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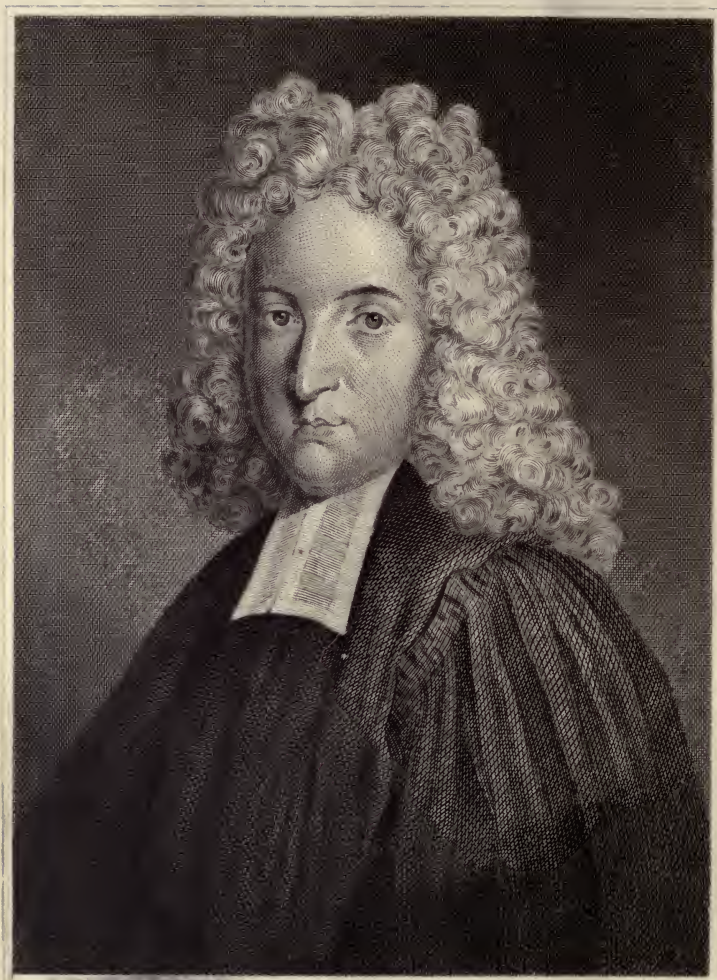












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REV. JAMES SAURIN.

NEW-YORK.

Harper & Brothers.

# S E R M O N S

OF

**THE REV. JAMES SAURIN,**

LATE PASTOR OF THE FRENCH CHURCH AT THE HAGUE.

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FROM THE FRENCH,

BY THE

REV. ROBERT ROBINSON, REV. HENRY HUNTER, D. D.;

AND

REV. JOSEPH SUTCLIFFE, A. M.

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A NEW EDITION, WITH ADDITIONAL SERMONS.

REVISED AND CORRECTED

BY THE REV. SAMUEL BURDER, A. M.

*Late of Clare Hall, Cambridge; Lecturer of the United Parishes of Christ Church, Newgate Street, and St. Leonard, Foster Lane, London.*

WITH A LIKENESS OF THE AUTHOR, AND A GENERAL INDEX.

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FROM THE LAST LONDON EDITION.

WITH A PREFACE BY THE REV. J. P. K. HENSHAW, D. D.;

IN TWO VOLUMES.—VOL. I.

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NEW YORK.

PUBLISHED BY HARPER & BROTHERS.

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1843.

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## **PREFACE**

### **TO THE LAST ENGLISH EDITION.**

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TRANSLATIONS of works written in foreign languages possess a value beyond the subjects discussed in them: in this respect, the congeniality of sentiment which pervades, may assimilate them to our own productions. But they are particularly useful to convince us, that mental cultivation and energy are not confined to any country, but are the gifts of God, impartially bestowed upon nations widely separated as to situation. Nor are these circumstances without their special influence, since we find the works of learned men characterized by peculiarities, which strongly distinguish them from each other. The transfusion of these into the languages of other countries, gives them a circulation which contributes equally to the instruction and pleasure of mankind in general.

Of this advantage the Sermons of M. SAURIN are pre-eminently deserving. Nor has it been conferred on them in vain. They have been most favourably received in this country, as the sale of several Editions demonstrates. As many of them as have made eight volumes, have, for some time, been before the public. The first five were translated by the Rev. R. ROBINSON. The sixth by the Rev. Dr. H. HUNTER; and the last two by the Rev. J. SUTCLIFFE.

In the present Edition they are compressed into Two Volumes, the last of which contains three additional Sermons, now first printed in English; one on Regeneration, translated by the Rev. J. SUTCLIFFE; and two others by M. A. BURDER. Of the manner in which they are rendered, the near relationship of the translator forbids me to speak, otherwise than to express a confident hope, that they will not be found unworthy of being associated with those which precede them.

This Edition has been carefully corrected by the Rev. J. SUTCLIFFE, previously to the work being put to the press, through which it has been my province to guide and correct it. To those who value the great doctrines of Christianity, these volumes cannot but prove highly acceptable: nor can they fail of making a due impression on the mind, by the forcible and eloquent manner in which they exhibit truth and holiness.

SAMUEL BURDER.

*Brixtable Lodge, Mortlake, Jan. 1, 1824.*



# PREFACE

TO THE

## FIRST AMERICAN STEREOTYPE EDITION.

The sermons of the accomplished Saurin, formerly pastor of the Reformed French church at the Hague, have been well known to a considerable part of the clergy of different denominations, in the United States, ever since they were put into an English dress by Robinson, Hunter, and Sutcliffe. To this class a recommendation of these sermons would be a work of supererogation; and they might justly look upon any attempt to give an analysis of their merits, by so humble an individual as the subscriber, to be about as needful and acceptable an offering to the cause of Christian literature, as the panegyric of a pedagogue upon the principia of Newton, the metaphysics of Locke, or the poetry of Milton, would be to the republic of letters. But there is a much more numerous, and (thanks be to the facilities of education and spreading influence of christianity in this rising and happy country!) constantly increasing, class of readers, to which these rare specimens of pulpit eloquence have been till lately, almost inaccessible, because found only in seven or eight formidable octavo volumes. It is, therefore, believed by the publishers of this stereotype edition, at whose request the subscriber has undertaken the task, that a brief preface by an American clergyman, would be an acceptable service to this numerous class of the Christian community, and would serve as an appropriate introduction of this valuable work in a compass and at a price adapted to their taste and ability.

The preachers of the French school are generally characterized by a warm imagination, an ornamented diction, and an animated declamation. To enlighten the understanding, direct the reason, and persuade the judgment, seem to have been regarded by them as secondary objects;—while all their energies were put forth to awaken the sensibilities, agitate the passions, and control the affections of their hearers. Those of the English school, on the contrary, seem to disdain all the arts of declamation; to treat their hearers as only rational beings, without reference to their animal sympathies and emotions—and to aim at moving the heart solely through the medium of the understanding. In the sermons of the former, the Divine will find very little that will prove a valuable addition to his theological lore, or aid him in the exposition and illustration of the great principles of revealed truth. And in the didactic discourses of the latter class, the preacher will not meet with much that will prove a valuable auxiliary to him in the great work of rousing the human soul to deep sensibility and emotion in reference to eternal things,—and persuading his fellow men to flee, without delay, from the wrath to come, and lay hold with an anxious and trembling hand upon the hope set before them in the gospel. The former have an abundance of heat, but a moderate portion of light:—they serve to kindle a great blaze of feeling, but shed little or no illumination upon the dark field of polemic theology, or the profound mysteries of the Christian faith. The latter, shed forth light, but it is, too often, cold and cheerless as the moonbeams: they aid the researches of the inquirer after the principles of truth and safe rules of moral casuistry, but have little influence in imbuing the heart of the awakened sinner, with the agonies of contrition, or the consolations of hope. The former, would appear empty and insipid if unaccompanied by the action and impassioned tones of the living preacher; and the latter, would lose half their excellencies if they were not carefully perused amidst the quiet and meditations of the study.—The former, seem to have been designed exclusively for producing an effect

upon a vivacious people from the pulpit; and the latter, as exclusively, for producing an effect upon a thinking people from the press.

In this hasty sketch of the characteristics of the French and English sermons,—it is designed to present a picture which is assumed to be correct only as a general outline of the respective classes. There are highly distinguished and honourable exceptions in both—as must be well known to the readers of Massillon, Bossuet, Du Bosc, and others of the one class; and of Tillotson, Barrow, Gisborne, Cooper, Cunningham, “*et id genus omne,*” of the other.

The people of these United States, can, perhaps, hardly be said to have any fixed national character. Every thing in this youthful country, is still in a forming state. But owing to the nature of our civil institutions, the ready incorporation into our political family of emigrants from every country in Europe, our early connexion and subsequent friendly intercourse with France, and other causes which might be mentioned; the peculiar habits of thought, and feeling, and conduct, which belonged to our English progenitors, have undergone an important modification;—and so far as our national character is developed, it may be said to combine the gravity and thoughtfulness of the natives of the British isles, with the buoyancy and sprightliness of the inhabitants of the southern sections of the continent of Europe.

If it be the duty of the moral and religious teachers of a people to adapt their instructions to their general habits of thought, and feeling, and action, (which none will question,) and if the national character now forming in this union, partakes of the qualities ascribed to it above, then is it manifestly important that the occupants of our American pulpits, while they carefully avoid the shallowness of the French style of sermonizing, and the coldness of the English, should labour to combine the excellencies of both;—and thus form and prosecute a system which is best calculated to act upon the religious feelings, and form the moral habits, of the nation.

The increasing attention paid to the cultivation of sacred literature and theological learning amongst us; and the great facilities afforded to young men of piety and talents in their preparation for the sacred office, by our theological seminaries;—while they are hailed as an earnest of the increasing respectability and advancing power of the clerical profession, encourage the hope that a day is not far distant, when the American preachers, even now equal in point of usefulness at least, to any body alike numerous in any other country of Christendom, will be pre-eminent for ability, eloquence, zeal, faithfulness, and efficiency. When it will be acknowledged, not only that their field of labour is more extensive and promising than that allotted to the Protestant ministry of any other country, but also more highly and successfully cultivated.

One means of promoting so desirable an end, is, to furnish our younger clergy, and students of divinity, with the best models of pulpit composition. And where can one be found which may be more safely and profitably studied than that contained in the succeeding pages? There are, indeed, many, very many volumes of excellent sermons in our own language, from the pens of native and foreign divines;—but will it be deemed invidious to say, that in none of them can be found more faultless models than these volumes afford of the style of sermonizing that is best adapted to the wants of the American Church, and the character of the American people? It is true, Saurin was a Frenchman—but his character as a man and a preacher, was modified, and doubtless improved, by several years exercise of his ministry in the metropolis of England,—and a longer exercise of it at the Hague; so that the objectionable peculiarities of his national school were restrained and amended by the sobriety of the English, and the gravity and obtuseness of the Hollanders. His discourses, owing perhaps, to the peculiar circumstances in which he was providentially placed, combine, more happily than any others, the excellencies of the continental and English schools of preachers, free from the glaring

faults of either. They have the warmth and vivacity of the French, without being superficial; and the depth and comprehensiveness of the English, without being dull. They contain weighty thoughts, clothed in powerful language. There are passages of thrilling eloquence and touching pathos, which open the deep founts of feeling, and bear the soul towards heaven as in a chariot of fire; and there are trains of cool and dispassionate argumentation, which rivet the attention, and convince the judgment of the most cautious inquirer after truth. There are some sermons which charm the most uninstructed minds by their beautiful simplicity; and others, which dazzle and awe the most cultivated, by their splendour and sublimity. There are parts in which "a lamb might wade, and others in which an elephant might swim."

The plainness of Tillotson, the *unction* of Massillon, the richness of Barrow, the fire of Bridaine, the power of Horsley, and the evangelical faithfulness of Du Bosc, are all (in a degree) mingled and concentrated in the sermons of our Author.

But the chief excellence of these sermons is their fidelity to the great principles of divine truth. If they were more distinguished for beauty of composition, brilliancy of imagination, richness of illustration, depth of thought, and power of eloquence, than they have been now represented to be, and yet opposed, or even concealed, the great doctrines of the cross, they would be worthy of execration, rather than of praise, from the lips of a Christian minister. But, blessed be God! the powerful mind of Saurin was sanctified by the grace of the gospel; and the brightest efforts of his genius, and the most precious gems he had collected in the mines of literature and science, were consecrated to the noble work of maintaining and adorning the truth as it is in Jesus. Here truth appears arrayed in the most attractive robes which genius and learning could throw around her.

It is not intended by these remarks to sanction every sentiment advanced in the following sermons of Monsieur Saurin. The writer of this preface, as an Episcopalian, entertains views in relation to the constitution and ministry of the Christian church, and also certain points of doctrine, which, of course, can derive no countenance from the writings of a Presbyterian divine. But he may safely declare that few things will be found in these sermons, which will not receive the hearty concurrence of evangelical christians of all denominations.

A particular notice of the subjects discussed in these sermons, is here deemed unnecessary, on account of the full analysis given by the translators and editors of the English editions. Suffice it to say, that some of the most important subjects in the whole circle of christian doctrines and duties are here discussed, illustrated, and enforced. Here God's character and government are displayed in all their perfection and glory; his law, in all its extent and spirituality;—and his gospel in all its grace and consolation. Here the Lord Jesus, as the God-man mediator, fulfilling the law by his obedience, and atoning for sin by his death, is set forth as the only ground of hope—the "end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." The Holy Ghost, the third person in the adorable trinity, is here recognized and glorified as "the Lord and giver of life," who by his divine energy quickens and renews the sinner's heart, comforts the soul of the believer under the sorrows of this life, and prepares him for the joys of that which is to come. Here the sceptic may be convinced, the heretic confuted, the worldling confounded, the sinner alarmed, the penitent comforted with the hope of pardon, and the "man of God, thoroughly furnished unto every good work."

May the blessing of *Him*, without whom Paul may plant and Apollus water in vain, accompany this new edition of these admirable sermons, and make it the instrument of salvation to multitudes of souls.

J. P. K. HENSHAW.

BALTIMORE, MAY 30, 1832.

The first part of the report is devoted to a general description of the country, its climate, soil, and productions. It is then divided into several chapters, each treating of a particular branch of the commerce or industry of the country. The first of these chapters is on the subject of the sugar trade, and contains a detailed account of the cultivation of sugar, the mode of preparing it, and the various uses to which it is put. The second chapter is on the subject of the rum trade, and contains a description of the distillation of rum, and the various uses to which it is put. The third chapter is on the subject of the molasses trade, and contains a description of the distillation of molasses, and the various uses to which it is put. The fourth chapter is on the subject of the rum and molasses trade, and contains a description of the distillation of rum and molasses, and the various uses to which they are put. The fifth chapter is on the subject of the rum and molasses trade, and contains a description of the distillation of rum and molasses, and the various uses to which they are put.

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**MEMOIRS**  
OF THE  
**REFORMATION IN FRANCE;**  
AND OF  
**THE LIFE OF THE REV. JAMES SAURIN.**

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THE celebrated Mr. SAURIN, author of the following sermons, was a French refugee, who, with thousands of his countrymen, took shelter in Holland, from the persecutions of France. The lives, and even the sermons, of the refugees are so closely connected with the history of the Reformation in France, that, we presume, a short sketch of the state of religion in that kingdom till the banishment of the Protestants by Louis XIV. will not be disagreeable to some of the younger part of our readers.

Gaul, which is now called France, in the time of Jesus Christ, was a province of the Roman empire, and some of the apostles planted Christianity in it. In the first centuries, while Christianity continued a rational religion, it spread and supported itself without the help, and against the persecutions, of the Roman emperors. Numbers were converted from paganism, several Christian societies were formed, and many eminent men, having spent their lives in preaching and writing for the advancement of the gospel, sealed their doctrine with their blood.

In the fifth century, Clovis I., a pagan king of France, fell in love with Clotilda, a Christian princess of the house of Burgundy, who agreed to marry him only on condition of his becoming a Christian, to which he consented, A. D. 491. The king, however, delayed the performance of this condition till five years after his marriage; when, being engaged in a desperate battle, and having reason to fear the total defeat of his army, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and put up this prayer, *God of Queen Clotilda! Grant me the victory, and I vow to be baptized, and thenceforth to worship no other God but thee!* He obtained the victory, and at his return, was baptized at Rheims, December 25, 496. His sister, and more than three thousand of his subjects followed his example, and Christianity became the professed religion of France.

Conversion implies the cool exercise of reason, and whenever passion takes the place, and does the office of reason, conversion is nothing but a name. Baptism did not wash away the sins of Clovis; before it he was vile, after it he was infamous, practising all kinds of treachery and cruelty. The court, the army, and the common people, who were pagan when the king was pagan, and Christian when he was Christian, continued the same in their morals after their conversion as before. When the Christian church, therefore, opened her doors, and delivered up her keys to these new con-

verts, she gained nothing in comparison of what she lost. She increased the number, the riches, the pomp, and the power, of her family: but she resigned the exercise of reason, the sufficiency of scripture, the purity of worship, the grand simplicity of innocence, truth, and virtue, and became a creature of the state. A virgin before; she became a prostitute now.

Such Christians, in a long succession, converted Christianity into something worse than paganism. They elevated the Christian church into a temporal kingdom, and they degraded temporal kingdoms into fiefs of the church. They founded dominion in grace, and they explained grace to be a love of dominion. And by these means they completed that general apostasy, known by the name of *Poperly*, which St. Paul had foretold, 1 *Tim.* iv. 1. and which rendered the reformation of the sixteenth century essential to the interests of all mankind.

The state of religion at that time, A. D. 1515, was truly deplorable. Ecclesiastical government, instead of that evangelical simplicity and fraternal freedom, which Jesus Christ and his apostles had taught, was become a spiritual domination under the form of a temporal empire. An innumerable multitude of dignities, titles, rights, honours, privileges, and pre-eminences belonged to it, and were all dependent on a sovereign priest, who, being an absolute monarch, required every thought to be in subjection to him. The chief ministers of religion were actually become temporal princes, and the high-priest, being absolute sovereign of the ecclesiastical state, had his court and his council, his ambassadors to negotiate, and his armies to murder his flock. The clergy had acquired immense wealth, and, as their chief study was either to collect and to augment their revenues, or to prevent the alienation of their estates, they had constituted numberless spiritual corporations, with powers, rights, statutes, privileges, and officers. The functions of the ministry were generally neglected, and, of consequence, gross ignorance prevailed. All ranks of men were extremely depraved in their morals, and the Pope's penitentiary had published the price of every crime, as it was rated in the tax-book of the Roman chancery. Marriages, which reason and scripture allowed, the Pope prohibited, and, for money, dispensed with those which both forbade. Church-benefices were sold to children, and to laymen, who then let them to under tenants, none of whom performed the duty, for which the profits were

paid; but all having obtained them by simony, spent their lives in fleecing the flock to repay themselves. The power of the pontiff was so great that he assumed, and, what was more astonishing, was suffered to exercise a supremacy over many kingdoms. When monarchs gratified his will, he put on a triple crown, ascended a throne, suffered them to call him *Holiness*, and to kiss his feet. When they disobliterated him, he suspended all religious worship in their dominions; published false and abusive libels, called bulls, which operated as laws, to injure their persons; discharged their subjects from obedience; and gave their crowns to any who would usurp them. He claimed an infallibility of knowledge, and an omnipotence of strength; and he forbade the world to examine his claim. He was addressed by titles of blasphemy, and, though he owned no jurisdiction over himself, yet he affected to extend his authority over heaven and hell, as well as over a middle place called purgatory, of all which places, he said, he kept the keys. This irregular church polity was attended with quarrels, intrigues, schisms, and wars.

*Religion itself* was made to consist in the performance of numerous ceremonies, of Pagan, Jewish, and Monkish extraction, all of which might be performed without either faith in God, or love to mankind. The church ritual was an address, not to the reason, but to the senses of men: music stole the ear, and soothed the passions; statues, paintings, vestments, and various ornaments, beguiled the eye; while the pause which was produced by that sudden attack, which a multitude of objects made on the senses, on entering a spacious decorated edifice, was enthusiastically taken for devotion. Blind obedience was first allowed by courtesy, and then established by law. Public worship was performed in an unknown tongue, and the sacrament was adored as the body and blood of Christ. The credit of the ceremonial produced in the people a notion, that the performance of it was the practice of piety, and religion degenerated into gross superstition. Vice, uncontrolled by reason or scripture, retained a Pagan vigour, and committed the most horrid crimes: and superstition atoned for them, by building and endowing religious houses, and by bestowing donations on the church. Human merit was introduced, saints were invoked, and the perfections of God were distributed by canonization, among the creatures of the Pope.

The pillars that supported this edifice were immense riches, arising by imposts from the sins of mankind; idle distinctions between supreme and subordinate adoration; senseless axioms, called the divinity of the schools; preachments of buffoonery or blasphemy, or both; cruel casuistry, consisting of a body of dangerous and scandalous morality; false miracles and midnight visions; spurious books and paltry relics; oaths, dungeons, inquisitions, and crusades. The whole was denominated THE HOLY, CATHOLIC, AND APOSTOLIC CHURCH, and laid to the charge of Jesus Christ.

Loud complaints had been made of these excesses, for the last hundred and fifty years, to those whose business it was to reform, and, as bad as they were, they had owned the necessity of reformation, and had repeatedly promis-

ed to reform. Several councils had been called for the purpose of reforming; but nothing had been done, nor could any thing be expected from assemblies of mercenary men, who were too deeply interested in darkness to vote for day. They were inflexible against every remonstrance, and, as a Jesuit has since expressed it, *They would not extinguish one taper, though it were to convert all the Hugonots in France.*

The restorers of literature reiterated and reasoned on these complaints: but they reasoned to the wind. The church champions were hard driven, they tried every art to support their cause: but they could not get rid of the attack by a polite duplicity: they could not intimidate their sensible opponents by anathemas; they would not dispute the matter by scripture, and they could not defend themselves by any other method; they were too obstinate to reform themselves, and too proud to be reformed by their inferiors. At length, the plaintiffs laid aside the thoughts of applying to them, and, having found out *the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free*, went about reforming themselves. The reformers were neither popes, cardinals nor bishops, but they were good men, who aimed to promote the glory of God, and the good of mankind. This was the state of the church, when Francis I. ascended the throne, 1515.

Were we to enter into a minute examination of the reformation in France, we would own a particular interposition of Providence: but we would also take the liberty to observe, that a happy conjunction of jarring interests rendered the sixteenth century a fit era for reformation. Events that produced, protected, and persecuted reformation, proceeded from open and hidden, great and little, good and bad causes. The capacities and the tempers, the virtues and the vices, the views and the interests, the wives and the mistresses, of the princes of those times; the abilities and dispositions of the officers of each crown; the powers of government, and the persons who wrought them: the tempers and geniuses of the people; all these, and many more, were springs of action, which, in their turns, directed the great events that were exhibited to public view. But our limits allow no inquiries of this kind.

The reformation which began in Germany, spread itself to Geneva, and thence into France. The French had a translation of the Bible, which had been made by Guaiars des Moulins, in 1224. It had been revised, corrected, and printed at Paris, by order of Charles VIII., and the study of it now began to prevail. 1487. The reigning king, who was a patron of learning; encouraged his valet de chambre, Clement Marot, to versify some of David's Psalms, and took great pleasure in singing them,\* and either protected, or persecuted the reformation, as his interest seemed to him to require. Although he went in procession to burn the first martyrs

\* His majesty's favourite psalm, which he sang when he went a hunting, was the 42d. The queen used to sing the 6th, and the king's mistress the 130th. Marot translated fifty, Beza the other hundred, Calvin got them set to music by the best musicians, and every body sang them as ballads. When the reformed churches made them a part of their worship, the papists were forbidden to sing them any more, and to sing a psalm was a sign of a Lutheran



of the reformed church, yet in the same year, 1535, he sent for Melancthon to come into France to reconcile religious differences. Although he persecuted his own Protestant subjects with infinite inhumanity, yet when he was afraid that the ruin of the German Protestants would strengthen the hands of the emperor Charles V. he made an alliance with the Protestant princes of Germany, and he allowed the Duke of Orleans, his second son, to offer them the free exercise of their religion in the Dukedom of Luxemburg. He suffered his sister, the Queen of Navarre, to protect the reformation in her country of Bearn, and even saved Geneva, when Charles, Duke of Savoy, would have taken it. It was no uncommon thing in that age, for princes to trifle thus with religion. His majesty's first concern was to be a king, his second to act like a rational creature.

The reformation greatly increased in this reign. The pious Queen of Navarre made her court a covert from every storm, supplied France with preachers, and the exiles at Geneva with money. Calvin, who had fled from his rectory in France, and had settled at Geneva, 1531, was a chief instrument; he slid his catechism, and other books into France, 1541. Some of the bishops were inclined to the reformation; but secretly, for fear of the Christians of Rome. The reformation was called Calvinism. The people were named Sacramentarians, Lutherans, Calvinists; and nick-named *Hugonots*, either from Hugon, a Hobgoblin, because, to avoid persecution, they held their assemblies in the night; or from the gate of Hugon, in Tours, where they used to meet; or from a Swiss word, which signifies a league.

Henry II., who succeeded his father Francis, 1547, was a weak, and a wicked prince. The increase of his authority was the law and the prophets to him. He violently persecuted the Calvinists of France because he was taught to believe, that heresy was a faction repugnant to authority; and he made an alliance with the German Protestants, and was pleased with the title of *Protector of the Germanic liberties*, that is, protector of protestantism. This alliance he made, in order to check the power of Charles V. He was governed, sometimes by his Queen, Catharine de Medicis, niece of Pope Clement VII., who, it is said, never did right except she did it by mistake: often by the constable de Montmorenci, whom, contrary to the express command of his father, in his dying illness, he had placed at the head of administration: chiefly by his mistress, Diana of Poitiers, who had been mistress to his father, and who bore an implacable hatred to the Protestants: and always by some of his favourites, whom he suffered to amass immense fortunes by accusing men of heresy. The reformation was very much advanced in this reign. The gentry promoted the acting of plays, in which the comedians exposed the lives and doctrines of the popish clergy, and the poignant wit and humour of the comedians afforded infinite diversion to the people, and conciliated them to the new preachers. Beza, who had fled to Geneva, 1548, came backward and forward into France, and was a chief promoter of the work. His Latin Testament, which he first published in this reign, 1556, was much read, greatly ad-

mired, and contributed to the spread of the cause. The New Testament was the Goliath's sword of the clerical reformers; *there was none like it.*

Francis II. succeeded his father Henry, 1559. He was only in the sixteenth year of his age, extremely weak both in body and mind, and therefore incapable of governing the kingdom by himself. In this reign began those civil wars, which raged in France for almost forty years. They have been charged on false zeal for religion: but this charge is a calumny, for the crown of France was the prize for which the generals fought. It was that which inspired them with hopes and fears, productive of devotions or persecutions, as either of them opened access to the throne. The interest of religion, indeed, fell in with these views, and so the parties were blended together in war.

The family of Charles the Great, which had reigned in France for 236 years, either became extinct, or was deprived of its inheritance, at the death of Louis the Lazy, 987. Him, Hugh Capet had succeeded, and had transmitted the crown to his own posterity, which, in this reign, subsisted in two principal branches, in that of Valois, which was in possession of the throne, and in that of Bourbon, the next heir to the throne of France, and then in possession of Bearn. The latter had been driven out of the kingdom of Navarre: but they retained the title, and were sometimes at Bearn, and sometimes at the court of France. The house of Guise, Dukes of Lorraine, a very rich and powerful family, to whose niece, Mary Queen of Scots, the young king was married, pretended to make out their descent from Charles the Great, and were competitors, when the times served, with the reigning family for the throne, and, at other times, with the Bourbon family, for the apparent heirship to it. With these views they directed their family alliances, perfected themselves in military skill, and intrigued at court for the administration of affairs. These three houses formed three parties. The house of Guise (the chiefs of which were five brethren at this time) headed one; the king of Navarre, the princes of the blood, and the great officers of the crown, the other; the Queen mother, who managed the interests of the reigning family, exercised her policy on both, to keep either from becoming too strong; while the feeble child on the throne was alternately a prey to them all.

Protestantism had obtained numerous converts in the last reign. Several princes of the blood, some chief officers of the crown, and many principal families, had embraced it, and its partisans were so numerous, both in Paris and in all the provinces, that each leader of the court parties deliberated on the policy of strengthening his party, by openly espousing the reformation, by endeavouring to free the Protestants from penal laws, and by obtaining a free toleration for them. At length, the house of Bourbon declared for Protestantism, and, of consequence, the Guises were inspired with zeal for the support of the ancient religion, and took the Roman Catholics under their protection. The king of Navarre, and the prince of Conde, were the heads of the first: but the Duke of Guise had the address to obtain the

chief management of affairs, and the Protestants were persecuted with insatiable fury all the time of this reign.

Had religion then no share in these commotions? Certainly it had, with many of the princes, and with multitudes of the soldiers: but they were a motley mixture; one fought for his coronet, another for his land, a third for liberty of conscience, and a fourth for pay. Courage was a joint stock, and they were mutual sharers of gain or loss, praise or blame. It was religion to secure the lives and properties of noble families, and though the common people had no lordships, yet they had the more valuable rights of conscience, and for them they fought. We mistake, if we imagine that the French have never understood the nature of civil and religious liberty; they have well understood it, though they have not been able to obtain it. *Suum cuique* would have been as expressive a motto as any that the Protestant generals could have borne.

The persecution of the Protestants was very severe at this time. Counsellor Du Bourg, a gentleman of eminent quality, and great merit, was burnt for heresy, and the court was inclined, not only to rid France of Protestantism, but Scotland also, and sent La Brosse with three thousand men, to assist the queen of Scotland in that pious design. This was frustrated by the intervention of queen Elizabeth of England. The persecution becoming every day more intolerable, and the king being quite inaccessible to the remonstrances of his people, the Protestants held several consultations, and took the opinions of their ministers, as well as those of their noble partisans, on the question, whether it were lawful to take up arms in their own defence, and to make way for a free access to the king to present their petitions? It was unanimously resolved, that it was lawful, and it was agreed, that a certain number of men should be chosen, who should go on a fixed day under the direction of Louis, prince of Conde, present their petition to the king, and seize the Duke of Guise, and the cardinal of Lorraine, his brother, in order to have them tried before the states. This affair was discovered to the Duke by a false brother, the design was defeated, and twelve hundred were beheaded. Guise pretended to have suppressed a rebellion that was designed to end in the dethroning of the king, and by this manœuvre, he procured the general lieutenantancy of the kingdom, and the glorious title of *Conservator of his country*. He pleased the puerile king by placing a few gaudy horseguards round his palace, and he infatuated the poor child to think himself and his kingdom rich and happy, while his Protestant subjects lay bleeding through all his realm.

The infinite value of an able statesman, in such important crises as these, might here be exemplified in the conduct of Michael de L'Hospital, who was at this time, 1560, promoted to the chancel-lordship: but our limits will not allow an enlargement. He was the most consummate politician that France ever employed. He had the wisdom of governing without the folly of discovering it, and all his actions were guided by that cool moderation which always accompanies a superior knowledge of mankind. He was a concealed Pro-

testant of the most liberal sentiments, an entire friend to religious liberty, and it was his wise management that saved France. It was his fixed opinion, that FREE TOLERATION was sound policy. We must not wonder that rigid papists deemed him an atheist, while zealous, but mistaking Protestants, pictured him carrying a torch behind him, to guide others but not himself. The more a man resembles God, the more will his conduct be censured by ignorance, partiality and pride!

The Duke of Guise, in order to please and strengthen his party, endeavoured to establish an inquisition in France. The chancellor, being willing to parry a thrust which he could not entirely avoid, was forced to agree, May, 1560, to a severer edict than he could have wished, to defeat the design. By this edict, the cognizance of the crime of heresy was taken from the secular judges, and given to the bishops alone. The Calvinists complained of this, because it put them into the hands of their enemies, and although their Lordships condemned and burnt so many heretics, that their courts were justly called *chambres ardentes*,\* yet the zealous Catholics thought them less eligible than an inquisition after the manner of Spain.

Soon after the making of this edict, August, 1560, many families having been ruined by it, Admiral Coligny presented a petition to the king, in the names of all the Protestants of France, humbly praying that they might be allowed the free exercise of their religion. The king referred the matter to the Parliament, who were to consult about it with the lords of the council. A warm debate ensued, and the Catholics carried it against the Protestants by three voices. It was resolved, that people should be obliged, either to conform to the old established church, or to quit the kingdom, with permission to sell their estates. The Protestants argued, that in a point of such importance, it would be unreasonable, on account of three voices, to inflame all France with animosity and war: that the method of banishment was impossible to be executed; and that the obliging of those, who continued in France, to submit to the Romish religion, against their consciences, was an absurd attempt, and equal to an impossibility. The chancellor, and the Protestant Lords, used every effort to procure a toleration, while the Catholic party urged the necessity of uniformity in religion. At length, two of the bishops owned the necessity of reforming, pleaded strenuously for moderate measures, and proposed the deciding of these controversies in an assembly of the states, assisted by a national council, to be summoned at the latter end of the year. To this proposal, the assembly agreed.

The court of Rome having laid it down as an indubitable maxim in church police, that an inquisition was the only support of the hierarchy, and dreading the consequences of allowing a nation to reform itself, was alarmed at this intelligence, and instantly sent a nuncio into France. His instructions were to prevent, if possible, the calling of a national council, and to promise the reassembling of the general council of Trent. The Protestants had been

\* Burning courts—fire offices,

too often dupes to such artifices as these, and, being fully convinced of the futility of general councils, they refused to submit to the council of Trent now for several good reasons. The pope, they said, who assembled the council, was to be judge in his own cause: the council would be chiefly composed of Italian bishops, who were vassals of the pope, as a secular prince, and sworn to him as a bishop and head of the church: the legates would pack a majority, and bribe the poor bishops to vote: each article would be first settled at Rome, and then proposed by the legates to the council: the Emperor, by advice of the late council of Constance, had given a safe conduct to John Huss, and to Jerome of Prague; however, when they appeared in the council, and proposed their doubts, the council condemned them to be burnt. The Protestants had reason on their side, when they rejected this method of reforming, for the art of procuring a majority of votes is the soul of this system of church government. This art consists in the ingenuity of finding out, and in the dexterity of addressing each man's weak side, his pride or his ignorance, his envy, his gravity, or his avarice; and the possessing of this is the perfection of a Legate of Rome.

During these disputes, the king died without issue, December 5, 1560, and his brother Charles IX. who was in the eleventh year of his age, succeeded him, December 13. The states met at the time proposed. The chancellor opened the session by an unanswerable speech on the ill policy of persecution; he represented the miseries of the Protestants, and proposed an abatement of their sufferings, till their complaints could be heard in a national council. The Prince of Conde and the King of Navarre were the heads of the Protestant party; the Guises were the heads of their opponents, and the queen mother, Catharine de Medicis, who had obtained the regency till the king's majority, and who began to dread the power of the Guises, leaned to the Protestants, which was a grand event in their favour. After repeated meetings, and various warm debates, it was agreed, as one side would not submit to a general council, nor the other to a national assembly, that a conference should be held at Poissy, between both parties, July, 1561, and an edict was made, that no persons should molest the Protestants, that the imprisoned should be released, and the exiles called home, August, 1561.

The conference at Poissy was held, in the presence of the king, the princes of the blood, the nobility, cardinals, prelates, and grandees of both parties. On the popish side, six cardinals, four bishops, and several dignified clergymen, and on the Protestant about twelve of the most famous reformed ministers, managed the dispute. Beza, who spoke well, knew the world, and had a ready wit, and a deal of learning, displayed all his powers in favour of the reformation. The papists reasoned where they could, and where they could not, they railed. The conference ended September 29, where most public disputes have ended, that is, where they began; for great men never enter these lists, without a previous determination not to submit to the disgrace of a public defeat.

At the close of the last reign, the ruin of Protestantism seemed inevitable: but now the reformation turned like a tide, overspread every place, and seemed to roll away all opposition, and, in all probability, had it not been for one sad event, it would now have subverted popery in this kingdom. The king of Navarre, who was now lieutenant general of France, had hitherto been a zealous Protestant; he had taken incredible pains to support the reformation, and had assured the Danish ambassador that, in a year's time, he would cause the true gospel to be preached throughout France. The Guises caballed with the pope and the king of Spain, and they offered to invest the king of Navarre with the kingdom of Sardinia, and to restore to him that part of the kingdom of Navarre, which lay in Spain, on condition of his renouncing Protestantism. The lure was tempting, and the king deserted, and even persecuted the Protestants. Providence is never at a loss for means to effect its designs. The queen of Navarre, daughter of the last queen, who had hitherto preferred a dance to a sermon, was shocked at the king's conduct, and instantly became a zealous Protestant herself. She met with some unkind treatment, but nothing could shake her resolution: *Had I, said she, the kingdoms in my hand, I would throw them into the sea, rather than defile my conscience by going to mass.* This courageous profession saved her a deal of trouble and dispute.

The Protestants began now to appear more publicly than before. The queen of Navarre caused Beza openly to solemnize a marriage in a noble family, after the Geneva manner.— This, which was consummated near the court, emboldened the ministers, and they preached at the countess de Senignan's, guarded by the marshal's provosts. The nobility thought that the common people had as good a right to hear the gospel as themselves, and caused the reformed clergy to preach without the walls of Paris. Their auditors were thirty or forty thousand people, divided into three companies, the women in the middle surrounded by men on foot, and the latter by men on horseback; and during the sermon, the governor of Paris placed soldiers to guard the avenues, and to prevent disturbances. The morality of this worship cannot be disputed, for if God be worshipped in spirit and in truth, the place is indifferent. The expediency of it may be doubted: but, in a persecution of forty years, the French Protestants had learnt that their political masters did not consider how rational, but how formidable they were.

The Guises and their associates, being quite dispirited, retired to their estates, and the queen regent, by the chancellor's advice, granted an edict to enable the Protestants to preach in all parts of the kingdom, except in Paris, and in other walled cities. The Parliaments of France had then the power of refusing to register royal edicts, and the chancellor had occasion for all his address, to prevail over the scruples and ill humour of the parliament to procure the registering of this. He begged leave to say, that the question before them was one of those which had its difficulties, on whatever side it was viewed; that in the present case one of two things must be chosen, either

to put all the adherents of the new religion to the sword; or to banish them entirely, allowing them to dispose of their effects; that the first point could not be executed, since that party was too strong both in leaders and partisans; and though it could be done, yet as it was staining the king's youth with the blood of so many of his subjects, perhaps when he came of age he would demand it at the hands of his governors; with regard to the second point, it was as little feasible, and could it be effected, it would be raising as many desperate enemies as exiles: that to enforce conformity against conscience, as matters stood now, was to lead the people to atheism. The edict at last was passed, January, 1562, but the house registered it with this clause, *in consideration of the present juncture of the times: but not approving of the new religion in any manner, and till the king shall otherwise appoint.* So hard sat toleration on the minds of papists.

A minority was a period favourable to the views of the Guises, and this edict was a happy occasion of a pretence for commencing hostilities. The Duke, instigated by his mother, went to Vassi, a town adjacent to one of his lordships, and, some of his retinue picking a quarrel with some Protestants, who were hearing a sermon in a barn, he interested himself in it, wounded two hundred, and left sixty dead on the spot. This was the first Protestant blood that was shed in civil war, March 1, 1562.

The news of this affair flew like lightning, and, while the Duke was marching to Paris with a thousand horse, the city and the provinces rose in arms. The chancellor was extremely afflicted to see both sides preparing for war, and endeavoured to dissuade them from it. The constable told him, *it did not belong to men of the long robe, to give their judgment with relation to war.* To which he answered, *that though he did not bear arms, he knew when they ought to be used.* After this, they excluded him from the councils of war.

The queen-regent, alarmed at the Duke's approach to Paris, threw herself into the hands of the Protestants, and ordered Conde to take up arms, August, 1562. War began, and barbarities and cruelties were practised on both sides. The Duke of Guise was assassinated, the king of Navarre was killed at a siege, fifty thousand Protestants were slain, and, after a year had been spent in these confusions, a peace was concluded, A. D. 1563. All that the Protestants obtained was an edict which excluded the exercise of their religion from cities, and restrained it to their own families.

Peace did not continue long, for the Protestants, having received intelligence, that the Pope, the house of Austria, and the house of Guise, had conspired their ruin, and fearing that the king, and the court, were inclined to crush them, as their rights were every day infringed by new edicts, took up arms again in their own defence, A. D. 1567. The city of Rochelle declared for them, and it served them for an asylum for sixty years. They were assisted by queen Elizabeth of England, and by the German princes, and they obtained, at the conclusion of this second war, A. D. 1568, the revocation of all penal edicts, the

exercise of their religion in their families, and the grant of six cities for their security.

The pope, the king of Spain, and the Guises, finding that they could not prevail while the wise chancellor retained his influence, formed a cabal against him, and got him removed, June, 1568. He resigned very readily, and retired to a country seat, where he spent the remainder of his days. A strange confusion followed in the direction of affairs; one edict allowed liberty, another forbade it, and it was plain to the Protestants that their situation was very delicate and dangerous. The articles of the last peace had never been performed, and the papists every where insulted their liberties, so that in three months time, two thousand Hugonots were murdered, and the murderers went unpunished. War broke out again, A. D. 1568. Queen Elizabeth assisted the Protestants with money, the Count Palatine helped them with men, the queen of Navarre parted with her rings and jewels to support them, and, the prince of Conde being slain, she declared her son, prince Henry, the head and protector of the Protestant cause, and caused medals to be struck with these words: *a safe peace, a complete victory, a glorious death.* Her Majesty did every thing in her power for the advancement of the cause of religious liberty, and she used to say, *that liberty of conscience ought to be preferred before honours, dignities, and life itself.* She caused the New Testament, the catechism, and the liturgy of Geneva, to be translated, and printed at Rochelle. She abolished popery, and established Protestantism in her own dominions. In her leisure hours, she expressed her zeal by working tapestries with her own hands, in which she represented the monuments of that liberty, which she procured by shaking off the yoke of the Pope. One suit consisted of twelve pieces. On each piece was represented some scripture history of *deliverance*; Israel coming out of Egypt, Joseph's release from prison, or something of the like kind. On the top of each piece, were these words, *where the spirit is there is liberty*, and in the corners of each were broken chains, fetters, and gibbets. One piece represented a congregation at Mass, and a fox, in a friar's habit, officiating as a priest, grinning horribly and saying, *the Lord be with you.* The pieces were fashionable patterns, and dexterously directed the needles of the ladies to help forward the reformation.

After many negotiations, a peace was concluded, 1570, and the free exercise of religion was allowed in all but walled cities; two cities in every province were assigned to the Protestants; they were to be admitted into all universities, schools, hospitals, public offices, royal, seigniorial, and corporate, and to render the peace of everlasting duration, a match was proposed between Henry of Navarre, and the sister of King Charles. These articles were accepted, the match was agreed to, every man's sword was put up in its sheath, and the queen of Navarre, her son, King Henry, the princes of the blood, and the principal Protestants, went to Paris to celebrate the marriage, August 15, 1572. A few days after the marriage, the Admiral, who was one of the principal Protestant leaders, was assassinated, Au-

gust 22. This alarmed the king of Navarre, and the prince of Conde, but the king and his mother promising to punish the assassin, they were quiet. The next Sunday, August 9, 24, being St. Bartholomew's day, when the bells rang for morning prayers, the Duke of Guise, brother of the last, appeared with a great number of soldiers and citizens, and began to murder the Hugonots; the wretched Charles appeared at the windows of his palace, and endeavoured to shoot those who fled, crying to their pursuers, *Kill them, kill them*. The massacre continued seven days; seven hundred houses were pillaged; five thousand people perished in Paris; neither age, nor sex, nor even women with child were spared; one butcher boasted to the king that he had hewn down a hundred and fifty in one night. The rage ran from Paris to the provinces, where twenty-five thousand more were cruelly slain; the queen of Navarre was poisoned; and, during the massacre, the king offered the king of Navarre, and the young prince of Conde, son of the late prince, if they would not renounce Hugonotism, either *death, mass, or bastille*: for he said he would not have one left to reproach him. This bloody affair does not lie between Charles IX., his mother Catherine of Medicis, and the Duke of Guise; for the church of Rome, and the court of Spain, by exhibiting public rejoicings on the occasion, have adopted it for their own, or, at least, have claimed a share.

Would any one after this propose passive obedience and non-resistance to French Protestants? Or can we wonder, that, abhorring a church, who offered to embrace them with hands reeking with the blood of their brethren, they put on their armour again, and commenced a fourth civil war? The late massacre raised up also another party, called *Politicians*, who proposed to banish the family of Guise from France, to remove the queen mother, and the Italians, from the government, and to restore peace to the nation. This faction was headed by Montmorenci, who had an eye to the crown. During these troubles, the king died, in the twenty-fifth year of his age, 1574. Charles had a lively little genius; he composed a book on hunting, and valued himself on his skill in physiognomy. He thought courage consisted in swearing and taunting at his courtiers. His diversions were hunting, music, women, and wine. His court was a common-sewer of luxury and impiety, and, while his favourites were fleecing his people, he employed himself in the making of rhymes. The part which he acted in the Bartholomean tragedy, the worst crime that was ever perpetrated in any Christian country, will mark his reign with infamy, to the end of time.

Henry III. who succeeded his brother Charles, was first despised, and then hated, by all his subjects. He was so proud that he set rails round his table, and affected the pomp of an eastern king: and so mean that he often walked in procession with a beggarly brotherhood, with a string of beads in his hand, and a whip at his girdle. He was so credulous that he took the sacrament with the Duke of Guise, and with the cardinal of Lorraine, his brother; and so treacherous, that he caused the assassi-

nation of them both. He boasted of being a chief adviser of the late massacre, and the Protestants abhorred him for it. The papists hated him for his adherence to the Hugonot house of Bourbon, and for the edicts which he sometimes granted in favour of the Protestants, though his only aim was to weaken the Guises. The ladies held him in execration for his unnatural practices: and the duchess of Montpensier talked of clipping his hair, and of making him a monk. His heavy taxes, which were consumed by his favourites, excited the populace against him, and, while his kingdom was covering with carnage and drenching in blood, he was training lap-dogs to tumble, and parrots to prate.

In this reign was formed the famous league, 1576, which reduced France to the most miserable condition that could be. The chief promoter of it was the duke of Guise. The pretence was the preservation of the Catholic religion. The chief articles were three. "The defence of the Catholic religion. The establishment of Henry III. on the throne. The maintaining of the liberty of the kingdom, and the assembling of the states." Those who entered into the league promised to obey such a general as should be chosen for the defence of it, and the whole was confirmed by oath. The weak Henry subscribed it at first in hopes of subduing the Hugonots; the queen mother, the Guises, the pope, the king of Spain, many of the clergy, and multitudes of the people became leaguers. When Henry perceived that Guise was aiming by this league to dethrone him, he favoured the Protestants, and they obtained an edict for the free exercise of their religion, 1576; but edicts were vain things against the power of the league, and three civil wars raged in this reign.

Guise's pretended zeal for the Romish religion allured the clergy, and France was filled with seditious books and sermons. The preachers of the league were the most furious of all sermon mongers. They preached up the excellency of the established church, the necessity of uniformity, the horror of Hugonotism, the merit of killing the tyrant on the throne, (for so they called the king) the genealogy of the house of Guise, and every thing else that could inflame the madness of party rage. It is not enough to say that these abandoned clergymen disgraced their office; truth obliges us to add, they were protected, and preferred to dignities in the church, both in France and Spain.

The nearer the Guises approached to the crown the more were they inflamed at the sight of it. They obliged the king to forbid the exercise of the Protestant religion. They endeavoured to exclude the king of Navarre, who was now the next heir to the throne, from the succession. They began to act so haughtily that Henry caused the Duke and the cardinal to be assassinated, 1588. The next year he himself was assassinated by a friar, 1589. Religion flourishes where nothing else can grow, and the reformation spread more and more in this reign. The exiles at Geneva filled France with a new translation of the Bible, with books, letters, catechisms, hymns, and preachers, and the people, contrasting the

religion of Christ with the religion of Rome, entertained a most serious aversion for the latter.

In the last king ended the family of Valois, and the next heir was Henry IV. of the house of Bourbon, king of Navarre. His majesty had been educated a Protestant, and had been the protector of the party, and the Protestants had reason to expect much from him on his ascending the throne of France: but he had many difficulties to surmount; for could the men who would not bear a Hugonot subject, bear a Hugonot king? Some of the old faction disputed his title, and all insisted on a christian king. Henry had for him, on the one side, almost all the nobility, the whole court of the late king, all Protestant states, and princes, and the old Hugonot troops: on the other, he had against him, the common people, most of the great cities, all the parliaments except two, the greatest part of the clergy, the pope, the king of Spain, and most Catholic states. Four years his majesty deliberated, negotiated, and fought, but could not gain Paris. At length, the league set up a king of the house of Guise, and Henry found that the throne was inaccessible to all but papists; he therefore renounced heresy before Dr. Benoit, a moderate papist, and professed his conversion to popery. Paris opened its gates, the pope sent an absolution, and Henry became a *most Christian king*, 1594. Every man may rejoice that his virtue is not put to the trial of refusing a crown!

When his majesty got to his palace in Paris, he thought proper to conciliate his new friends by showing them particular esteem, and played at cards the first evening with a lady of the house of Guise, the most violent leaguer in all the party. His old servants, who had shed rivers of blood to bring the house of Bourbon to the throne, thought themselves neglected. While the Protestants were slighted, and while those, who had followed the league, were disengaging themselves from it on advantageous conditions, one of the king's old friends said, "We do not envy your killing the fatted calf for the prodigal son, provided you do not sacrifice the obedient son to make the better entertainment for the prodigal. I dread those bargains, in which things are given up, and nothing got but mere words; the words of those who hitherto have had no words at all."

By ascending the throne of France, Henry had risen to the highest degree of wretchedness. He had offered violence to his conscience by embracing popery; he had stirred up a general discontent among the French Protestants; the queen of England, and the Protestant states, reproached him bitterly; the league refused to acknowledge him till the pope had absolved him in form; the king of Spain caballed for the crown; several cities held out against him; many of the clergy thought him a hypocrite, and refused to insert his name in the public prayers of the church; the lawyers published libels against him; the Jesuits threatened to assassinate him, and actually attempted to do it. In this delicate and difficult situation, though his majesty manifested the frailty of humanity by renouncing Protestantism, yet he extricated himself and his subjects from the fatal labyrinths in

which they were all involved, so that he deservedly acquired from his enemies the epithet Great, though his friends durst not give him that of Good.

The king had been so well acquainted with the Protestants, that he perfectly knew their principles, and, could he have acted as he would, he would have instantly granted them all that they wanted. Their enemies had falsely said, that they were enemies to government: but the king knew better; and he also knew that the claims of his family would have been long ago buried in oblivion, had not the Protestants supported them. Marshal Biron had been one chief instrument of bringing him to the throne. The Marshal was not a good Hugonot, nor did he profess to be a papist: but he espoused the Protestant party, for he was a man of great sense, and he hated violence in religion; and there were many more of the same cast. Parties, however, ran so high that precipitancy would have lost all, and Henry was obliged to proceed by slow and cautious steps.

The deputies of the reformed churches, soon waited on his majesty to congratulate him, and to pray for liberty. The king allowed them to hold a general assembly, and offered them some slight satisfaction: but the hardy veteran Hugonots, who had spent their days in the field, and who knew also that persons, who were of approved fidelity, might venture to give the king their advice without angering him, took the liberty of reminding him that they would not be paid in compliments for so many signal services. Their ancestors and they had supported his right to the crown, along with their own right to liberty of conscience, and as Providence had granted the one, they expected that the other would not be denied. The king felt the force of these remonstrances, and ventured to allow them to hold provincial assemblies; after a while, to convene a national synod, and, as soon as he could, he granted them the famous *EDICT OF NANTZ*, 1598.

The Edict of Nantz, which was called *perpetual and irrevocable*, and which contained ninety-two articles, besides fifty-six secret articles, granted to the Protestants liberty of conscience, and the free exercise of religion; many churches in all parts of France, and judges of their own persuasion; a free access to all places of honour and dignity; great sums of money to pay off their troops; a hundred places as pledges of their future security, and certain funds to maintain both their preachers and their garrisons. The king did not send this edict to be registered in parliament, till the pope's legate was gone out of the kingdom, so that it did not go there till the next year. Some of the old party in the house bogged at it very much, and particularly because the Hugonots were hereby qualified for offices, and places of trust; but his majesty sent for some of the chiefs to his closet, made them a most pathetic speech on the occasion, and, with some difficulty, brought them to a compliance. It is easy to conceive that the king might be very pathetic on this occasion, for he had seen and suffered enough to make any man so. The meanest Hugonot soldier could not avoid the

pathos, if he related his campaigns. But it is very credible, that it was not the pathos of his majesty's language, but the power in his hand, that affected these intolerant souls.

No nation ever made a more noble struggle for recovering liberty of conscience out of the rapacious hands of the Papal priesthood than the French. And one may venture to defy the most sanguine friend to intolerance to prove, that a free toleration hath, in any country, at any period, produced such calamities in society as those which persecution produced in France. After a million of brave men had been destroyed, after nine civil wars, after four pitched battles, after the besieging of several hundred places, after more than three hundred engagements, after poisoning, burning, assassinating, massacring, murdering in every form, France is forced to submit to what her wise Chancellor de L'Hospital had at first proposed, A FREE TOLERATION. Most of the zealous leaguers voted for it, because *they had found by experience, they said, that violent proceedings in matters of religion prove more destructive than edifying.* A noble testimony from enemies' mouths!

France now began to taste the sweets of peace; the king employed himself in making his subjects happy, and the far greater part of his subjects, endeavoured to render him so. The Protestants applied themselves to the care of their churches, and, as they had at this time a great many able ministers, they flourished, and increased the remaining part of this reign. The doctrine of their churches was Calvinism, and their discipline was Presbyterian, after the Geneva plan. Their churches were supplied by able pastors; their universities were adorned with learned and pious professors, such as Casaubon, Daille, and others, whose praises are in all the reformed churches; their provincial and national synods were regularly convened, and their people were well governed. Much pains were taken with the king to alienate his mind from his Protestant subjects: but no motives could influence him. He knew the worth of the men, and he protected them till his death. This great prince was hated by the Popish clergy for his lenity, and was stabbed in his coach by the execrable Ravillac, whose name inspires one with horror and pain, May 14, 1610.

Lewis XIII. was not quite nine years of age, when he succeeded his father Henry. The first act of the queen mother, who had the regency during the king's minority, was the confirmation of the edict of Nantz. Lewis confirmed it again at his majority, promising to observe it inviolably, 1614. The Protestants deserved a confirmation of their privileges at his hands; for they had taken no part in the civil wars and disturbances which had troubled his minority. They had been earnestly solicited to intermeddle with government: but they had wisely avoided it.

Lewis was a weak, ambitious man; he was jealous of his power to excess, though he did not know wherein it consisted. He was so void of prudence, that he could not help exalting his flatterers into favourites, and his favourites into excessive power. He was so timorous that his favourites became the objects of

his hatred, the moment after he had elevated them to authority: and he was so callous that he never lamented a favourite's death or downfall. By a solemn act of devotion, attended with all the force of pictures, masses, processions, and festivals, he consecrated his person, his dominions, his crown and his subjects to the Virgin Mary, desiring her to defend his kingdom, and to inspire him with grace to lead a holy life, 1638. The Popish clergy adored him for thus sanctifying their superstitions by his example, and he, in return, lent them his power to punish his Protestant subjects, whom he hated. His panegyrists call him Lewis *the Just*: but they ought to acknowledge that his majesty did nothing to merit the title, till he found himself dying.

Lewis's prime minister was an artful, enterprising clergyman, who, before his elevation, was a country bishop, and, after it, was known by the title of Cardinal de Richlieu: but the most proper title for his eminence is that, which some historians give him, of the *Jupiter Mactator* of France. He was a man of great ability: but of no merit. Had his virtue been as great as his capacity, he ought not to have been intrusted with government, because all Cardinals take an oath to the Pope, and although an oath does not bind a bad man, yet as the taking of it gives him credit, so the breach of it ruins all his prospects among those with whom he hath taken it.

The Jesuits, who had been banished from France, for attempting the life of Henry IV. 1594, had been recalled, and restored to their houses, 1604, and one of their society, under pretence of being responsible, as a hostage, for the whole fraternity, was allowed to attend the king. The Jesuits, by this means, gained the greatest honour and power; and, as they excelled in learning, address, and intrigue, they knew how to obtain the king's ear, and how to improve his credulity to their own advantage.

This dangerous society was first formed, 1534, by Ignatius Loyola, a Spanish deserter, who, being frightened out of the army by a wound, took it into his head to go on a pilgrimage, and to form a religious society for the support of the Catholic faith. The Popes, who knew how to avail themselves of enthusiasm in church government, directed this grand spring of human action to secular purposes, and, by canonizing the founder, and arranging the order, elevated the society in a few years, to a height that astonished all Europe. It was one opinion of this society, that the authority of kings is inferior to that of the people, and that they may be punished by the people in certain cases. It was another maxim with them, that sovereign princes have received from the hand of God a sword to punish heretics. The Jesuits did not invent these doctrines; but they drew such consequences from them as were most prejudicial to the public tranquillity; for, from the conjunction of these two principles, they concluded that an heretical prince ought to be deposed, and that heresy ought to be extirpated by fire and sword, in case it could not be extirpated otherwise. In conformity to the first of these principles, two kings of France had been murdered successively, under pretext that they were fautors of heretics. The par-

liament in this reign, 1615, condemned this as a pernicious tenet, and declared that the authority of monarchs was dependant only on God. But the last principle, that related to the extirpation of heresy, as it flattered the court and the clergy, came into vogue. *Jus divinum* was the test of sound orthodoxy; and this reasoning became popular argumentation, *Princes may put heretics to death; therefore they ought to put them to death.*

Richlieu, who had wriggled himself into power, by publishing a scandalous libel on the Protestants of France, advised the king to establish his authority, by extirpating the intestine evils of the kingdom. He assured his majesty that the Hugonots had the power of doing him mischief, and that it was a principle with them, that kings might be deposed by the people. The Protestants replied to his invectives, and exposed the absurdity of his reasoning. Richlieu reasoned thus. John Knox, the Scotch reformer, did not believe the divine authority of kings. Calvin held a correspondence with Knox, therefore Calvin did not believe it. The French reformed church derived its doctrine from Calvin's church of Geneva, therefore the first Hugonots did not believe it. The first Hugonots did not believe it, therefore the present Hugonots do not believe it. No man, who valued the reputation of a man of sense, would have scaled the walls of preference with such a ridiculous ladder as this!

The king, intoxicated with despotic principles, followed the fatal advice of his minister, and began with his patrimonial province of Bearn, where he caused the Catholic religion to be established, 1620. The Hugonots broke out into violence, at this attack on their liberties, whence the king took an opportunity to recover several places from them, and at last made peace with them on condition of their demolishing all their fortifications except those of Montauban and Rochelle. Arnoux, the Jesuit, who was a creature of Richlieu's, was at that time, confessor of *Lewis the Just*.

The politic Richlieu invariably pursued his design of rendering his master absolute. By one art he subdued the nobility, by another the parliaments, and, as civil and religious liberty live and die together, he had engines of all sorts to extirpate heresy. He pretended to have formed the design of re-uniting the two churches of Protestants and Catholics. He drew off from the Protestant party the dukes of Sully, Bouillon, Lesdeguieres, Rohan, and many of the first quality: for he had the world, and its glory to go to market withal; and he had to do with a race of men, who were very different from their ancestors. Most of them had either died for their profession, or fled out of the kingdom, and several of them had submitted to practise mean trades, in foreign countries, for their support: but these were endeavouring to serve God and mammon; and his eminence was a fit casuist for such consciences.

The Protestants had resolved, in a general assembly, to die rather than to submit to the loss of their liberties: but their king was weak, their prime minister was wicked, their clerical enemies were powerful and implacable, and they were obliged to bear those infractions of edicts, which their oppressors made every

day. At length Richlieu determined to put a period to their hopes, by the taking of Rochelle. The city was besieged both by sea and land, and the efforts of the besieged were at last overcome by famine; they had lived without bread for thirteen weeks, and, of eighteen thousand citizens there were not above five thousand left, 1625. The strength of the Protestants was broken by this stroke. Montauban agreed now to demolish its works, and the just king confirmed anew the *perpetual and irrevocable* edict of Nantz, as far as it concerned a free exercise of religion.

The Cardinal, not content with temporal power, had still another claim on the Protestants, of a spiritual kind. Cautionary towns must be given up to that, and conscience to this. He suffered the edict to be infringed every day, and he was determined not to stop till he had established a uniformity in the church, without the obtaining of which, he thought, that something was wanting to his master's power. The Protestants did all that prudence could suggest. They sent the famous Amyraut to court to complain to the king of the infraction of their edicts, 1631. Mr. Amyraut was a proper person to go on this business. He had an extreme attachment to the doctrine of passive obedience. This rendered him agreeable to the court: and he had declared for no obedience in matters of conscience, and this made him dear to the Protestants. The synod ordered him not to make his speech to the king kneeling, as the deputies of the former synod had done: but to procure the restoring of the privilege, which they formerly enjoyed, of speaking to the king, standing, as the other ecclesiastics of the kingdom were allowed to do. The cardinal strove, for a whole fortnight, to make Amyraut submit to this tacit acknowledgment of the clerical character in the Popish clergy, and of the want of it in the reformed ministers. But Amyraut persisted in his claim, and was introduced to the king as the synod had desired. The whole court was charmed with the deputy's talents and deportment. Richlieu had many conferences with him, and, if negotiation could have accommodated the dispute between arbitrary power and upright consciences, it would have been settled now. He was treated with the utmost politeness, and dismissed. If he had not the pleasure of reflecting that he had obtained the liberty of his party, he had, however, the peace that ariseth from the consciousness of having used a proper mean to obtain it. The same mean was tried, some time after, by the inimitable Du Bosc, whom his countrymen call a *PERFECT ORATOR*, but alas! he was eloquent in vain.

The affairs of the Protestants waxed every day worse and worse. They saw the clouds gathering, and they dreaded the weight of the storm: but they knew not whither to flee. Some fled to England, but no peace was there. Laud, the tyrant of the English church, had a Richlieu's heart without his head; he persecuted them, and, in conjunction with Wren, and other such churchmen, drove them back to the infinite damage of the manufactures of the kingdom, 1634. It must effect every liberal eye to see such professors as Amyraut,



Cappel, and De La Place; such ministers as Mestrezat and Blondel, who would have been an honour to any community, driven to the sad alternative of flying their country, or of violating their consciences. But their time was not yet fully come.

Cardinal Richlieu's hoary head went down to the grave, 1642, without the tears of his master, and with the hatred of all France. The king soon followed him, 1643, complaining, in the words of Job, *my soul is weary of my life*. The Protestants had increased greatly in numbers in this reign, though they had lost their power: for they were now computed to exceed two millions. So true is it, that violent measures in religion weaken the church that employs them.

Lewis XIV. was only in the fifth year of his age at the demise of his father. The queen-mother was appointed sole regent during his minority, and Cardinal Mazarine, a creature of Richlieu's, was her prime minister, 1643. The edict of Nantz was confirmed by the regent, and again by the king at his majority, 1652. But it was always the cool determination of the minister to follow the late Cardinal's plan, and to revoke it as soon as he could, and he strongly impressed the mind of the king with the expediency of it.

Lewis, who was a perfect tool to the Jesuits, followed the advice of Mazarine, of his confessors, and of the clergy about him, and as soon as he took the management of affairs into his own hands, he made a firm resolution to destroy the Protestants, 1661. He tried to weaken them by buying off their great men, and he had but too much success. Some, indeed, were superior to this state trick; and it was a noble answer which the Marquis de Bougy gave, when he was offered a marshal's staff, and any government that he might make choice of, provided he would turn Papist. "Could I be prevailed on," said he, "to betray my God, for a marshal of France's staff, I might betray my king for a thing of much less consequence: but I will do neither of them, but rejoice to find that my services are acceptable, and that the religion which I profess, is the only obstacle to my reward." Was his majesty so little versed in the knowledge of mankind, as not to know that saleable virtue is seldom worth buying?

The king used another art as mean as the former. He exhorted the bishops to take care, that the points in controversy betwixt the Catholics and Calvinists should be much insisted on by the clergy, in their sermons, especially in those places that were mostly inhabited by the latter, and that a good number of missionaries should be sent among them, to convert them to the religion of their ancestors. It should seem, at first view, that the exercise of his majesty's power in this way would be formidable to the Protestants, for, as the king had the nomination of eighteen archbishops, a hundred and nine bishops, and seven hundred and fifty abbots, and as these dignitaries governed the inferior clergy, it is easy to see that all the popish clergy of France were creatures of the court, and several of them were men of good learning. But the Protestants had no fears on this head. They were excellent

scholars, masters of the controversy, hearty in the service, and the mortifications, to which they had been long accustomed, had taught them that temperate coolness, which is so essential in the investigating and supporting of truth. They published, therefore, unanswerable arguments for their non-conformity. The famous Mr. Claude, pastor of the church at Charenton, near Paris, wrote a *defence of the reformation*, which all the clergy in France could not answer. The bishops, however, answered the Protestants all at once, by procuring an edict which forbade them to print.

The king, in prosecution of his design, excluded the Calvinists from his household, and from all other employments of honour and profit; he ordered all the courts of justice, erected by virtue of the edict of Nantz, to be abolished, and, in lieu of them, made several laws in favour of the Catholic religion, which debarred from all liberty of abjuring the Catholic doctrine, and restrained those Protestants, who had embraced it, from returning to their former opinions, under severe punishments. He ordered soldiers to be quartered in their houses till they changed their religion. He shut up their churches, and forbade the ministerial function to their clergy, and, where his commands were not readily obeyed, he levelled their churches with the ground. At last he revoked the edict of Nantz, and banished them from the kingdom, October 22, 1685.

"A thousand dreadful blows," says Mr. Saurin, "were struck at our afflicted churches, before that which destroyed them: for our enemies, if I may use such an expression, not content with seeing our ruin, endeavoured to taste it. One while, edicts were published against those, who, foreseeing the calamities that threatened our churches, and not having power to prevent them, desired only the sad consolation of not being spectators of their ruin, August, 1669. Another while, against those, who, through their weakness, had denied their religion, and who not being able to bear the remorse of their consciences, desired to return to their first profession, May, 1679. One while, our pastors were forbidden to exercise their discipline on those of their flocks, who had abjured the truth, June, 1680. Another while, children of seven years of age were allowed to embrace doctrines, which, the church of Rome says, are not level to the capacities of adults, June, 1681. Now a college was suppressed, and then a church shut up, January, 1683. Sometimes we were forbidden to convert infidels; and sometimes to confirm those in the truth, whom we had instructed from their infancy, and our pastors were forbidden to exercise their pastoral office any longer in one place than three years, July, 1685. Sometimes the printing of our books was prohibited, and sometimes those which we had printed were taken away, September, 1685. One while, we were not suffered to preach in a church, and another while, we were punished for preaching on its ruins, and at length we were forbidden to worship God in public at all, October, 1685. Now we were banished, then we were forbidden to quit the kingdom on pain of death, 1689. Here we saw the glorious rewards of those who betrayed their religion;

and there we beheld those who had the courage to confess it, a halting to a dungeon, a scaffold, or a galley. Here, we saw our persecutors drawing on a sledge the dead bodies of those who had expired on the rack. There, we beheld a false friar tormenting a dying man, who was terrified, on the one hand, with the fear of hell if he should apostatize, and, on the other, with the fear of leaving his children without bread if he should continue in the faith: yonder, they were tearing children from their parents, while the tender parents were shedding more tears for the loss of their souls, than for that of their bodies, or lives."

It is impossible to meet with parallel instances of cruelty among the heathens in their persecutions of the primitive christians. The bloody butchers, who were sent to them under the name of *Dragoons*, invented a thousand torments to tire their patience, and to force an abjuration from them. "They cast some," says Mr. Claude, "into large fires and took them out when they were half roasted. They hanged others with large ropes under their arm-pits, and plunged them several times into wells, till they promised to renounce their religion. They tied them like criminals on the rack, and poured wine with a funnel into their mouths, till, being intoxicated, they declared that they consented to turn Catholics. These cruel proceedings made eight hundred thousand persons quit the kingdom."

If the same actions may proceed from different principles, it must always be a hazardous, and often an unjust attempt, to assign the true motives of men's conduct. But public actions fall under public notice, and they deserve censure, or commendation, according to the obvious good or evil, which they produce in society. The art of governing requires a superior genius, and a superior genius hides, like a lofty mountain, its summit in the clouds. In some cases, a want of capacity, and, in others, a fund of selfishness, would prevent a subject's comprehension of his prince's projects, and, consequently, his approbation of the prince's measures; and, for these reasons, the cabinets of princes should be the least accessible, and their hearts the most impenetrable parts of their dominions: but when the prince would reduce his projects to practice, and cause his imaginations to become rules of action to his subjects, he ought to give a reason for his conduct, and if his conduct be rational, he will do so, for as all law is founded in reason, so reason is its best support. In such a case, the nature of the thing, as well as the respect that is due to the rank of the prince, would require us to be either mute or modest, on the *motive*; and the same reasons would require us to consider the reasonableness, or unreasonableness, of the *law*, for if it be not reason, it ought not to be law; and nothing can prevent our feeling the good or ill effects of the whole action.

To disfranchise, and to banish, to imprison, and to execute, some members of society, are partial evils: but they are also sometimes general benefits, and the excision of a part may be essential to the preservation of the whole. The inflicting of these punishments on the French Protestants, might possibly be essential to the safety of the whole nation. Or, per-

haps his majesty might think it essential to monarchy; perhaps the clergy might think it essential to orthodoxy; perhaps the financiers, and the king's mistresses, might think it essential to the making of their fortunes; but we have nothing to do with these private views, the questions are, Was it essential to the general safety and happiness of the kingdom? Was it agreeable to the unalterable dictates of right reason? Was it consistent with the sound, approved maxims of civil policy? In these views, we venture to say, that the repeal of the edict of Nantz, which had been the security of the Protestants, was an action irrational and irreligious, inhuman and ungrateful, perfidious, impolitic, and weak. If respect to religion, and right reason, were to compose a just title for the perpetrator of such a crime, it might call him, a *most inhuman tyrant*: certainly it would not call him, a *most Christian king*.

It was an *irrational act*, for there was no fitness between the punishment and the supposed crime. The crime was a mental error: but penal laws have no internal operation on the mind. It was *irreligious*, for religion ends where persecution begins. An action may begin in religion: but when it proceeds to injure a person, it ceaseth to be religion, it is only a denomination, and a method of acting. It was inhuman, for it caused the most savage cruelties. It was as ungrateful in the house of Bourbon to murder their old supporters, as it was magnanimous in the Protestants, under their severest persecutions, to tell their murderer, that they thought that blood well employed, which had been spilt in supporting the just claim of the house of Bourbon to the throne. It was, to the last degree, *perfidious*, for the edict of Nantz had been given by Henry IV. for a perpetual, and irrevocable decree; it had been confirmed by the succeeding princes, and Lewis XIV. himself had assigned in the declaration the loyalty of the Protestants, as a reason of the confirmation. *My subjects of the pretended reformed religion, says he, have given me unquestionable proofs of their affection and loyalty.* It had been sworn to by the governors and lieutenants general of the provinces, by the courts of parliament, and by all the officers of the courts of justice. What national perjury! Is it enough to say, as this perjured monarch did, *My grandfather, Henry IV. loved you, and was obliged to you. My father, Lewis XIII. feared you, and wanted your assistance. But I neither love you, nor fear you, and do not want your services.* The ill policy of it is confessed on all sides. Where is the policy of banishing eight hundred thousand people, who declare that a free exercise of religion ought not to injure any man's civil rights, and, on this principle, support the king's claim to the crown, as long as he executes the duty of the office? Where is the policy of doing this in order to secure a set of men, who openly avow these propositions, *the Pope is superior to all law: it is right to kill that prince, whom the Pope excommunicates: If a prince become an Arian, the people ought to depose him?* Where is the policy of banishing men, whose doctrines have kept in the kingdom, during the space of two hundred and fifty years, the sum of two hundred and fifty millions of lives, which, at a moderate calculation, would other-

wise have gone to Rome for indulgences, and annates, and other such trash? Who was the politician, the Count d'Avaux, who, while he was ambassador in Holland, from 1685 to 1688, offered to prove that the refugees had carried out of France more than twenty millions of property, and advised the king to recall it, by recalling its owners? or the king, who refused to avail himself of this advice? Who was the politician, the intolerant Lewis, who drove his Protestant soldiers and sailors out of his service? or the benevolent prince of Orange, who, in one year, raised three regiments of French refugee soldiers, commanded by their own officers, and manned three vessels, at the same time, with refugee sailors, to serve the Dutch, while France wanted men to equip her fleets? The Protestants, having been for some time, excluded from all offices, and not being suffered to enjoy any civil or military employments, had applied themselves either to the manufactures, or to the improving of their money in trade. Was it policy to banish a Mons. Vincent, who employed more than five hundred workmen? Was it policy on the side of that prince, who demolished manufactories? or on the side of those who set them up, by receiving the refugee manufacturers into their kingdoms? Had England derived no more advantage from its hospitality to the refugees than the silk manufacture, it would have amply repaid the nation. The memorials of the intendants of the provinces were full of such complaints, 1698. The intendant of Rouen said that the refugees had carried away the manufacture of hats. The intendant of Poitiers said that they had taken the manufacture of druggets. In some provinces the commerce was diminished several millions of livres in a year, and in some, half the revenue was sunk. Was it policy in the king to provoke the Protestant states, and princes, who had always been his faithful allies against the house of Austria, and, at the same time, to supply them with eight hundred thousand new subjects? After all, it was a *weak* and *foolish* step, for the Protestants were not extirpated. There remained almost as many in the kingdom as were driven out of it, and, even at this day, though now and then a preacher hath been hanged, and now and then a family murdered, yet the opulent province of Languedoc is full of Protestants, the Lutherans have the university of Alsace, neither art nor cruelty can rid the kingdom of them; and some of the greatest ornaments of France, now plead for a FREE TOLERATION.

The refugees charge their banishment on the *clergy* of France, and they give very good proof of their assertion, nor do they mistake, when they affirm that their sufferings are a part of the religion of Rome; for Pope Innocent XI. highly approved of this persecution. He wrote a brief to the king, in which he assured him that what he had done against the heretics of his kingdom would be immortalized by the eulogies of the Catholic church. He delivered a discourse in the consistory, in which he said, *the most Christian King's zeal and PIETY, did wonderfully appear in extirpating heresy, and in clearing his whole kingdom of it in a very few months, March 18, 1689.* He ordered *Te*

*Deum* to be sung, to give thanks to God for this return of the heretics into the pale of the church, which was accordingly done with great pomp, April 28. If this persecution were clerical policy, it was bad, and, if it were the religion of the French clergy, it was worse. In either case, the church procured great evil to the state. Lewis XIV. was on the pinnacle of glory at the conclusion of the peace of Nimeguen, 1679. His dominion was, as it were, established over all Europe, and was become an inevitable prejudice to neighbouring nations; but, here he began to extirpate heresy, and here he began to fall, nor has the nation ever recovered its grandeur since.

Protestant powers opened their arms to these venerable exiles. Abbadie, Ancillon, and others, fled to Berlin. Basnage, Claude, Du Bose, and many more, found refuge in Holland. The famous Dr. Allix, with numbers of his brethren, came to England. A great many families went to Geneva, among which was that of Saurin.

Mr. Saurin, the father of our author, was an eminent Protestant lawyer at Nismes, who, after the repeal of the edict of Nantz, retired to Geneva, 1685. He was considered at Geneva, as the oracle of the French language, the nature and beauty of which he thoroughly understood. He had four sons, whom he trained up in learning, and who were all so remarkably eloquent, that eloquence was said to be hereditary in the family. The Reverend Lewis Saurin, one of the sons, was afterwards pastor of a French church in London. Saurin, the father, died at Geneva. James, the author of the following sermons, was born at Nismes, 1677, and went with his father into exile, to Geneva, where he profited very much in learning.

In the seventeenth year of his age, 1694, Saurin quitted his studies to go into the army, and made a campaign as cadet in lord Gallo-way's company. The next year, 1695, his captain gave him a pair of colours in his regiment, which then served in Piedmont: but the year after, 1696, the duke of Savoy, under whom Saurin served, having made his peace with France, Saurin quitted the profession of arms, for which he was never designed, and returned to Geneva to study.

Geneva was, at that time, the residence of some of the best scholars in Europe, who were in the highest estimation in the republic of letters. Pictet, Lewis Tronchin, and Philip Mes-tre-zat, were professors of divinity there, Al-phonso Turet-in was professor of sacred history, and Chouet, who was afterward taken from his professorship, and admitted into the government of the republic, was professor of natural philosophy. The other departments were filled with men equally eminent in their several professions. Some of them were natives of Geneva, others were exiles from Italy and France, several of them were of noble families, and all of them were men of eminent piety. Under these great masters, Saurin became a student, and particularly applied himself to divinity, as he now began to think of devoting himself to the ministry, 1696. To dedicate one's self to the ministry in a wealthy flourishing church, where rich benefices are every day becoming vacant, requires very little virtue, and some-

times only a strong propensity to vice: but to choose to be a minister, in such a poor, banished, persecuted church, as that of the French Protestants, argues a noble contempt of the world, and a supreme love to God, and to the souls of men. These are the best testimonials, however, of a young minister, whose profession is not to enrich, but to "save himself, and them who hear him." 1 Tim. iv. 16.

After Mr. Saurin had finished his studies, 1700, he visited Holland and England. In the first he made a very short stay: but in the last he staid almost five years, and preached with great acceptance among his fellow exiles in London. Of his person an idea may be formed by the annexed copperplate,\* which is said to be a great likeness, and for which I am indebted to my ingenious friend, Mr. Thomas Holloway, as I am to his amiable brother, Mr. John Holloway, for several anecdotes of Saurin. His dress was that of the French clergy, the gown and cassock. His address was perfectly genteel, a happy compound of the affable and the grave, at an equal distance from rusticity and foppery. His voice was strong, clear, and harmonious, and he never lost the management of it. His style was pure, unaffected, and eloquent, sometimes plain, and sometimes flowery: but never improper, as it was always adapted to the audience, for whose sake, he spoke. An Italian acquaintance of mine, who often heard him at the Hague, tells me, that in the introductions of his sermons, he used to deliver himself in a tone, modest and low; in the body of the sermon, which was adapted to the understanding, he was plain, clear, and argumentative, pausing at the close of each period, that he might discover, by the countenances and motions of his hearers, whether they were convinced by his reasoning; in his addresses to the wicked, (and it is a folly to preach as if there were none in our assemblies, Mr. Saurin knew mankind too well) he was often sonorous, but oftener a weeping suppliant at their feet. In the one, he sustained the authoritative dignity of his office, in the other, he expressed his master's, and his own benevolence to bad men, "praying them in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God." 2 Cor. v. 20. In general, adds my friend, his preaching resembled a plentiful shower of dew, softly and imperceptibly insinuating itself into the minds of his numerous hearers, as dew into the pores of plants, till the whole church was dissolved, and all in tears under his sermons. His doctrine was that of the French Protestants, which at that time was moderate Calvinism. He approved of the discipline of his own churches, which was Presbyterian. He was an admirable scholar, and which were his highest encomiums, he had an unconquerable aversion to sin, a supreme love to God, and to the souls of men, and a holy unblemished life. Certainly he had some faults: but, as I never heard of any, I can publish none.

During his stay in England, he married a Miss Catherine Boyton, by whom he had a son, 1703, named Philip, who survived him; but whether he had any more children I know not.

\* The engraving accompanying this volume, is an exact fac-simile from the one in the London edition, alluded to in the text.

Two years after his marriage, 1705, he returned to Holland, where he had a mind to settle. but the pastoral offices being all full, and meeting with no prospect of a settlement, though his preaching was received with universal applause, he was preparing to return to England, when a chaplainship to some of the nobility at the Hague, with a stipend, was offered to him. This situation exactly suited his wishes, and he accepted the place, 1705.

The Hague, it is said, is the finest village in Europe. It is the residence of the States General, of ambassadors, and envoys from other courts, of a great number of nobility and gentry, and of a multitude of French refugees. The princes of Orange have a spacious palace here, and the chapel of the palace was given to the refugees for a place of public worship, and, it being too small to contain them, it was enlarged by above half. The French church called him to be one of their pastors. He accepted the call, and continued in his office till his death. He was constantly attended by a very crowded and brilliant audience, was heard with the utmost attention and pleasure, and, what few ministers can say, the effects of his ministerial labours were seen in the holy lives of great numbers of his people.

When the princess of Wales, afterward Queen Caroline, passed through Holland, in her way to England, Mr. Saurin had the honour of paying his respects to that illustrious lady. Her royal highness was pleased to single him out from the rest of the clergy, who were present, and to say to him, *Do not imagine that, being dazzled with the glory which this revolution seems to promise me, I have lost sight of that God from whom it proceeds. He hath been pleased to distinguish it with so many extraordinary marks, that I cannot mistake his divine hand; and as I consider this long train of favours as immediately coming from him, to Him alone I consecrate them.* It is not astonishing, if Saurin speaks of this condescension with rapture. They are the kind and Christian acts of the governors of a free people, and not the haughty airs of a French tyrant, insulting his slaves, that attach and inflame the hearts of mankind. The history of this illustrious Christian queen is not written in blood, and therefore it is always read with tears of grateful joy.

Her royal highness was so well satisfied of Mr. Saurin's merit, that soon after her arrival in England, she ordered Dr. Boulter, who was preceptor to prince Frederic, the father of his present majesty, to write to Saurin, to draw up a treatise on the education of princes. Saurin immediately obeyed the order and prefixed a dedication to the young princes. The book was never printed: but, as it obtained the approbation of the princess of Wales, who was an incomparable judge, we may conclude that it was excellent in its kind. This was followed by a handsome present from the princess to the author. His most considerable work was entitled *Discourses historical, critical, and moral, on the most memorable events of the Old and New Testament.* This work was undertaken by the desire of a Dutch merchant, who expended an immense sum in the engraving a multitude of copperplates, which adorn the work. It consists of six folio volumes. Mr. Saurin died be-

fore the third was finished: but Mr. Roques finished the third, and added a fourth on the Old Testament: and Mr. de Beausobre subjoined two on the New Testament. The whole is replete with very extensive learning, and well worth the careful perusal of students in divinity. The first of these was translated into English by Chamberlayne, soon after its first publication in French.

His *Dissertation on the expediency of sometimes disguising the truth*, raised a furious clamour against our author: he does not decide the question: but he seems to take the affirmative. This produced a paper war, and his antagonists unjustly censured his morals. The mildness of his disposition rendered him a desirable opponent, for though he was sure to conquer, yet he subdued his adversary so handsomely, that the captive was the better for his defeat. But others did not controvert with so much temper. Some wrote against him, others for him. At length the synod decided the dispute in his favour.

He published a small, but valuable piece on *The state of Christianity in France*. It treats of many important points of religion, in controversy between the Catholics and Protestants.

There are twelve volumes of his sermons. Some are dedicated to his Majesty George II. and the king was pleased to allow him a handsome pension. Some to her majesty Queen Caroline, while she was princess of Wales. One to Count Wassanaer, a Dutch nobleman. Two were dedicated to his Majesty, after his decease, by his son. Professor Dumont, and Mr. Husson, to whom Mr. Saurin left his manuscripts, published the rest, and one volume is dedicated to the Countess Dowager of Albemarle. The English seem therefore, to have a right to the labours of this great man. Mr. Saurin died at the Hague, on December 30th, 1730, most sincerely regretted by all his acquaintances, as well as by his church, who lost in him a truly primitive Christian minister, who spent his life, in watching over his flock, as one who knew that he must give an account.

In regard to this translation, it was first undertaken by the desire of a small circle of private friends, for our mutual edification. If I have suffered my private opinion to be prevailed over by others, to print this translation, it is not because I think myself able to give language to Saurin: but because I humbly hope that the sentiments of the author may be conveyed to the reader, by this translation. His sentiments, I think, are, in general, those of the holy Scripture, and his manner of treating them well adapted to impress them on the heart. I have endeavoured not to disguise his meaning, though I have not been able to adopt his style, for which defect, though I print them by private subscription, for the use of my friends, on whose candour I depend, yet I do not offer to publish them to the world, for the language of Mr. Saurin. I should have been glad to have pleased every subscriber, by inserting those sermons, which were most agreeable to him, had I known which they were: but as this was impossible, I have followed my own judgment, or perhaps exposed my want of it. The first volume aims to secure the doctrine of a *God*, against the attacks of atheists. In the second, we mean to plead for the holy *Scriptures* against Deists. In the third, we intend to take those sermons, which treat of the *doctrines of Christianity*, as we humbly conceive that the New Testament is something more than a system of moral philosophy. And the last volume, we dedicate to *moral* subjects, because we think Christianity a holy religion, productive of moral obedience in all its true disciples.\* May the God of all grace bless the reading of them to the weakening of the dominion of sin, and to the advancement of the kingdom of our blessed Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

R. ROBINSON.

*Chesterton, April 15th, 1775.*

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\* This refers to the London edition of Six Volumes—the whole of which is contained in the two volumes of the present edition.

# PREFACE,

BY THE REV. ROBERT ROBINSON.

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THAT spirit of inquiry which produced the Reformation, operated in France, as in other countries, and gave being to an endless variety of different sentiments of religion. All the reformers, however, agreed in one grand article, that is, in substituting the authority of the holy Scriptures in the place of the infallibility of the Bishop of Rome.

The elevation of an obscure book, (for such, to the shame of Popery, the Bible had been,) to the dignity of a supreme judge, whose decisions were final, and from which there lay no appeal, naturally excited the attention of some who were capable, and of many who thought themselves so, to examine the authenticity of so extraordinary a book. At the Reformation, the infallibility of the Pope was the popular inquiry; and, after it, the infallibility of Jesus Christ came under consideration. Curiosity and conscience concurred to search, and several circumstances justified the inquiry.

Many spurious books had been propagated in the world: the Jewish nation, and the Romish church, paid as much regard to tradition as to the holy Scriptures: Protestants derived different, and even contrary doctrines, from the same Scriptures; the authenticity of some books of both Testaments had never been universally acknowledged, and the points in litigation were of the last importance. These considerations excited the industry of a multitude of critics. One examined the chronology of the Bible, another the geography of it, a third its natural philosophy, a fourth its history; one tried its purity by the rules of grammar, another measured its style by the laws of rhetoric; and a most severe scrutiny the book underwent.

Nothing came to pass in this inquiry but what might have been expected. Some defended the book by solid, and some by silly arguments; while others reprobated it, as void of any rational proof at all. There are prerequisites essential to the investigation of truth, and it is hardly credible, that, all who examined, or who pretended to examine, the divinity of the Christian canon, possessed them.

No sooner had Charles IX. published the first edict of pacification in France, in 1562, than there appeared at Lyons, along with many other sects, a party who called themselves DEISTS. The edict provided, that no person should be prosecuted on account of matters of conscience, and this sect claimed the benefit of it.

Deists differ so much from one another, that it is hard to define the term *Deism*, and to say precisely what the word stands for. Dr. Samuel Clarke takes the denomination in the most extensive signification, and distinguishes Deists into *four classes*.

“The *first class* believe the *existence* of a Supreme Being, who made the world, but who does not at all concern himself in the management of it.

“The *second* consists of those who believe, not only the being, but also the *providence* of God with respect to the *natural world*; but who, not allowing any difference between moral good and evil, deny that God takes any notice of the morally good or evil actions of men; these things depending, as they imagine, on the arbitrary constitution of human laws.

“The *third sort*, having right apprehensions concerning the natural attributes of God, and his all-governing Providence, and some notion of his *moral perfections* also, yet being prejudiced against the notion of the immortality of the human soul, believe that men perish entirely at death, and that one generation shall perpetually succeed another, without any future restoration, or renovation of things.

“The *fourth* consists of those who believe the existence of a Supreme Being, together with his providence in the government of the world, as also the obligations of *natural religion*: but so far only as these things are discoverable by the light of *nature* alone, without believing any divine revelation. These last are the only true Deists!”

The rise of the Deists, along with that of other sects and parties among the reformed churches, seemed to confirm one argument of the Roman Catholics against the Reformation. When the Reformers had pleaded for the sufficiency of revelation, and for the private right of judging of its meaning, the divines of the church of Rome had always replied, that unanimity in the faith is the test of the true church of Christ; that the church of Rome had always enjoyed such a unity: that the allowance of liberty of conscience would produce innumerable opinions; that people of the same sentiments would associate for the support and propagation of their pretended faith; and that, consequently, religious parties would counteract one another, to the entire subversion of Christianity itself. Hence they inferred the absurdity of that principle on which Protestantism stood, and the absolute necessity of a living infallible judge of religious truths. The event above-mentioned seemed to confirm this reasoning.

When these ideas entered the mind of a man of fruitful genius in the church of Rome, they operated in the most eccentric manner imaginable. A popular orator, or, who did ten times more mischief, a court-chaplain, would collect a few real improprieties among Protestants, subjoin a thousand more irregularities of his own invention, mere creatures of his superstitious fancy, paint them in co-

lours the most frightful, exhibit them to public view under images the most tragical, ascribe them all to that horrid monster—the right of private judgment, and by these means endeavour to establish the old system, that destroyed men's lives, on the ruins of that new one, which benevolently proposed to save them.

The weaker Protestants were intimidated by this vile bombast; and the wiser, who had been educated Papists, that is to say, whose tender minds had been perverted with a bad philosophy, and a worse divinity, were hard pressed with this idle argument. The famous Peter Viret, who was pastor of the reformed church at Lyons, at this first appearance of the Deists, not only wrote against them; but, we are sorry to say, he did more, he joined with the archbishop's vicar in persecuting them. What a motley figure! The voice of Jacob, and the hands of Esau!

Some of the more candid Protestants contented themselves with making two observations, which they thought were sufficient to answer the objections of Rome on this article. First, they said, it is not true that there are no religious controversies in the church of Rome; there are two hundred and thirty-seven contrarieties of doctrine among the Romish divines. Secondly, if it were true, the quiet of the members of that church would not prove their unity in the faith. A negative unanimity, that is, a freedom from religious differences, may proceed from ignorance, negligence, or fear: the two first resemble the quiet of night, where all are asleep; or the stillness of a church-yard, where all are dead; and the last the taciturnity of a slave under a tyrant's rod. These observations were not impertinent, for although none of our disputes are managed without humbling marks of human infirmity, yet, on a cool balance of accounts, it will appear, that the moral good produced by liberty of conscience is far greater than the moral evil suffered. Peevish tempers, and puerile mistakes mix with free inquiry; but without inquiry fair and free we should have no religion at all.

Had the Protestants done only that with the writings of Moses and Paul, which they did with the writings of Homer and Tacitus, had they fetched them out of dusty holes in libraries, exposed them to public view, and left them to shift for themselves, their authenticity, we presume, would have shined with inimitable lustre; for fewer objections have lain against the book, than against the methods that have been used to enforce it. But that fatal notion of uniformity, this absurd dogma, unity in the faith is the test of a true church, misled those worthy men, and they adopted the spirit of persecution, that child of the "mother of abominations," Rev. xvii. 5, whom folly had produced, and whom cruelty had hitherto maintained.

In order to vie with the church of Rome in point of uniformity, and to excel it in point of truth, the reformers extracted, what they supposed, the sense of Scripture; not on plain, obvious, essential truths; but on doctrines extremely perplexed and difficult; these extracts they called Confessions of Faith, these they

signed; and all who refused to sign them they disowned, and persecuted out of their communities.

Having done these things, not according to the pattern showed by their divine Master, in his plain and peaceful sermon on the Mount of Olives, Heb. viii. 5, but according to the *arcana imperii* of "the woman who sitteth on seven mountains and who reigneth over the kings of the earth," Rev. xvii. 9. 18, they boasted of enjoying as good a uniformity as that of which the Catholic church vaunted.

If they, who first prosecuted these unrighteous measures in the Protestant churches, could have foreseen the dismal consequences of them, surely they must have lain in sackcloth and ashes, to lament their anti-christian zeal, which, by importing exotics from Rome, by planting them in reformed churches, and by flattering the magistracy into the dirty work of cultivating them, spoiled the growth of reason and religion, and cherished, under their deleterious shade, nothing but that unprofitable weed, *implicit faith*.

Let a dispassionate spectator cast his eye on the Christian world, and, when he has seen the rigorous measures that have been used to establish, as it is called, the *faith* of the Reformers, let him turn his eye to the church of Rome on the one hand, and to sectaries on the other, and attend to the consequences of these measures among both. Catholics laugh at Protestant arguments against the infallibility of the Bishop of Rome. See, say they, *mutant clypeos*, the reformed have destroyed one Pope to create a hundred. Calvin is infallible at Geneva, Luther in Germany, in England Cranmer, and in Scotland Knox! How wise the doctrine of infallibility! how just and necessary the practice of the Inquisition! The pretended Protestants have tried in vain to govern churches without severity; they themselves, who have exclaimed the most violently against it, have been obliged to adopt it. Sectaries, on the other hand, avail themselves of these practices, and, not distinguishing between Christianity itself and the professors of it, charge that on the laws of our privity, which is chargeable only on the inadventency of his subjects.

Other times, other manners! Whether the reproaches of the Papists, the increase of learning, piety, and experience, or whatever else have meliorated the reformed churches, the French Protestants rarely persecute; and when they do, it is plain, they do that as a body in a synod, which not one of them would dare to avow as a private divine. Dangerous distinction! Should an upright man vote for a measure which he would blush to enforce! Should he not endeavour to abrogate canons, which, for the soul of him, he has not impiety enough to execute? Shall Protestants renounce that *merchandise* of Rome, which consists of *odours, and ointments, and chariots, and purple, and silk, and scarlet*, and continue that more scandalous traffic which consists of "slaves and souls of men?" Rev. xviii. 12, 13.

"If a counsel, or a work, be of God, ye cannot overthrow it," Acts v. 38, 39, is one of the surest axioms in the world; and if there be such a thing in the world as dignity; that

is, propriety of character, it must be in that Christian, who, disdaining every carnal weapon, maintains the truth of his religion by placid reasoning, and by a holy life. Other influence is unscriptural, and unnatural too. We may admire the genius of a Deist, avail ourselves of his learning, and lament his abuse of both: but we may not touch his person, his property, his liberty, his character, his peace. "To his own Master he standeth or falleth." Rom. xiv. 4.

We beg leave to subjoin three observations in regard to deism. Deists are not so numerous as some have imagined. Real Christians have occasioned violent prejudices against Christianity. Very few Deists have taken up the argument on its true grounds; and they, who have, could not support it.

*Deists are not so numerous as some have imagined.* Mons. de Voltaire has thought proper to inform his countrymen, in his *Additions* to his *General History*, that "Deism, which Charles II. seemed openly to profess, became the reigning religion" in England: that "the sect is become very numerous:" and that "a number of eminent writers have made open profession of deism." How this agreeable French writer came to know this, who can tell, if, as he affirms a little lower, "Deists allow a diversity of opinions in others, and seldom discover their own;" and, if Deists have only a private form of worship, each worshipping God in his own house, and assisting without scruple at all public ceremonies? Surely Mons. Voltaire mistook, he meant to describe a hypocrite, and not a Deist.

If a Deist be one who, having examined the religion of nature, and the religion of Scripture, gives the preference to the former, and rejects the latter, it may be affirmed, I think, that the number of Deists is very small. In a comparative view, the number is too inconsiderable to be mentioned. The rank of a Herbert, the wit of a Shaftesbury, the style of a Bolingbroke, the scurrilous buffoonery of a Woolston, along with the wisdom and piety of the Lockes, and Lelands, and Lardners, who have opposed them, have given a name to deism; but the number of its professors is trifling, and of no account. If Mons. de Voltaire meant to relate an historical fact, he ought to have enumerated the *numerous professors* of Christianity, and the *eminent writers* in defence of it, and then the numerous professors of deism would have diminished and disappeared. If he meant to give a sanction to deism on account of its numerous defenders, he is a fresh example of that weakness, to which great philosophers are sometimes subject, the weakness of sacrificing a sound logic to a silly prejudice.

Two sorts of people are fond of multiplying Deists; Bigots, and Deists themselves. Deists take the liberty of associating with themselves Confucius, Zoroaster, Socrates, and all the ancient philosophers. They first suppose that these philosophers would have rejected revelation, had it been proposed to them, and then they speak of them as if they had actually rejected it. But, if the gospel be not a system of absurdity, adapted to credulity, the probability is greater that they would have re-

ceived, than that they would have rejected it; and if, as Lord Bolingbroke says, "it must be admitted, that Plato insinuates, in many places, the want, or the necessity of a divine revelation, to discover the external service God requires, and the expiation for sin, and to give stronger assurances of the rewards and punishments that await men in another world;" it becomes highly probable, that Plato would have embraced the Christian revelation; and were the testimony of Jesus Christ admissible, it is absolutely certain, that, "if the mighty works, which were done in Judea, had been done among the heathens, many heathens would have repented of Paganism in sackcloth and ashes," Matt. xi. 21, &c. To the army of philosophers they add all those Christians, who do not understand, or who do not practise, the dictates of Christianity. With this hypothetical reasoning they attack Christianity, and boast of numbers, while all their votaries are so few, that a child may write them. Bigots, who make Scripture, and their sense of it, the same thing, practise the same pious fraud, and turn over all those to the deistical party, who do not allow their doctrines. Hence the popular notion of the multiplicity of Deists.

From the charge of deism, first, the *populace* ought to be freed. Too many of them live without any religion. The religion of nature is as unknown to them as the religion of Scripture. When they think of religion, their error is credulity, and their spiritual guides soon find, that the believing of too much, and not the believing of too little, is their mistake. They are wicked: but they are not Deists; for the term *deism* surely stands for admitting the religion of nature, as well as for the renouncing of revelation. But of both, in general, they are alike ignorant.

*They, who renounce popular doctrines,* are not therefore Deists. The learned and pious Dr. Bekker, one of the pastors at Amsterdam, renounced the popular opinion of the power of the devil, and published a book against it in 1691. He seemed to doubt also of the eternity of hell-torments. He was reputed a Deist, and the consistory, the classes, and the synods, proceeded against him, suspended him first from the communion, and deposed him at last from the office of a minister. Yet Dr. Bekker was a fast friend of revelation, and all his crime lay in expounding some literal passages of revelation allegorically. Not the book: but the received meaning of it, he denied.

The Deists ought not to claim *them, who affirm, that it is not the property of the truths of revelation to square with philosophy.* Mons. Voltaire takes Pomponatius for a Deist. Pomponatius denied the *natural* immortality of the soul; he affirmed, that it could not be proved by principles of philosophy: but he believed, and maintained the immortality of the soul on the testimony of revelation. This learned Italian philosopher was persecuted by the monks; his book, it is said, was burnt by the Venetians; and the modern Deists have adopted him; yet Pomponatius was a believer of revelation, and, by believing the immortality of the soul on the testimony of Scripture, he discovered the most profound veneration for it, a deference exactly similar to that which trini



tarians pay to its testimony concerning the nature of God.

What Pomponatius affirmed of the immortality of the soul, Bayle affirmed of *all the mysteries of the gospel*; but we do not allow that Bayle was therefore a Deist. Thus he writes: "If one of the apostles, St. Paul for instance, when among the Athenians, had besought the Areopagus to permit him to enter the lists against all philosophers; had he offered to maintain a disputation upon the three persons, who are but one God; and if, before he began the disputation, he had acknowledged the truth of the rules laid down by Aristotle in his logic, whether, with regard to the terms of opposition, or the characteristics of the premises of a demonstrative syllogism, &c.: lastly, if, after these preliminaries were well settled, he had answered, that our reason is too weak to ascend to the knowledge of the mysteries in opposition to which objections were proposed to him; in such a case, he would have suffered as much shame, as it is possible for a defeated opponent to meet with. The Athenian philosophers must have gained a complete victory; for he would have been judged and condemned agreeably to the maxims, the truth of which he had acknowledged before. But had the philosophers employed those maxims in attacking him, after he had informed them of the foundation of his faith, he might have opposed the following barrier to them; that his doctrines were not within the cognizance of reason; that they had been revealed by heaven; and that mankind must believe them, though they could not comprehend them. The disputation, in order for its being carried on in a regular manner, must not have turned upon the following question, whether these doctrines were repugnant to the rules of logic and metaphysics: but on the question, whether they had been revealed by heaven. It would have been impossible for St. Paul to have been defeated, except it could have been proved to him, that God did not require those things to be believed."\* This reasoning does not appear to favour deism; it seems to place the *mysteries of Christianity* on their true base.

Neither are those to be reputed Deists, who doubt, or deny, the inspiration of some books which are usually accounted sacred. Luther denied the inspiration of the Epistle to St. James; Grotius that of the Song of Solomon; and Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria, denied that the Apocalypse was written by the Apostle John; yet no one of these was a Deist.

Nor ought the Deist to claim those learned critics, who allow that the Scriptures have undergone the fate of all other books, and who, therefore, expose and amend the errors of copyists, expunge interpolations, restore mutilated passages, and deal with the writings of St. Paul as they do with the writings of Thucydides. The chronology, the geography, the history, the learning of the Bible, (if the expression be not improper) must necessarily submit to a critical investigation, and upright critics have self-evident rules of trial. The most severe piece of criticism on revelation is at the same time one of the most excellent de-

fences of it. One single rule, had it been thought worthy of that attention which it merits, would have spared the writing of many a folio, and have freed some Christians from many a religious reverie.\* Yet the author of this piece of criticism, the great Le Clerc, has been, by some of his bigotted countrymen, accounted a Deist.

Finally, we cannot resign those brightest ornaments of the Christian church, whose sense and grace will not allow them to be dogmatical, and who hesitate about some doctrines generally received by their own communities. The celebrated Philip Melancthon has been taxed with scepticism: but far be the imputation from him! "He was one of the wisest and best men of his age," says a certain historian; "he was of a sweet, peaceful disposition, had a great deal of wit, had read much, and his knowledge was very extensive. The combination of such qualities, natural and acquired, is ordinarily a foundation for diffidence. Melancthon was by no means free from doubts, and there were abundance of subjects, upon which he durst not pronounce *this is so, and it cannot be otherwise*. He lived among a sect of people, who to him appeared passionate, and too eager to mix the arts of human policy, and the authority of the secular arm, with the affairs of the church. His tender conscience made him afraid that this might be a mark of reprobation. Although he drew up the Augsburg Confession, yet he hated disputes in religion, and when his mother asked him how she should conduct her belief amidst so many controversies, continue, answered he, to believe and pray as you have hitherto done, and let these wars of controversy give you no manner of trouble." This is the Melancthon who was suspected of deism!

Several more classes might be added to these: but these are sufficient to prove that real Deists are not by far so numerous as reputed ones. The cause of deism, unsupported by reason, may magnify its little all: but the cause of revelation has little to fear from the learning, less from the morality, and nothing from the number of its opponents.

When some atheists appeared in the Jewish church, and attacked the knowledge and worship of God, the people of God were intimidated: but, the royal Psalmist justly observes, "They were in great fear, where no fear was," Psal. liii. 5. Similar events have produced similar fears in the Christian church, and to these honest, but ignorant fears, we ascribe the much greater part of those pious frauds with which Christians have disgraced the cause of God. Most of the fathers, most of the church of Rome, and some Protestant churches, have treated Christianity like an old crazy palace, which requires props or supporters on every side; and they have manifested great injudiciousness in the choice of supporters. The gospel stands like a stately, sturdy oak, defying the attack of every storm: but they, who had

\* Mons. Le Clerc expresses this rule thus: *Multa videri in versionibus emphatica, quæ in ipsis fontibus nullam emphasin habent.*—Ars. Crit. tom. 1. p. 2. s. i. c. 4. This rule of interpretation, which regards the *idiom* of a language, deserves more attention, it should seem, than hath been usually paid to it.

\* Gen. Dict. vol. x. Illustration upon the Manichees.

pitched their tent beneath its shade, heard a rustling among the leaves, trembled for the fate of the tree, and, to secure it, surrounded it with a plantation of oziars. To this ignorant timidity, and not to the base tricks of knavery, the sordid arts of a sorry avarice, or the barbarous pleasure of shedding human blood, we charitably attribute the greatest absurdities in the Christian church.

These absurdities, however, have produced very bad effects, and they oblige us to own, that *real Christians have occasioned violent prejudices against Christianity.*

Some Christians have endeavoured to support the cause of Christianity by spurious books; some by juggling tricks, called miracles; some by the imposition of superstitious ceremonies; some by the propagation of absurd doctrines; some have pretended to explain it by a wretched philosophy; others have exposed it to derision under pretence of adorning it with allegory; some have pleaded for it by fines, and fires, and swords; others have incorporated it with civil interests; most have laid down false canons of interpretation, and have resembled that synod which condemned the aforementioned Dr. Bekker, because he "had explained the holy Scriptures so as to make them contrary to the *Catechism*, and particularly to the *Articles of Faith* which he had himself subscribed." Above all, the loose lives of the professors of Christianity, and particularly of some of the ministers of it, have "covered the daughter of Sion with a cloud, and have cast down from heaven unto the earth the beauty of Israel." Lam. ii. 1.

Involve Christianity in all these thick mists, surround it with all these phenomena, call a weak eye, or a wicked heart, to contemplate it, and, without a spirit of prophecy, the discovery may be foretold; the observer will become a reasoner . . . a philosopher . . . a DEIST.

These are the topics, and not the gospel itself, which most Deists have attacked: but if we agree to exonerate Christianity of all these incumbrances; what have Deists to answer? *Very few of them have taken up the argument on its true grounds; and they who have could not support it.*

When a Frenchman undertakes to attack Christianity, the disputes of his countrymen afford him an ample supply; he borrows arms of every party of Christians, he conquers Popery with Protestant weapons, opposes the visions of quietism with the subtleties of Jansenism, the mysteries of Jansenius with the laws of good sense; and, having defeated absurdity, he vainly imagines he has obtained a victory over Christianity. English Deists have taken the same method, and as our country has the same excesses, they have an ample field of glory before them. Christianity has nothing to do with the errors of St. Austin, or the dreams of Madam Bourignon; but it is founded on a few facts, the evidence of which can never be disproved. The knowledge of these is a preservative against Deism.

To establish these facts was the original design of Monsieur Saurin in the following sermons, as it is mine in endeavouring to translate them. Those who are acquainted with his ser-

mons, well know, that there are in the twelve volumes many more on the same topics: but, as it was impossible to put them all into one volume, I have been obliged to make the best choice in my power, and have arranged them in the following order:—

The first sermon contains a set of rules essentially necessary to the investigating of *truth*, and a few reasons to enforce the practice of them. The second proposes an examination of the *truths of Christianity*, and settles rules of disputation peculiar to this controversy. The *facts* follow in the succeeding sermons, the birth, the ministry, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, &c. Four of the last discourses *expose infidelity and recommend Christianity*; and the last of all is an *exhortation* to him who is supposed to have found the gospel of Christ, *to hold it fast*, as a system of truth, and to avoid those snares, into which Christians are liable to be drawn.

May our readers "have these things always in remembrance; for we have not followed cunningly devised fables," 2 Pet. i. 15, &c. but a *sure word of prophecy*, history and precept, which *holy men of God spake, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*

\*Three times have I taken pen in hand to account to my subscribers in a preface for my choice of the sermons that compose this volume. But one thought hath as often confused me at the outset, and obliged me to lay it aside. I am struck with an idea of the different degrees of labour necessary to two men, one of whom should conceive the project of disuniting Christians, and the other that of cementing them together in mutual love. The first need not trouble himself with study, examination, and argument; he would not be obliged either to divest himself of his own prepossessions, or to expose those of others; he need not sit whole nights and days either to examine his own theses, or impartially to weigh those of his opponents: let him only take popular prejudices, cover them with the sacred style of Scripture, or conceal them under the impenetrable jargon of the schools; let him animate them with party spirit, call it religious zeal, and denounce judgment on all who do not believe the whole to be essential to salvation; and the work will be done. Such a man, I think, resembles a light-heeled enemy, tripping over a spacious field, and scattering, as he goes, the seeds of an endless number of weeds: while the man, who adopts a contrary plan, must be forced, like the patient prying weeder, to stoop and toil, step by step, day after day, feeling many a pain, and fetching many a sigh, to pull the noxious produce up.

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

\* Here commences Mr. Robinson's preface to the *third volume* of the first edition.

ed therefore to explain myself, and to bespeak a candid attention, while I endeavour to do so.

Very early in life I was prepossessed in favour of the following positions:—Christianity is a religion of divine origin—a religion of divine origin must needs be a perfect religion, and answer all the ends, for which it was revealed, without human additions. The Christian religion has undergone considerable alterations since the times of Jesus Christ and his apostles, and yet, *Jesus Christ* was then accounted the *finisher*, as well as the *author of faith*, Heb. xii. 2. The doctrines of revelation, as they lie in the inspired writings, differ very much from the same doctrines, as they lie in creeds of human composition. The moral precepts, the positive institutes, and the religious affections, which constitute the devotion of most modern Christians, form a melancholy contrast to those, which are described by the guides, whom they profess to follow. The light of nature, and that of revelation; the operations of right reason, the spirit of the first, and the influence of the Holy Ghost, the soul of the last: both proceeding from the same uniform Supreme Being, cannot be supposed to be destructive of each other, or, even in the least degree, to clash together. The finest idea, that can be formed of the Supreme Being, is that of an infinite intelligence always in harmony with itself and, accordingly, the best way of proving the truth of revelation is that of showing the analogy of the plan of redemption to that of creation and providence. Simplicity and majesty characterize both nature and Scripture: simplicity reduces those benefits, which are essential to the real happiness of man, to the size of all mankind; majesty makes a rich provision for the employment and superadded felicity of a few superior geniuses, who first improve themselves, and then felicitate their inferior brethren by simplifying their own ideas, by refining and elevating those of their fellow creatures, by so establishing a social intercourse, consolidating fraternal love, and along with it all the reciprocal ties, that unite mankind. Men's ideas of objects essential to their happiness, are neither so dissimilar nor so numerous, as inattentive spectators are apt to suppose. Variety of sentiment, which is the life of society, cannot be destructive of real religion. Mere mental errors, if they be not entirely innocent in the account of the Supreme Governor of mankind, cannot be, however, objects of blame and punishment among men. Christianity could never be intended to destroy the natural rights, or even to diminish the natural privileges of mankind. That religion, which allows the just claims, and secures the social happiness of all mankind, must needs be a better religion than that, which provides for only a part at the expense of the rest. God is more glorified by the good actions of his creatures, expressive of homage to him, and productive of universal, social good, than he is by uncertain conjectures, or even accurate notions, which originate in self-possession and terminate in social disunion. How clear soever all these maxims may be, a certain degree of ambition or avarice, ignorance or malice, presumption or diffidence, or any other irregular passion, will render a man blind to the clearest

demonstration, and insensible to the most rational and affecting persuasion. These positions; mere opinions and prepossessions before examination, became demonstrative truths after a course of diligent search; and these general principles have operated in the choice of the sermons, which compose this volume of the principal doctrines of Christianity.

But, previous to all inquiries concerning the doctrines of Christianity, it is absolutely necessary to establish that of **CHRISTIAN LIBERTY**; for, say what we will, if this preliminary doctrine of right be disallowed, voluntary piety is the dream of an enthusiast; the oracles of God in the Christian world, like those of the Sybils in pagan Rome, are sounds convertible to senatorial sense; and the whole Christian mission, from the first prophet down to the last minister, is one long muster-roll of statesmen's tools, a disgrace to their species, a contradiction to their profession, a dishonour to their God!

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

The object of Christian liberty, that, with which a man, who would examine Christianity, has to do, is a system of Christian doctrine: but, having established the doctrine of right, before we proceed to exercise this right by examining the religion proposed to mankind by Jesus Christ, it is absolutely necessary to inquire what we ought, on sound principles of just and fair reasoning, to expect to find in it. I know some truths without revelation. I have a full demonstration in nature, that there is one God—that it is impossible there should be more than one—that he is an intelligent spirit—and that he is a wise and bountiful Being. Should any religion, which pretends to be divine, affirm that there is a plurality of gods; God is not an intelligent Spirit—God is an unwise and an unkind being—I should have a right to reject this pretended revelation. Indeed, should a revealed religion allow my de-

monstrations, and afterwards explain them in a manner quite subversive of my former explanations of them: should it affirm, God is, as you say, a wise and bountiful being; but he displays his wisdom and goodness not in governing his intelligent creatures, as you have imagined; such a moral government, I will prove to you, would show a defect of wisdom and goodness; but he displays the supreme perfection of both, by providing for such and such interests, and by bestowing such and such benefits, as have either escaped your notice, or were beyond your comprehension. In this case I ought not to reject revelation, for, although I can demonstrate without inspiration the wisdom and goodness of God, yet I cannot pretend by the light of nature to know all the directions, and to ascertain all the limits of these perfections.

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

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

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

and concealed from all the rest of his fellow creatures; and the glory of civil society is not to encroach on the moral government of God.

Christianity comes, pretends to come from the God of nature; I look for analogy, and I find it: but I find it in the holy Scriptures, the first teachers, and the primitive churches. In all these, I am considered as a rational creature, objects are proposed, evidence is offered: if I admit it, I am not entitled thereby to any temporal emoluments; if I refuse it, I am not subjected to any temporal punishments; the whole is an affair of conscience, and lies between each individual and his God. I choose to be a Christian on this very account. This freedom which I call a perfection of my nature; this self-determination, the dignity of my species, the essence of my natural virtue; this I do not forfeit by becoming a Christian; this I retain, explained, confirmed, directed, assisted by the regal grant of the Son of God. Thus the prerogatives of Christ, the laws of his religion, and the natural rights of mankind being analagous, evidence arises of the divinity of the religion of Jesus.

I believe it would be very easy to prove, that the Christianity of the church of Rome, and that of every other establishment, because they are establishments, are totally destitute of this analogy. The religion of nature is not capable of establishment, the religion of Jesus Christ is not capable of establishment: if the religion of any church be capable of establishment, it is not analogous to that of Scripture, or that of nature. A very simple example may explain our meaning. Natural religion requires a man to pay a mental homage to the Deity, to venerate his perfections, by adoring and confiding in them. By what possible means can these pious operations of the mind be established? could they be forced, their nature would be destroyed, and they would cease to be piety, which is an exercise of judgment and will. Revealed religion requires man to pay a mental homage to the Deity through Jesus Christ, to venerate his perfections by adoring and confiding in them as Christianity directs; by repentance, by faith, by hope, and so on. How is it possible to establish those spiritual acts? A human establishment requires man to pay this Christian mental homage to the Deity, by performing some external ceremony, suppose bowing to the east. The ceremony, we grant, may be established: but, the voluntary exercise of the soul in the performance, which is essential to the Christianity of the action, who in the world can establish this? If the religion of Jesus be considered as consisting of external rites and internal dispositions, the former may be established; but, be it remembered, the establishment of the exterior not only does not establish the interior, but the destruction of the last is previously essential to the establishment of the first.

No religion can be established without penal sanctions, and all penal sanctions in cases of religion are persecutions. Before a man can persecute, he must renounce the generous tolerant dispositions of a Christian. No religion can be established without human creeds; and subscription to all human creeds implies two

dispositions contrary to true religion, and both expressly forbidden by the author of it. These two dispositions are, love of dominion over conscience in the imposer, and an abject preference of slavery in the subscriber. The first usurps the rights of Christ; the last swears allegiance to a pretender. The first domineers, and gives laws like a tyrant; the last truckles like a vassal. The first assumes a dominion incompatible with his frailty, impossible even to his dignity, yea, denied to the dignity of angels; the last yields a low submission, inconsistent with his own dignity, and ruinous to that very religion, which he pretends by this mean to support. Jesus Christ does not require, he does not allow, yea, he expressly forbids both these dispositions, well knowing, that an allowance of these would be a suppression of the finest dispositions of the human soul, and a degrading of revelation beneath the religion of nature. If human inventions have formerly secularized Christianity, and rendered such bad dispositions necessary in times of ignorance, they ought to be exploded now, as all Christians now allow this theory:—The Son of God did not come to redeem one part of mankind to serve the secular views, and unworthy passions of the other: but he obtained freedom for both, that both *might serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness all the days of their lives.* Luke i. 74, 75. When churches reduce this theory to practice, they realize in actual life, what otherwise makes only a fine idea decyphered in books, and by so doing they adorn their Christianity with the glorious evidence of analogy.

Suppose the God of nature should think proper to reveal a simple system of astronomy, and to require all mankind to examine and believe this revelation on pain of his displeasure. Suppose one civil government, having examined this revelation, and explained the sense, in which they understood it, should endeavour to establish their explication by temporal rewards and punishments. Suppose they should require all their subjects to carry their infants in their arms to a public school, to answer certain astronomical interrogations, to be put by a professor of astronomy; as, in general, wilt thou, infant of eight days old! wilt thou be an astronomer? Dost thou renounce all erroneous systems of astronomy? In particular, dost thou admit the true Copernician system? Dost thou believe the revealed explication of this system? And dost thou also believe that explication of this revelation, which certain of our own predecessors in the profession believed, which we, your masters and parents, in due obedience, receive? Suppose a proxy required to answer for this infant; all this, I, proxy for this child, do steadfastly believe; and suppose from this hour, the child became a reputed astronomer. Suppose yet farther, this child should grow to manhood, and in junior life should be pressed, on account of the obligation contracted in his infant state, to subscribe a certain paper called an astronomical creed, containing mathematical definitions, astronomical propositions, and so on, and should be required for certain rewards to examine and approve, teach and defend this creed, and no other, without incurring the penalty of expul-

sion from all public schools, a deprivation of all honours, which he might be supposed on other accounts to merit, an exclusion from all offices of trust, credit, and profit, in some cases a loss of property, in others imprisonment, in others death. In this supposed case, I ask, would not the establishment of this system be an open violation of the doctrine of analogy, and should I not have a right to reason thus? The revelation itself is infallible, and the author of it has given it me to examine: but the establishment of a *given meaning* of it renders examination needless, and perhaps dangerous. The God of nature has given me eyes, instruments, powers, and inclinations to use them; eyes, faculties, and dispositions as good as those of my ancestors, and instruments better: but all these advantages, which may be beneficial to me, if they confirm the truth of the explication; may be fatal to me, if they lag behind, or ken beyond the bound of the creed. Nature says, a constellation is a collection of stars, which, in the heavens, appear near to one another. This is a plain simple truth, I open my eyes, and admit the evidence. Revelation says, each fixed star is a sun, the centre of a system, consisting of planets inhabited by intelligent beings, who possess one sense and two faculties more than the inhabitants of this globe, and who worship the most high God in spirit and in truth. I cannot comprehend this whole proposition: but there is nothing in it contrary to the nature of things; and I believe the truth of it on the testimony of the revealer. The established explication of this proposition is that of Ptolemy. He numbered the stars in the constellation Bootes, and found them, or supposed he found them, twenty-three, and this number I am to examine and approve, teach and defend against all opponents. What shall I say to Tycho, who affirms, Bootes contains only eighteen? Must I execrate Havelius, who makes them fifty-two? After all, perhaps Flamstead may be right; he says there are fifty-four. Does not this method of teaching astronomy suppose a hundred absurdities? Does it not imply the imperfection of the revealed system, the infallibility of Ptolemy, the erroneusness of the other astronomers, the folly of examination, or the still greater madness of allowing a conclusion after a denial of the premises, from which it pretends to be drawn? When I was an infant, I am told, I was treated like a man, now I am a man, I am treated like an infant. I am an astronomer by proxy. The plan of God requires faculties, and the exercise of them: that of my country exchanges both for quiet submission. I am, and I am not, a believer of astronomy.

Were it affirmed, that a revelation from heaven established such a method of maintaining a science of speculation, reasoning, and practice, every rational creature would have a right to doubt the truth of such a revelation; for it would violate the doctrine of analogy, by making the Deity inconsistent with himself. But we will pursue this track no further; we hope nothing said will be deemed illiberal; we distinguish between a constitution of things, and many wise and good men, who submit to it, and we only venture to guess, if they be

wise and good men, under such inconveniences, they would be wiser and better men without them: at all adventures, if we owe much respect to men, we owe more to truth, to incontrovertible, unchangeable truth.

A second character of a divine revelation, is *proportion*. By proportion I mean, relative fitness, and, when I affirm a divine revelation must bring along with it proportional evidence, I mean to say, it must appear to be exactly fitted to those intelligent creatures, for whose benefit it is intended. In the former article we required a *similarity* between the requisitions of God and the faculties of men: in this we require an exact *quantity* of requisition commensurate with those faculties. The former regards the nature of a revelation; this has for its object the limits of it. Were it possible for God, having formed a man only for walking, by a messenger from heaven to require him to fly, the doctrine of analogy would be violated by this requisition; and were he to determine a prodigious space, through which he required him to pass in a given time, were he to describe an immense distance, and to enjoin him to move through it with a degree of velocity impossible to him, the doctrine of proportion would be violated; and the God of revelation would in both cases be made contradictory to the God of nature.

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

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

ment would be at once a renunciation of their right to hold by the original grant, and of their lord's prerogative to bestow.

What can a declaimer mean, when he repeats a number of propositions, and declares the belief of them all essential to the salvation of *man*? or what could he reply to one, who should ask him, which man do you mean, the man in the stall? Is it Sir Isaac Newton: or the man in the aisle? It is Tom Long, the carrier. God almighty, the creator of both, has formed these two men with different organs of body, and different faculties of mind; he has given them different advantages and different opportunities of improving them, he has placed them in different relations, and empowered the one to teach what the other, depend on his belief what will, is not capable of learning. Ten thousand Tom Longs go to make up one Newtonian soul. Is it credible, the God who made these two men, who thoroughly knows them, who is the common parent, the just governor, and the kind benefactor of both, should require of men so different, equal belief and practice? Were such a thing supposable, how unequal and disproportional, how inadequate and unlike himself must such a Deity be! To grasp the terraqueous globe with a human hand, to make a tulip-cup contain the ocean, to gather all the light of the universe into one human eye, to hide the sun in a snuff-box, are the mighty projects of children's fancies. Is it possible, requisitions similar to these should proceed from *the only wise God*!

There is, we have reason to believe, a certain proportion of spirit, if I may be allowed to speak so, that constitutes a human soul; there are infinitely different degrees of capability imparted by the Creator to the souls of mankind; and there is a certain ratio by necessity of nature, between each degree of intelligence and a given number of ideas, as there is between a cup capable of containing a given quantity, and a quantity of matter capable of being contained in it. In certain cases it might serve my interest could the palm of my hand contain a hog'shead: but in general my interest is better served by an inability to contain so much. We apply these certain principles to revelation, and we say, God hath given in the Christian religion an infinite multitude of ideas; as in nature he hath created an infinite multitude of objects. These objects are diversified without end, they are of various sizes, colours, and shapes, and they are capable of innumerable motions, productive of multifarious effects, and all placed in various degrees of perspicuity; objects of thought in the Christian religion are exactly similar; there is no end of their variety; God and all his perfections, man and all his operations, the being and employment of superior holy spirits, the existence and dispositions of fallen spirits, the creation and government of the whole world of matter, and that of spirit, the influences of God and the obligations of men, the dissolution of the universe, a resurrection, a judgment, a heaven, and a hell, all these, placed in various degrees of perspicuity, are exhibited in religion to the contemplation of intelligent creatures. The creatures, who are required to contemplate

these objects, have various degrees of contemplative ability; and their duty, and consequently their virtue, which is nothing else but a performance of duty, consists in applying all their ability to understand as many of these objects, that is, to form as many ideas of them, as are apportioned to their own degree. So many objects they are capable of seeing, so many objects it is their duty to see. So much of each object they are capable of comprehending, so much of each object it is their duty to comprehend. So many emotions they are capable of exercising, so many emotions it is their duty to exercise. So many acts of devotion they can perform, so many Almighty God will reward them for performing, or punish them for neglecting. This I call the doctrine of religious proportion. This I have a right to expect to find in a divine revelation, and this I find in the most splendid manner in Christianity, as it lies in the Bible, as it was in the first churches, and as it is in some modern communities. I wish I could exchange the word some for all.

This doctrine of proportion would unroost every human creed in the world, at least it would annihilate the imposition of any. Instead of making one creed for a whole nation, which, by the way, provides for only one nation, and consigns over the rest of the world to the destroyer of mankind; instead of doing so, there should be as many creeds as creatures; and instead of affirming, the belief of three hundred propositions is essential to the felicity of every man in both worlds, we ought to affirm, the belief of half a proposition is essential to the salvation of Mary, and the belief of a whole one to that of John, the belief of six propositions, or, more properly the examination of six propositions, is essential to the salvation of the reverend Edward, and the examination of sixty to that of the right reverend Richard; for, if I can prove, one has sixty degrees of capacity, another six, and another one, I can easily prove, it would be unjust to require the same exercises of all; and a champion ascribing such injustice to God would be no formidable adversary for the pompousness of his challenge, or the comparisons of his horse: his very sword could not conquer, though it might affright from the field.

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

Were this doctrine of proportion allowed,

three consequences would follow. First, Subscription to human creeds, with all their appendages, both penal and pompous, would roll back into the turbulent ocean, the *Sea* I mean, from whence they came; the Bible would remain a placid emanation of wisdom from God; and the belief of it a sufficient test of the obedience of his people. Secondly, Christians would be freed from the inhuman necessity of execrating one another, and by placing Christianity in believing in Christ, and not in believing in one another, they would rid revelation of those intolerable abuses, which are fountains of sorrow to Christians, and sources of arguments to infidels. Thirdly, Opportunity would be given to believers in Christ to exercise those dispositions, which the present disproportional division of this common benefit obliges them to suppress, or conceal. O cruel theology, that makes it a crime to do what I have neither a right nor a power to leave undone!

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

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

The first character of imperfection, is *propose-*

ing to obtain a great end without the use of proper means. To propose a noble end argues a fund of goodness: but not to propose proper means to obtain it, argues a defect of wisdom. Christianity proposes the noble end of assimilating man to God! and it employs proper means of obtaining this end. God is an intelligent being, happy in a perfection of wisdom; the gospel assimilates the felicity of human intelligences to that of the Deity, by communicating the ideas of God on certain articles to men. God is a bountiful being, happy in a perfection of goodness; the gospel assimilates the felicity of man to that of God, by communicating certain benevolent dispositions to its disciples, similar to the communicative excellencies of God. God is an operative being, happy in the display of exterior works beneficial to his creatures; the gospel felicitates man by directing and enabling him to perform certain works beneficent to his fellow-creatures. God condescends to propose this noble end, of assimilating man to himself, to the nature of mankind, and not to certain distinctions, foreign from the nature of man, and appendant on exterior circumstances. The boy, who feeds the farmer's meanest animals; the sailor, who spends his days on the ocean; the miner, who, secluded from the light of the day, and the society of his fellow-creatures, spends his life in a subterraneous cavern, as well as the renowned heroes of mankind, are all included in this condescending, benevolent, design of God. The gospel proposes to assimilate all to God: but it proposes such an assimilation, or, I may say, such a degree of moral excellence, as the nature of each can bear, and it directs to means so proper to obtain this end, and renders these directions so extremely plain, that the perfection of the designer shines with the utmost glory.

I have sometimes imagined a Pagan ship's crew in a vessel under sail in the wide ocean; I have supposed not one soul aboard ever to have heard one word of Christianity; I have imagined a bird dropping a New Testament written in the language of the mariners on the upper deck; I have imagined a fund of uneducated, unsophisticated good sense in this company, and I have required of this little world answers to two questions; first, what end does this book propose? the answer is, this book "was written, that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing we might have life through his name," John xx. 31. I ask secondly, what means does this book authorise a foremast man, who believes, to employ to the rest of the crew to induce them to believe, that Jesus is the Son of God, and that believing, they also with the foremast man, may have eternal felicity through his name? I dare not answer this question: but I dare venture to guess, should this foremast man conceal the book from any of the crew, he would be unlike the God, who gave it to all; or should he oblige the cabin-boy to admit his explication of the book, he would be unlike the God, who requires the boy to explain it to himself; and should he require the captain to enforce his explication by penalties, the captain ought to reprove his folly for counteracting the end of the book, the felicity of all the mari-

ners; for turning a message of peace into an engine of faction; for employing means inadequate to the end; and so for erasing that character of perfection, which the heavenly donor gave it.

A second character of imperfection is the *employing of great means to obtain no valuable end*. Whatever end the author of Christianity had in view, it is beyond a doubt, he hath employed great means to effect it. To use the language of a prophet, he hath "shaken the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land," Hag. ii. 6, 7. When the *desire of all nations* came, universal nature felt his approach, and preternatural displays of wisdom, power, and goodness, have ever attended his steps. The most valuable ends were answered by his coming. Convictions followed his preaching; and truths, till then shut up in the counsels of God, were actually put into the possession of finite minds. A general manumission followed his meritorious death, and the earth resounded with the praises of a spiritual deliverer, who had set the sons of bondage free. The laws of his empire were published, and all his subjects were happy in obeying them. "In his days the righteous flourished," and on his plan, "abundance of peace would have continued as long as the moon endured," Ps. lxxii. 7. Plenty of instruction, liberty to examine it, and peace in obeying it, these were ends worthy of the great means used to obtain them.

Let us for a moment suppose a subversion of the seventy-second psalm, from whence I have borrowed these ideas; let us imagine "the kings of Tarshish and of the isles bringing presents," not to express their homage to Christ: but to purchase that dominion over the consciences of mankind, which belongs to Jesus Christ; let us suppose the boundless wisdom of the gospel, and the innumerable ideas of inspired men concerning it, shrivelled up into the narrow compass of one human creed; let us suppose liberty of thought taken away, and the peace of the world interrupted by the introduction and support of bold usurpations, dry ceremonies, cant phrases, and puerile inventions; in this supposed case, the history of great means remains, the worthy ends to be answered by them are taken away, and they, who should thus deprive mankind of the end of the sacred code, would charge themselves with the necessary obligation of accounting for this character of imperfection. Ye prophets, and apostles! ye ambassadors of Christ! "How do ye say, we are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us? Lo! certainly in vain made he it, the pen of the scribes is in vain!" Jer. viii. 8. Precarious wisdom that must not be questioned! useless books, which must not be examined! vain legislation, that either cannot be obeyed, or ruins him who obeys it.

All the ends, that can be obtained by human modifications of divine revelation, can never compensate for the loss of that dignity, which the perfection of the system, as God gave it, acquires to him; nor can it indemnify a man for the loss of that spontaneity, which is the essence of every effort, that merits the name of human, and without which virtue itself is nothing but a name. Must we destroy the man to make the Christian! What is there in



a scholastic honour, what in an ecclesiastical emolument, what in an archiepiscopal throne, to indemnify for these losses! Jesus Christ gave his life a ransom for men, not to empower them to enjoy these momentary distinctions; these are far inferior to the noble ends of his coming: the honour of God and the gospel at large; the disinterested exercise of mental abilities, assimilating the free-born soul to its benevolent God; a copartnership with Christ in promoting the universal felicity of all mankind; these, these are ends of religion worthy of the blood of Jesus, and deserving the sacrifice of whatever is called great among men.

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

Should men take up the gospel in this simplicity; and, accommodating it to their own imaginary superior wisdom, or to their own secular purposes; should they explain this union so as to suit their designs, and employ means to produce it; and should they denominate their system Christianity, it would certainly be, in spite of its name, a Christianity marked with the imperfection of its authors; for in the Christian religion, in the thing itself, and not in its appellation, shines the glorious character of perfection.

The Christian religion unites mankind. By what common bond does it propose to do so? By *love*. This is a *bond of perfectness*, a most perfect bond. This is practicable, and productive of every desirable end, and the more we study human nature, the more fully shall we be convinced, that we cannot imagine any religion to do more, nor need we desire more, for this answers every end of being religious. Had Jesus Christ formed his church on a *sentimental* plan, he must have employed many means, which he has not employed, and he must have omitted many directions, which he has given. One of his means of uniting mankind, is contained in this direction, *Search the Scriptures, and call no man your master upon earth*; that is to say, exercise your very different abilities, assisted by very different degrees of aid, in periods of very different duration, and form your own notions of the doctrines contained in the scriptures. Is

not this injunction destructive of a sentimental union? Place ten thousand spectators in several circles around a statue erected on a spacious plain, bid some look at it through magnifying glasses, others through common spectacles, some with keen naked eyes, others with weak diseased eyes, each on a point of each circle different from that where another stands, and all receiving the picture of the object in the eye by different reflections and refractions of the rays of light, and say, will not a command to look destroy the idea of sentimental union; and, if the establishment of an exact union of sentiment be the end, will not looking, the mean appointed to obtain it, actually destroy it, and would not such a projector of uniformity mark his system with imperfection?

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

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

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

In general each church calls its own creed a system of Christianity, a body of Christian doctrine, and perhaps not improperly; but then each divine ought to distinguish that part of his system, which is pure revelation, and so stands confessedly the doctrine of Jesus

Christ, from that other part, which is human explication, and so may be either true or false, clear or obscure, presumptive or demonstrative, according to the abilities of the explainer, who compiled the creed. Without this distinction, we may incorporate all our opinions with the infallible revelations of Heaven, we may imagine each article of our belief essential to Christianity itself, we may subjoin a human codicil to a divine testament, and attribute equal authenticity to both, we may account a proposition confirmed by a synodical seal as fully authenticated as a truth confirmed by an apostolical miracle, and so we may bring ourselves to rank a conscientious disciple of Christ, who denies the necessity of episcopal ordination, with a brazen disciple of the devil, who denies the truth of revelation, and pretends to doubt the being of a God.

But here, I feel again the force of that observation, with which this preface begins. How few, comparatively, will allow, that such a reduction of a large system to a very small number of clear, indisputable, essential first principles, will serve the cause of Christianity! How many will pretend to think such a reduction dangerous to thirty-five out of thirty-nine articles of faith! How many will confound a denial of the essentiality (so to speak) of a proposition, with a denial of the truth of it! How many will go further still, and execrate the latitudinarian, who presumes in this manner to subvert Christianity itself! I rejoice in prospect of that "day, when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to his gospel," Rom. ii. 16; when we shall stand not at the tribunal of human prejudices and passions, but at the just bar of a clement God. Here, were I only concerned, I would rest, and my answer to all complainants should be a respectful silence before their oracles of reason and religion: but alas! I have nine children, and my ambition is (if it be not an unpardonable presumption to compare insects with angels,) my ambition is to engage them to treat a spirit of intolerance, as Hamilcar taught Hannibal to treat the old Roman spirit of universal dominion. The enthusiastic Carthaginian parent going to offer a sacrifice to Jupiter for the success of an intended war, took with him his little son Hannibal, then only nine years of age, and eager to accompany his father, led him to the altar, made him lay his little hand on the sacrifice, and swear that he would never be in friendship with the Romans. We may sanctify this thought by transferring it to other objects, and while we sing in the church glory to God in the highest, vow perpetual peace with all mankind, and reject all weapons except those which are spiritual, we may, we must declare war against a spirit of intolerance from generation to generation. Thus Moses wrote "a memorial in a book, rehearsed it in the ears of Joshua, built an altar, called the name of it Jehovah my banner, and said, The Lord hath sworn, that the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation," Exod. xvii. 14—16.

We are neither going to contrast human creeds with one another, nor with the Bible; we are not going to affirm or deny any propositions contained in them; we only design to

prove, that all consist of human explications as well as divine revelation, and consequently that all are not of equal importance, nor ought any to be imposed upon the disciples of Christ, either by those who are not disciples of the Son of God, or by those who are. The subject is delicate and difficult, not through any intricacy in itself, but through a certain infelicity of the times. An error on the one side may be fatal to revelation, by alluring us to sacrifice the pure doctrines of religion to a blind benevolence; and on the other an error may be fatal to religion itself by inducing us to make it a patron of intolerance. We repeat it again, a system of Christian doctrine is the object of Christian liberty; the articles, which compose a human system of Christian doctrine, are divisible into the two classes of *doctrines and explications*: the first we attribute to *Christ*, and call *Christian doctrines*, the last to some of his *disciples*, and these we call *human explications*; the first *are* true, the last *may be so*; the first execrate intolerance, the last cannot be supported without the spirit of it. I will endeavour to explain my meaning by an example:—

Every believer of revelation allows the authenticity of this passage of holy Scripture, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," John iii. 16. If we cast this into propositional form, it will afford as many propositions as it contains ideas. Each idea clearly contained in the text I call an idea of Jesus Christ, a Christian sentiment, a truth of revelation, in a word, a *Christian doctrine*. Each of these ideas of the text, in forming itself into a proposition, will naturally associate with itself a few other ideas of the expletive kind, these I call secondary ideas, in distinction from the first, which I call primary; or, in plainer style, ideas clearly of the *text* I name *Christian doctrines*, or *doctrines of Christ*, and *all the rest* I call human explications of these doctrines; they may be *Christian*, they may not; for I am not sure, that the next idea, which always follows at first in my mind, was the next idea to the first in the mind of Jesus Christ; the first is certainly his, he declares it, the second might be his; but as he is silent, I can say nothing certain; where he stops, my infallibility ends, and my uncertain reason begins.

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

will agree in the matter of each proposition, they will conjecture very differently concerning the manner of its operation.

One disciple of Christ, whom we call Richard, having read this text, having exercised his thoughts on the meaning of it, and having arranged them in the propositional form now mentioned, if he would convince another disciple, whom we name Robert, of the truth of any one of his propositions; would be obliged to unfold his own train of thinking, which consists of an associated concatenation of ideas, some of which are primary ideas of Jesus Christ, and others secondary notions of his own; additions, perhaps, of his wisdom, perhaps of his folly, perhaps of both: but all, however, intended to *explicate* his notion of the text, and to facilitate the evidence of his notion to his brother. Robert admits the proposition, but not exactly in Richard's sense. In this case, we assert ideas, we take what both allow to be the original ideas of our common Lord, and we reckon thus; here are nine ideas in this proposition, numbers one, three, six, nine, genuine, primary ideas of Christ; numbers two, four, five, secondary ideas of Richard; numbers seven, eight, secondary ideas of Robert; the first constitutes a divine doctrine, the last a human explication; the first forms one divine object, the last two human notions of its mode of existence, manner of operation, or something similar: but, be each what it may, it is human explication, and neither synod nor senate can make it more.

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

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

A second class of expositors take the idea of *relation*, and one affirms, God and believers are to be considered in the relative light of *governor and subjects*, the characters of a perfect government are discernible in the giving of a Saviour, justice vindicates the honour of government by punishing some, mercy dis-

plays the benefit of government by pardoning others, and royal prerogative both disculpates and elevates the guilty; however, as the governor is a God, he retains and displays his absolute right of dispensing his favours as he pleases. A second says, God and believers are to be considered in the light of *parent and children*, and Christ is not given to believers according to mere maxims of exact government: but he is bestowed by God, the common Father, impartially on all his children. A third says, God and believers are to be considered in the light of *master and servants*, and God rewards the imperfect services of his creatures with the rich benefits of Christianity. A fourth considers God and believers in the relation of *king and consort*, and say, God gave Christianity as an unalienable dowry to his chosen associate. In all these systems, God, Christ, believers, and gift remain; the pure genuine ideas of the text; and the association of the idea of *relation* distinguishes and varies the systems.

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

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

Suppose a man were required to believe this proposition, God gave Jesus to believers absolutely; or this, God gave Jesus to believers conditionally; it is not impossible, the whole

proposition might be proved original, genuine, primary doctrine of Jesus Christ. Our proposition in this text could not prove it, and were this the whole of our information on this article, conditionally and unconditionally would be human explications: but, if Christ has given us, in any other part of revelation, more instruction on this subject; if he any where affirm, either that he was given on certain conditions to be performed by believers, or that he was not given so, then indeed we may associate the ideas of one text with those of another, and so form of the whole a genuine Christian doctrine.

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

We will venture to go a step further. Were we as capable of determining the exact ratio between any particular mind and a given number of ideas, as we are of determining how many feet of water a vessel of a given burden must draw; and were we able so to determine how much faith in how many doctrines was essential to the holiness, and so to the happiness of such a soul; we shall not then entertain a vain notion of exacting by force these rights of God of his creature. For, first, the same proportion, which renders a certain number of ideas as essential to the happiness of an intelligent mind, renders this number of ideas so clear, that they establish themselves and need no imposition. Secondly, the nature of faith does not admit of imposition; it signifies nothing to say, kings command it; if angels commanded it, they would require an impossibility, and exact that of me, which they themselves could not perform. Thirdly, God has appointed no means to enforce belief, he has nominated no vicegerents to do this, he has expressly forbidden the attempt. Fourthly, the means that one man must employ to impose his creed on another, are all nefarious, and damn a sinner to make a saint. Fifthly, imposition of human creeds has produced so much mischief in the world, so many divisions among Christians, and so many execrable ac-

tions, attended with no one good end to religion, that the repetition of this crime would argue a soul infested with the grossest ignorance, or the most stubborn obstinacy imaginable. Sixthly, dominion over conscience is that part of God's empire, of which he is most jealous. The imposition of a human creed is a third action, and before any man can perform it, he must do two other exploits, he must usurp the throne, and claim the slave. How many more reasons might be added! From a cool examination of the nature of God—the nature of man—the nature of Christianity—the nature of all powers within the compass of human thought to employ—the history of past times—the state of the present—in a word, of every idea that belongs to the imposition of a human creed, we venture to affirm, the attempt is irrational, unscriptural, impracticable, impossible. Creed is belief, and the production of belief by penal sanctions neither is, nor was, nor is to come. The project never entered the mind of a professor of any science except that of theology. It is high time theologians should explode it. The glorious pretence of establishing by force implicit belief, should be left to the little tyrant of a country school; let him lay down dry documents, gird false rules close about other men's sons, lash docility into vanity, stupidity, or madness, and justify his violence by spluttering, *Sic volo, sic jubeo, stat pro ratione voluntas.*

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

Although the distinction of a divine revelation from a human explication is just and necessary, although the principles of analogy, proportion, and perfection, are undeniable, and although, considered as a theory, the nature and necessity of universal toleration will be allowed to be as clear and demonstrative as possible, yet, we are well aware, the allowance of these articles in all their fair, just, necessary consequences, would be so inimical to many dispositions, and so effectually subversive of so many selfish interested systems, that we entertain no hopes of ever seeing the theory generally reduced to practice. Heaven may exhibit a scene of universal love, and it is glorious to Christianity to propose it; it is an idea replete with ecstatic joy, and, thanks be to God, it is more than an idea, it is a law in many Christian churches, alas! little known, and less imitated by the rest of their brethren. There is "a remnant of Jacob in the midst of many people, as a dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men," Micah v. 7. These may cheerfully adopt the prophet's exultation, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy! If I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in

darkness the Lord shall be a light unto me, he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness," chap. vii. 8. "In the day that my walls are to be built, in that day shall human decrees concerning conscience be far removed," ver. 11.

On these general principles the sermons in this volume are selected, and on these the reader will at once perceive why it does not contain the whole system of any one subscriber, or the whole system of the author. Each contains primary truths, which all allow, and secondary explications, which some believe, which others doubt, and which some deny. I have not been able to form the volume wholly on this plan; but I have endeavoured to approach it as nearly as my materials would permit.

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

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

Chesterton, July 10, 1777.

This volume\* is a sketch of Christian mora-

\* Alluding to the 4th vol. of the London Edition; or, under the present arrangement, from the 53d sermon to the 69th, inclusive.

lity, such as the sermons of Mr. Saurin afford. Had the author drawn them up with a particular design of exhibiting a full view of the subject, he would have assorted and arranged ideas, which now lie dispersed and intermixed. However, we trust the arrangement will appear neither improper nor unedifying.

There are two general opinions among divines concerning the origin of morality and religion. Some suppose, that all the knowledge which the world ever had of these subjects, was at first revealed, and hath been continued to this day by tradition. Others, on the contrary, think, that without revelation, men may, and actually do, by the mere exercise of their natural powers, discover the being of a God, and the consequent obligations of men. Both classes; however, affirm, that revelation gives force to moral duties, and so is essential to the practice of real virtue.

This is not the place to enter into disputation; we will content ourselves with a few plain remarks on the nature and obligations of men, and on the moral influence of the gospel; and, for this purpose, we will divide the subject into three parts, and consider first, nature; secondly, obligation; and lastly, motive.

1. NATURE. There is hardly a word in the English language of more vague and indeterminate meaning than the word *nature*. In this place I mean by it the native state, properties, and peculiarities of men. If man be a creature consisting of soul and body; if each individual hath properties, powers, or faculties, peculiar to itself; obligation to employ these to the ends for which they were intended by the Creator, must necessarily follow. Ancient philosophy, therefore, connected together the natural with the moral state of man, and reasoned from the one to the other. Without superior information by revelation from God, there is no other way of determining what men are, or what they are not expected to perform.

It would be easy to lose ourselves in metaphysical speculations concerning the nature, the operations, and the duration of the soul; and it would be as easy to lose ourselves, in attempting precisely to determine, among an infinite number of feelings, ideas, perceptions, aversions, sensations, and passions, where the last power of body ends, and where the first operation of spirit begins. Perhaps we are to expect only a general knowledge of such subjects. That the happiness of both depends on a certain harmony between thought and action, is beyond a doubt; and that in a life made up of a course of thinking and acting, thinking ought to precede action is equally clear. To act is to do something; and every intelligent creature ought to do whatever he does for a reason. In the nature of man, then, avoiding all perplexing refinements, and confining our views to plain and useful observation, there are three things considerable: *happiness*, the end of men's actions; *notions*, the means of obtaining the end; and *reason*, which discovers, selects, and enforces rules of uniting the means with the end.

2. OBLIGATION. We divide this article into two parts, *obligation*, and *sense of obligation*.

We begin with the first. By exercising our reason to find out proper means of obtaining happiness, we collect a set of ideas concerning

the duties of life, and putting these together, we call the collection morality. As this collection consists of a great variety of duties, or actions proper to obtain happiness, we find it convenient to divide them into several classes; and as each class contributes its share towards the production of the general end, happiness, we consider the whole in the light of *obligation*; for every creature is obliged to seek its own happiness, and it is natural to man to do so.

The condition of man in regard to the Supreme Being, his creator, is that of absolute dependence; and hence comes the first distribution of the duties of life into a class called *natural theology*: *theology*, because God is the object of our contemplation; and *natural theology*, because the duties to be done in regard to God, are such, and such only as are discoverable by our observing and exercising our reason on the works of nature. By considering ourselves, we find a second class of ideas, which make up what is called *moral philosophy*, or more properly *moral theology*: and in this we place the rules by which man conducts himself to become virtuous, in order to become happy. Extending our views a little further, and taking in proper notions of the various situations in life, to which men are subject, and the various connexions which we necessarily have in the world, we perceive a set of general principles just and useful, and all necessary to the happiness of these situations and relations; and hence comes a third branch of morality, called *general policy*, or common prudence. The next exertion of thinking and reasoning regards nations, and to this belongs a large class of ideas, all tending to public prosperity and felicity; *national policy* is, therefore, a fourth branch of morality; and it includes all the actions necessary to govern a state, so as to produce civil order and social happiness. To these, by extending our thoughts yet further, we proceed to add the *law of nature*, and the *law of nations*; both which go to make up the general doctrine of *manners*, which we call morality.

If man aim at happiness, if he consult reason by what means to acquire it, if he be naturally impelled to perform such actions as are most likely to obtain that end, he will perceive that the reason of each duty is the obligation of it. As far, then, as man is governed by reason, so far doth he approve of the bond or obligation of performing the duties of life.

Let us attend to *sense of obligation*. Should it appear on examination, and that it will appear on the slightest examination, is too evident, that the senses of the body irritate the passions of the heart, and that both conspiring together against the dominion of reason, become so powerful as to take the lead, reason will be perverted, the nature and fitness of things disordered, improprieties and calamities introduced, and, consequently, the great end, happiness, annihilated. In this case, the nature of things would remain what it was, obligation to duties would continue just the same, and there would be no change, except in the *order* of actions, and in the loss of that end, happiness, which order would have produced.

This speculation, if we advert to the real state of things, will become fact fully established in our judgment. True, the first branch of

morality is natural theology; but have mankind in general, in all ages and countries, sought rational happiness in worshipping the one Great Supreme? Whence, then, is idolatry and whence that neglect of the Father of Universal nature, or what is worse, that direct opposition to him? Morality, we grant, hath always been, as it yet continues to be, beautifully depicted in academical theses; professors of each branch of literature have successively contributed to colour and adorn the subject, and yet, in real life, neither the law of nature nor that of nations, nor that of private virtue, or public policy, hath been generally obeyed; but, on the contrary, by crimes of all descriptions, "*the whole earth hath been filled with violence*;" Gen. vi. 11. 13. Alas! what is the life of each individual but a succession of mistakes and sins? What the histories of families, nations, and great monarchies, but narrations of injustice and woe? Morality, lovely goddess, was a painting of exquisite art, placed in proper light in a public gallery, for the inspection and entertainment of connoisseurs; but she was cold, and her admirers unanimated: the objects that fired their passions had not her beauty, but they were alive. In one word, *obligation* to virtue is eternal and immutable; but *sense of obligation* is lost by sin.

3. *Motive*. We will not enter here on that difficult question, the origin of evil. We will not attempt to wade across that boundless ocean of difficulties, so full of shipwrecks. Evil is in the world, and the permission of it is certainly consistent with the attributes of God. Our inability to account for it is another thing, and the fact is not affected by it. Experiment hath convinced us, that revelation, along with a thousand other proofs of its divinity, brings the irrefragable evidence of *motive* to obedience; a heavenly present, and every way suited to the condition of man!

It would be endless to enumerate the motives to obedience, which deck the scriptures as the stars adorn the sky: each hath been an object of considerable magnitude to persons in some ages and situations: but there is one of infinite magnificence, which eclipses all the rest, called *the sun of righteousness*, I mean Jesus Christ. In him the meekness of Moses, and the patience of Job, the rectitude of the ten commandments, and the generosity of the gospel, are all united; and him we will now consider a moment in the light of motive to obedience.

By considering the *prophecies* which preceded his advent, and by comparing his advent with those prophecies, we are impelled to allow the divinity of his mission. This is one motive, or one class of motives, to moral obedience. By observing the *miracles* which he wrought, we are obliged to exclaim with Nicodemus, "No man can do what thou doest, except God be with him." This is a second class of motives. By attending to his *doctrines*, we obtain a third set of powerful and irresistible motives to obedience. His *example* affords a fourth, for his life is made up of a set of actions, all manifestly just and proper; each by its beauty commending itself to every serious spectator.

This moral excellence, this conformity to Jesus Christ, is the only authentic evidence of the truth of our faith, as the apostle Paul teach

es us with the utmost clearness, in the thirteenth chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians. Faith and practice, in the Christian religion, are inseparably connected; for as there can be no true morality without faith in the doctrines of Christ, so there can be no true faith without Christian morality: and it is for this reason chiefly, that we should be diligent to distinguish the pure doctrines of revelation from human explications, because a belief of the former, produces a holy conformity to the example of Christ; while an improper attachment to the latter, leaves us where zeal for the traditions of the fathers left the Jews. We have treated of this at large in the preface to the third volume, and it is needless to enlarge here. *Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.*

It was not my intention, when I translated the first four volumes of Mr. Saurin's sermons, to add any more;\* but, willing to contribute my mite towards the pleasure and edification of such as having read the four desired a fifth, I took an opportunity, and added this fifth volume to a second edition of the four first. There is no alteration worth mentioning in the four, except that the editor thinking the fourth too thin, I have given him a dissertation on the supposed madness of David at the court of Achish, translated from the French of Mr. Dumont, which he has added to increase the size of that volume, following, however, his own ideas in this, and not mine.

Saurin's sermons, in the original, are twelve octavo volumes, eleven of which are miscellaneous, and one contains a regular train of sermons for Lent, and is the only set of sermons among the whole. The four English volumes are composed of a selection of sermons from the whole with a view to a kind of order, the first being intended to convey proper ideas of the true character of God, the second to establish revelation, and so on: but this volume is miscellaneous, and contains fourteen sermons on various subjects. For my part, almost all the sermons of our author are of equal value in my eye, and each seems to me to have a beauty peculiar to itself, and superior in its kind; but when I speak thus, I wish to be understood.

It is not to be imagined, that a translator adopts all the sentiments of his author. To approve of a man's religious views in general is a reason sufficient to engage a person to translate, and it would be needless, if not arrogant, to enter a protest in a note against every word in which the author differed from the translator. In general, I think, Saurin is one of the first of modern preachers: and his sermons, the whole construction of them, worth the attention of any teacher of Christianity, who wishes to excel in his way: but there are many articles taken separately in which my ideas differ entirely from those of Mr. Saurin, both in doctrine, rites, discipline, and other circumstances.

For example; our author speaks a language

\* This preface was originally prefixed to the fifth volume of these sermons; but as that is now incorporated with the fourth, it is inserted in this place.—*Note of the last London Edition.*

concerning the rites of Christianity, which I do not profess to understand. All he says of infant baptism appears to me erroneous, for I think infant baptism an innovation. When he speaks of the Lord's Supper and talks of a holy table, consecration, august symbols, and sublime mysteries of the sacrament, I confess, my approbation pauses, and I feel the exercise of my understanding suspended, or rather diverted from the preacher to what I suspect the sources of his mistakes. The Lord's Supper is a commemoration of the most important of all events to us, the death of Christ; but I know of no mystery in it, and the primitive church knew of none; mystery and transubstantiation rose together, and together should have expired. *August symbols* may seem bombast to us, but such epithets ought to pass with impunity among the gay and ever exuberant sons of France.

Again, in regard to church discipline, our author sometimes addresses civil magistrates, to suppress scandalous books of divinity, and exhorts them to protect the church, and to furnish it with sound and able pastors; but, when I translate such passages, I recollect Mr. Saurin was a Presbyterian, a friend to establishments with toleration however, and in his system of church discipline, the civil magistrate is to take order as some divines have sublimely expressed it. My ideas of the absolute freedom of the press, and the independent right of every Christian society to elect its own officers, and to judge for itself in every possible case of religion, oblige me in this subject also to differ from our author.

Further, Mr. Saurin, in his addresses to ministers, speaks of them in a style much too high for my notions. I think all Christians are brethren, and that any man, who understands the Christian religion himself, may teach it to one other man, or to two other men, or to two hundred, or to two thousand, if they think proper to invite him to do so; and I suppose what they call ordination not necessary to the exercise of his abilities: much less do I think that there is a secret something, call it Holy Ghost, or what else you please, that passes from the hand of a clerical ordainer, to the whole essence of the ordained, conveying validity, power, indelible character, and so to speak, creation to his ministry. Mr. Saurin's colleagues are *Levites holy to the Lord, ambassadors of the King of kings, administrators of the new covenant*, who have written on their foreheads *holiness to the Lord*, and on their breasts the names of the *children of Israel!* In the writings of Moses all this is history: in the sermons of Mr. Saurin all this is oratory: in my creed all this is nonentity.

It signifies so little to the world what such an obscure man as I believe and approve, that I never thought to remark any of these articles in translating and prefacing the four first volumes: but lest I should seem, while I am propagating truth, to countenance error, I thought it necessary to make this remark. Indeed, I have always flattered myself for differing from Saurin; for I took it for probable evidence that I had the virtue to think for myself, even in the presence of the man in the world the most likely to seduce me. Had

I a human oracle in religion, perhaps Saurin would be the man: but *one is our master, even Christ.*

Notwithstanding these objections, I honour this man for his great abilities! much more for the holy use he made of them in teaching the Christian religion; and also for the seal, which it pleased God to set to his ministry; for he was, in the account of a great number of his brethren, a *chosen vessel* unto the Lord, filled with an *excellent treasure of the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*, and his ministry was attended with abundant success. As I have been speaking of what I judge his defects, it is but fair to add a few words of what I account his excellencies.

My exact notions of the Christian ministry are stated in the thirteenth sermon of this volume, entitled *the different methods of preachers*. Mr. Saurin, after the apostle Paul, divides Christian ministers into three classes. The first *lay another foundation* different from that which is laid. The second build on the right foundation, *wood, hay, and stubble*. The third build on the same foundation, *gold, silver, and precious stones*. I consider Mr. Saurin as one of the last class, and I think it would be very easy to exemplify from his own discourses the five excellencies, mentioned by him as descriptive of the men.

First, there is in our author a wise *choice of subjects*, and no such thing as a sermon on a question of mere curiosity. There are in the twelve volumes one hundred and forty-four sermons: but not one on a subject unimportant. I shall always esteem it a proof of a sound, prudent understanding in a teacher of religion, to make a proper choice of doctrine, text, arguments, and even images and style, adapted to the edification of his hearers. Where a man has lying before him a hundred subjects, ninety of which are indisputable, and the remaining ten extremely controverted and very obscure, what but a wayward genius can induce him nine times out of ten to choose the doubtful as the subjects of his ministry?

Saurin excels, too, in the *moral* turn of his discourses. They are all practical, and, set out from what point he will, you may be sure he will make his way to the heart in order to regulate the actions of life. Sometimes he attacks the body of sin, as in his sermon on the *passions*, and at other times he attacks a single part of this body, as in his sermon on the *despair of Judas*; one while he inculcates a particular virtue, as in the discourse on the *repentance of the unchaste woman*, another time piety, benevolence, practical religion in general: but in all he endeavours to diminish the dominion of sin, and to extend the empire of virtue.

Again, another character of his discourses is what he calls *solidity*, and which he distinguishes from the fallacious glare of mere wit and ingenuity. Not that his sermons are void of invention and acuteness: but it is easy to see his design is not to display his own genius, but to elucidate his subject; and when invention is subservient to argument, and holds light to a subject, it appears in character,

beautiful because in the service and livery of truth. Mere essays of genius are for schools and under-graduates: they ought never to appear in the Christian pulpit; for sensible people do not attend sermons to *have men's persons in admiration*, but to receive such instruction and animation as may serve their religious improvement.

Further, our author, to use again his own language, excelled in "weighing in just balances truth against error, probability against proof, conjecture against demonstration, and despised the miserable sophisms of those who defended truth with the arms of error." We have a fine example of this in the eleventh sermon, on the *deep things of God*, and there fidelity and modesty are blended in a manner extremely pleasing. The doctrine of the divine decrees hath been very much agitated, and into two extremes, each under some plausible pretence, divines have gone. Some have not only made up their own minds on the subject, in which they were right, but they have gone so far as to exact a conformity of opinion from others, and have made such conformity the price of their friendship, and, so to speak, a ticket for admittance to the Lord's Supper, and church communion: in this they were wrong. Others struck with the glaring absurdity of the former, have gone to the opposite extreme, and thought it needless to form any sentiments at all on this, and no other subjects connected with it. Our author sets a fine example of a wise moderation. On the one hand, with a wisdom, that does him honour, he examines the subject, and with the fidelity of an upright soul openly declares in the face of the sun that he hath sentiments of his own, which are those of his own community, and he thinks those of the inspired writers. On the other hand, far from erecting himself, or even his synod, into a standard of orthodoxy, a tribunal to decide on the rights and privileges of other Christians, he opens his benevolent arms to admit them to communion, and, with a graceful modesty, to use his own language, *puts his hand on his mouth*, in regard to many difficulties that belong to his own system. I think this sermon may serve for a model of treating this subject, and many others of the Christian religion. There is a certain point, to which conviction must go, because evidence goes before it to lead the way, and up to this point we believe because we understand: but beyond this we have no faith, because we have no understanding, and can have no conviction, because we have no evidence. This point differs in different men according to the different strength of their mental powers, and as there is no such thing as a standard soul, by which all other souls ought to be estimated, so there can be no such thing as a human test in a Christian church, by which the opinions of other Christians ought to be valued. There is one insuperable difficulty, which can never be surmounted, in setting up human tests, that is, *whose opinion shall the test be, yours or mine?* and the only consistent church in the world on this article is the church of Rome.

Were men as much inclined to unite, and to use gentle healing measures, as they are to



divide, and to gratify an arbitrary censorious spirit, they would neither be so ridiculous as to pretend to have no fixed sentiments of their own in religion, nor so unjust as to make their own opinions a standard for all other men. There are in religion some great, principal, infallible truths, and there are various fallible inferences derived by different Christians: in the first all agree, in the last all should agree to differ. I think this, I repeat it again, a chief excellence in our author. He has sentiments of his own, but he holds them in a liberal generous manner, no way injurious to the rights of other men.

In the sermon above mentioned, Saurin makes a fifth class of mean *superficial* builders without elevation and penetration, and against these he sets such as soar aloft in the exercise of the ministry, and in this also he himself excels. His thoughts on some subjects are lofty, and his language sublime. He is not afraid of considering religion in union with our feelings, nor does he hesitate to address hope and fear, and other passions of our minds with those great truths of the gospel, which are intended to allure, awake, arouse, and excite us to action. Terribly sometimes does he treat of future punishment, and generally under the awful image made use of in holy Scriptures: delightfully at other times does he speak of eternal happiness in the enjoyment of God. On both these subjects, on the perfections of God, and on the exercise of piety, particularly in the closet, he stretches and soars, not out of sight, beyond truth and the reason of things, but so high only as to elevate and animate his hearers. By the most exact rules of a wise and well-directed eloquence most of his sermons are composed: at first cool and gentle like a morning in May, as they proceed glowing with a pleasant warmth, and toward the close not so much inflaming as settling and incorporating the fire of the subject with the spirits of his hearers, so as to produce the brisk circulation of every virtue of which the heart of man is capable, and all which spend their force in the performance of the duties of life.

Our author always treats his hearers like rational creatures, and excels in laying a ground of argument to convince the judgment before he offers to affect the passion; but what I admire most of all in him is his conscientious attachment to the *connected sense of Scripture*. The inspired book is that precisely, which ought to be explained in a Christian auditory, and above all, that part of it the New Testament, and the connected sense is that, which only deserves to be called the true and real sense of Scripture. By detached passages, as Saurin observes, any thing may be proved from Scripture, even that there is no God; and I question whether any one of our wretched customs has so much contributed to produce and cherish error as that of taking detached passages of Scripture for the whole doctrine of Scripture on any particular subject. An adept in this art will cull one verse from Obadiah, another from Jude, a third from Leviticus, and a fourth from Solomon's Song, and compile a fundamental doctrine to be received as the mind of God by all good Christians under pain

of his displeasure. Were this a common man, and not a sublime genius under the influence of the Holy Spirit, and so beyond advice, I would presume to counsel him always to cap his medley of a sermon with a text from the Lamentations of Jeremiah.

Do we then propose Saurin as a model for all preachers? By no means. But as we suppose there are diversities of gifts for the edification of the church, each excellent in its kind, so we suppose Saurin a model in his own class. There is in the writings of the apostle Paul one of the finest allegories in the world to illustrate this subject. The Christian church is considered under the image of a *human body*, and of this body God is considered as the Spirit or *soul*: and the most refined morality is drawn from the fact. "The eye cannot say unto the hand I have no need of thee: nor again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you. If one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it;" for it is the same God which worketh all diversities of gifts in all good men. It is highly probable, that what is affirmed of individuals may be true of collective bodies of men. One church may excel in literature, another in purity of doctrine, a third in simplicity of worship, a fourth in administration of ordinances, a fifth in sweetness of temper and disposition, and so on. It is not for us to investigate this subject now; let it suffice to observe that the French reformed church has excelled in a clear, convincing and animating way of composing and delivering Christian sermons. Never so warm as to forget reasoning, never so accurate as to omit energy, not always placid, not always rapid, never so moral as to be dry and insipid, never so evangelical and savoury as to spiritualize the Scriptures till *the fat of a kidney* is as good a body of divinity as the whole sermon of Jesus Christ on the mount. Different as my ideas of some subjects are from those of Mr. Saurin, yet I wish we had a Saurin in every parish: yea, so entirely would I go into the doctrine of the apostle's allegory just now mentioned, that I would encourage even a builder of "wood, hay and stubble," suppose he erected his absurdities *on the foundation laid* in Scripture, to destroy the works of the devil in any place where those words are practised. In a village made up of a stupid thing called a squire, a mercenary priest, a set of intoxicated farmers, and a train of idle, profligate, and miserable poor, and where the barbarous rhymes in their churchyard inform us that they are all either gone or going to heaven (and we have too many such parishes in remote parts of the kingdom,) would it not be infinitely better for society if an honest enthusiast could convert these people to piety and morality, though it were affected by spiritualizing all the flanks and kidneys, and bullocks and red cows, mentioned in Scripture? Any thing of religion is better than debauchery and blasphemy.

Such a set of converts would grow in time up to majority, and when of age would look back on their first religious nourishment as men do on the amusements of their childhood: and among other reformatations would cleanse public instruction from Jewish allegory, Pagan

philosophy, and the gaudy tinsel of the schools. From a state of gross ignorance and vice up to a state of the highest perfection of Christian knowledge and virtue, lie infinite degrees of improvement one above another, in a scale of excellence up to "the first-born of every creature," the perfect teacher sent from God. In this scale our author occupies a high place in my eye, and if a reader choose to place him a few degrees lower, I shall not contend about that; for on my principles, if he contribute in any, even the least degree, to the cause of truth and virtue, he is a foreigner worth our acquaintance, and the Gallic in his appearance will not disgust a friend to the best interests of mankind. I say nothing of the *translation*: it does not become me. Let those who are able, do better. Envy of this kind I have none.

*The following is the prayer which Mr. Saurin generally used immediately before Sermon.*

O Lord! our God and Father! thou seest us prostrate in thy presence to render the homage due to thy Majesty, to confess our sins to thee, and to implore thy favour. Had we followed the first emotions of our consciences, we should not have presumed to lift our eyes to heaven, but should have fled from thy sight. We are creatures mean and infirm, a thousand times more unworthy of appearing before thee for our depravity, than for our natural meanness. But, O Lord! though our sins and miseries depress us, yet thy mercy lifts us up. Thou art a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in goodness: thou hast no pleasure in the death of a sinner; but that he should repent and live; and thou hast given thy Son to the world, that whosoever believeth in him should have everlasting life. So many benefits, so many promises encourage our trembling consciences, and inspire us with the liberty we now take to approach the throne of thy mercy, and to implore the powerful aid of thy grace. We have always need of thine assistance: but now, O Lord! we feel a more than usual want. We are assembled in thy house to learn the doctrines of our salvation, and the rules of our

conduct: but, O God! our duty surpasses our strength, we cannot succeed without thy Holy Spirit. Grant a double portion of this to us who preach thy word; grant after we have understood thine oracles, we may be first affected with the truths they contain, before we propose them to others, and may we announce them in a manner suitable to their excellence. But suffer us not to labour in vain; dispose our hearers to receive thine orders with submission, and to practise them with punctuality; so that all of us, being animated with one spirit, and aiming at one end, may sanctify our conduct, and live agreeable to the holiness of our calling. We pray for all these blessings in the name of thy well-beloved Son Jesus Christ our Lord. *Our Father, &c.*

*The following is the approbation of the Walloon Church at Dort, employed by the Synod at Utrecht to examine the Sermons of Mr. Saurin.*

WE have found nothing in all these sermons contrary to the doctrine received among us. We have remarked every where a manly eloquence, a close reasoning, an imagination lively and proper to establish the truths of our holy religion, and to explain substantially and elegantly the duties of morality. Accordingly, we believe they will effectually contribute to edify the church, and to render more and more respectable the memory of this worthy servant of God, whose death the examination of his works has given us a fresh occasion to lament. We attest this to the venerable Synod at Utrecht. In the same sentiments we send the present attestation to our most dear brother Mr. Dumont, pastor and professor at Rotterdam, whom the late Mr. Saurin appointed by his will to take the charge of publishing such of his works as were fit for the press. Done at the Consistory at the Walloon Church at Dort, May 20th, 1731, and signed by order of all, by

H. G. CERTON, *Pastor.*

J. COMPERAT, *Pastor.*

ADRIAN BRAETS JACOBZ, *Elder.*

JOHN BACKRIS, *Elder.*

JOHN VAN BREDÁ, *Deacon.*

SIMON TAAV VAN CAMPEN, *Deacon.*

# SERMON I.

## THE PERFECTION OF CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE.

HEB. v. 12—14. vi. 1—3.

*For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again, which be the first principles of the oracles of God, and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness; for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of age have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.—Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, LET US GO ON UNTO PERFECTION, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do if God permit.*

I HAVE put two subjects together which are closely connected, and I intend to explain both in this discourse. The last part of the text is a consequence of the first. In the first, St. Paul reproves some Christians for their little knowledge; in the last, he exhorts them to increase it: and the connexion of both will appear, if you attend to the subject under his consideration. The Epistle to the Hebrews, which may be considered as the apostle's principal work, treats of the most difficult points of divinity and morality. In particular, this is the idea that must be formed of Melchisedec's priesthood, as a prefiguration of Jesus Christ's. This mysterious subject the apostle had begun to discuss, but he had not proceeded far in it before he found himself at a stand, by recollecting the character of those to whom he was writing. He describes them in the text, as men who were grown old in the profession of Christianity indeed, but who knew nothing more of it than its first principles: and he endeavours to animate them with the laudable ambition of penetrating the noblest parts of that excellent system of religion, which Jesus Christ had published, and which his apostles had explained in all its beauty, and in all its extent.

This general notion of St. Paul's design, in the words of my text, is the best comment on his meaning, and the best explication that we can give of his terms.

By the *first principles of the oracles of God*, to which the Hebrews confined themselves, the apostle means the rudiments of that science of which God is the object; that is, Christian divinity and morality: and these rudiments are here also called the *principles of Christ*,\* that is, the first principles of that doctrine which Jesus Christ had taught. These are compared to *milk*, which is given to children incapable of digesting *strong meat*; and they are opposed to the profound knowledge of those, who have been habituated by long exercise to study and meditation, or, as the apostle expresses it, "who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

In this class St. Paul places, first, *repentance from dead works, and faith towards God*. These were the first truths which the heralds of the

gospel preached to their hearers: to them they said, "Repent, and believe the gospel."

St. Paul places in the same class, secondly, the doctrine of baptisms, that is, the confession of faith that was required of those who had resolved to profess Christianity and to be baptized. Of such persons a confession was required, and their answers to certain questions were demanded. The formularies that have been used upon this occasion, have been extremely diversified at different places and in different times, but the most ancient are the shortest and the most determinate. One question that was put to the catechumen, was, "Dost thou renounce the devil?" to which he answered, "I renounce him." Another was, "Dost thou believe in Jesus Christ?" to which he replied, "I believe in him." St. Cyprian calls these questions the *baptismal interrogatory*; and the answers are called by Tertullian, the *answer of salvation*: and we have a passage upon this article in an author still more respectable, I mean St. Peter, who says, "Baptism doth also now save us; not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God," 1 Pet. iii. 21; that is, the answer that was given by the catechumen before his baptism.

Thirdly, Among the rudiments or first principles of Christianity, St. Paul puts the *laying on of hands*, by which we understand the gift of miracles, which the apostles communicated, by imposition of hands to those who embraced the gospel. We have several instances of this in Scripture, and a particular account of it in the eighth chapter of Acts, verses 11, 12, 14, 17. It is there said, that Philip, having undeceived many of the Samaritans, whom Simon the sorcerer "had of a long time bewitched, baptized both men and women," and that the apostles, Peter and John, "laid their hands on them," and by that ceremony communicated to them the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

The *resurrection of the dead, and the eternal judgment*, two other articles which St. Paul places in the same class; articles believed by the weakest Christians, received by the greatest part of the Jews, and admitted by even many of the heathens. Now the apostle wishes that the Hebrews, *leaving these principles,*

\* ΤΗΣ ΜΕΚΗΣ ΤΟΥ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ ΛΟΓΟΣ.

would aspire to be *perfect*. Let us go on unto *perfection*, says he; let us proceed from the catechumen state, to a thorough acquaintance with that religion, which is *wisdom among them that are perfect*; that is, a system of doctrine which cannot be well understood by any except by such as the heathens called *perfect*. They denominated those *perfect*, who did not rest in a superficial knowledge of a science, but who endeavoured thoroughly to understand the whole. This was the design of St. Paul in writing to the Hebrews; and this is ours in addressing you.

We will endeavour, first, to give you as exact and adequate a notion as we can of Christian divinity and morality, and from thence infer, that you can neither see the beauty, nor reap the benefit, of either of them, while you confine yourselves, as most of you do, to a few loose principles, and continue unacquainted with the whole system or body of religion.

Secondly, We will inquire, why so many of us do confine our attention to these first truths, and never proceed to the rest.

Lastly, We will give you some directions how to increase your knowledge, and to attain that *perfection* to which St. Paul endeavoured to conduct the Hebrews. This is the whole that we propose to treat of in this discourse.

I. It is evident from the nature of Christianity, that you can neither see its beauties, nor reap its benefits, while you attend only to some loose principles, and do not consider the whole system: for the truths of religion form a system, a body of coherent doctrines, closely connected, and in perfect harmony. Nothing better distinguishes the accurate judgment of an orator, or a philosopher, than the connexion of his orations or systems. Unconnected systems, orations, in which the author is determined only by caprice and chance, as it were, to place the proposition which follows after that which precedes, and that which has precedence of that which follows; such orations and systems are less worthy of rational beings, than of creatures destitute of intelligence, whom nature has formed capable of producing sounds indeed, but not of forming ideas. Orations and systems should be connected; each part should occupy the place which order and accuracy, not caprice and chance assign it. They should resemble buildings constructed according to the rules of art; the laws of which are never arbitrary, but fixed and inviolable, founded on the nature of regularity and proportion: or to use St. Paul's expression, each should be "a body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth," Eph. iv. 16.

Let us apply this to the subject in hand. Nothing better proves the divinity of religion, than the connexion, the harmony, the agreement of its component parts. I am aware that this grand characteristic of Christianity has occasioned many mistakes among mankind. Under pretence that a religion proceeding from God must harmonize in its component parts, men have licentiously contrived a chain of propositions to please themselves. They have substituted a phantom of their own imagination, for that body of doctrine which God has given us in the Holy Scriptures. Hence so much ob-

stinacy in maintaining, after so much rashness and presumption in advancing, such phantoms. For, my brethren, of all obstinate people, none excel more in their dreadful kind, than those who are prejudiced in favour of certain systems. A man who does not think himself capable of forming a connected system, can bear contradiction, because, if he be obliged to give up some of the propositions which he has advanced, some others which he embraces will not be disputed, and what remains may indemnify him for what he surrenders. But a man prepossessed with an imaginary system of his own, has seldom so much teachableness. He knows, that if one link be taken away, his chain falls to pieces; and that there is no removing a single stone from his building without destroying the whole edifice: he considers the upper skins which covered the tabernacle, as typical as the ark in the holy place, or the mercy-seat itself. The staff with which Jacob passed over Euphrates, and of which he said; "with my staff I passed over this river," seems to him as much designed by the Spirit of God, to typify the cross on which Jesus Christ redeemed the church, as the serpent of brass which was lifted up in the desert by the express command of God himself.

But if infatuation with systems hath occasioned so many disorders in the church, the opposite disposition, I mean, the obstinate rejection of all, or the careless composition of some, hath been equally hurtful: for it is no less dangerous, in a system of religion, to omit what really belongs to it, than to incorporate any thing foreign from it.

Let us be more explicit. There are two sorts of truths in religion; truths of speculation, and truths of practice. Each truth is connected not only with other truths in its own class, but truths of the first class are connected with those of the second, and of these parts thus united, is composed that admirable body of doctrine which forms the system of religion.

There are in religion some truths of speculation, there is a chain of doctrines. God is holy: this is the first truth. A holy God can have no intimate communion with unholy creatures: this is a second truth which follows from the first. God, who can have no communion with unholy creatures, can have no communion with men, who are unholy creatures: this is a third truth which follows from the second. Men, who are unholy creatures, being incapable as such of communion with the happy God, must on that very account be entirely miserable: this is a fourth truth which follows from the third. Men, who must be absolutely miserable because they can have no communion with the holy, happy God, become objects of the compassion of that God, who is as loving and merciful as he is happy and holy: this is a fifth truth which follows from the fourth. This loving and merciful God is naturally inclined to relieve a multitude of his creatures, who are ready to be plunged into the deepest miseries: this is a sixth truth which follows from the fifth.

Thus follow the thread of Jesus Christ's theology, and you will find, as I said, each part that composes it, depending on another, and every one giving another the hand. For, from

the loving and merciful inclination of God to relieve a multitude of his creatures from a threatening abyss of the deepest miseries, follows the mission of Jesus Christ; because it was fit that the remedy chosen of God to relieve the miseries of men should bear a proportion to the causes which produced it. From the doctrine of Jesus Christ's mission follows the necessity of the Spirit of God: because it would have been impossible for men to have discovered by their own speculations the way of salvation, unless they had been assisted by a supernatural revelation, according to that saying, "Things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, God hath revealed unto us by his Spirit," 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10. From the doctrines of the mission of the Son of God, and of the gift of the Holy Spirit, follows this most comfortable truth, that we are the objects of the love of God, even of love the most vehement and sincere that can be imagined: for "God commended his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us," Rom. v. 8. And, as we are objects of that love which God hath commended to us in his Son, it follows, that no bounds can be set to our happiness, that there is no treasure too rich in the mines of *the blessed God*, no duration too long in eternity, no communion with the Creator too close, too intimate, too tender, which we have not a right to expect; according to that comfortable, that ecstatic maxim of St. Paul,—God, who "spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Rom. viii. 32.

This is a chain of some truths of the gospel. We do not say that it might not be lengthened; we do not pretend to have given a complete system of the doctrines of the gospel; we only say that the doctrines proposed are closely connected, and that one produces another in a system of speculative gospel truths.

In like manner, there is a connexion between practical truths. The class of practical truths is connected with the class of speculative truths, and each practical truth is connected with another practical truth.

The class of practical truths is connected with the class of speculative truths. As soon as ever we are convinced of the truth of the doctrines just now mentioned, we shall be thereby convinced that we are under an indispensable necessity to devote ourselves to holiness. People, who draw consequences from our doctrines injurious to morality, fall into the most gross and palpable of all contradictions. The single doctrine of Jesus Christ's mission naturally produces the necessity of sanctification. Ye believe that the love of holiness is so essential to God, that rather than pardon criminals without punishing their crimes, he has punished his own Son. And can ye believe that the God, to whom holiness is so essential, will bear with you while ye make no efforts to be holy? Do not ye see that in this supposition ye imagine a contradictory God, or, rather that ye contradict yourselves? In the first supposition ye conceive a God to whom sin is infinitely odious: in the second, ye conceive a God to whom sin is infinitely

tolerable. In the first supposition, ye conceive a God, who, by the holiness of his nature, exacts a satisfaction: in the second, ye conceive a God, who, by the indifference of his nature, loves the sinner while he derives no motives from the satisfaction to forsake his sin. In the first supposition, ye imagine a God who opposes the strongest barriers against vice: in the second, ye imagine a God who removes every obstacle to vice: nothing being more likely to confirm men in sin than an imagination, that, to what length soever they go, they may always find in the sacrifice of the Son of God, an infallible way of avoiding the punishment due to their sin, whenever they shall have recourse to that sacrifice. Were it necessary to enlarge this article, and to take one doctrine after another, you would see that every doctrine of religion proves what we have advanced, concerning the natural connexion of religious speculative truths, with truths of practice.

But, if practical truths of religion are connected with speculative truths, each of the truths of practice is also closely connected with another. All virtues mutually support each other, and there is no invalidating one part of our morality, without, on that very account, invalidating the whole.

In our treatises of morality, we have usually assigned three objects to our virtues. The first of these objects is God: the second is our neighbour: and the third ourselves. St. Paul is the author of this division. "The grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men; teaching us, that denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world," Tit. ii. 11, 12. But all these are connected together: for we cannot live *godly* without living at the same time *righteously* and *soberly*: because to live *godly* is to perform what religion appoints, and to take that perfect Being for our example to whom religion conducts and unites us. Now to live as religion appoints, and to take that perfect Being for our pattern to whom religion conducts and unites us, is to live *righteously* with our neighbour, and *soberly* with ourselves. Strictly speaking, we have not one virtue unless we have all virtues; nor are we free from one vice unless we be free from all vices; we are not truly charitable unless we be truly just, nor are we truly just unless we be truly charitable: we are not truly liberal but as we avoid profuseness, nor are we truly frugal but as we avoid avarice. As I said before, all virtues naturally follow one another, and afford each other a mutual support.

Such is the chain of religious truths: such is the connexion, not only of each truth of speculation, but of speculative truths with the truths of practice. There is then a concatenation, a harmony, a connexion in the truths of religion; there is a system, a body of doctrine, in the gospel. This is the article that we proposed to prove.

But, a religion in which there is such a chain, such a harmony and connexion; a body of doctrine so systematically compacted and united, ought not to be taken by bits and parts.

To illustrate this we may compare spiritual with natural things. The more art and ingenuity there is in a machine composed of divers wheels, the more necessary it is to consider it in its whole, and in all its arrangements, and the more does its beauty escape our observation when we confine our attention to a single wheel: because the more art there is in a machine, the more essential is the minutest part to its perfection. Now deprive a machine of an essential part, and you deface and destroy it.

Apply this to spiritual things. In a compact system, in a coherent body of doctrine, there is nothing useless, nothing which ought to occupy the very place that the genius who composed the whole hath given it. What will become of religion if ye consider any of its doctrines separately? What becomes of religion if ye consider the holiness of God, without his justice, or his justice without his mercy?

II. Let us then proceed to inquire why so many of us confine ourselves to a small number of religious truths, and incapacitate ourselves for examining the whole system. The fact is too certain. Hence, our preachers seem to lead us in obscure paths, and to lose us in abstract speculations, when they treat of some of the attributes of God; such as his faithfulness, his love of order, his regard for his intelligent creatures. It is owing to this that we are, in some sense, well acquainted with some truths of religion, while we remain entirely ignorant of others, which are equally plain, and equally important. Hence it is that the greatest part of our sermons produce so little fruit, because sermons are, at least they ought to be, connected discourses, in which the principle founds the consequence, and the consequence follows the principle; all which supposes in the hearers a habit of meditation and attention. For the same reason we are apt to be offended when any body attempts to draw us out of the sphere of our prejudices, and are not only ignorant, but (if you will pardon the expression) ignorant with gravity, and derive I know not what glory from our own stupidity. Hence it is that a preacher is seldom or never allowed to soar in his sermons, to rise into the contemplation of some lofty and rapturous objects, but must always descend to the *first principles* of religion, as if he preached for the first time, or, as if his auditors for the first time heard. Hence also it is that some doctrines, which are true in themselves, demonstrated in our scriptures, and essential to religion, become errors, yea, sources of many errors in our mouths, because we consider them only in themselves, and not in connexion with other doctrines, or in the proper places to which they belong in the system of religion. This might be easily proved in regard to the doctrines of the mercy of God in Jesus Christ, the sacrifice of the cross, the necessity of the Holy Spirit's assistance; doctrines true, demonstrated, and essential; but doctrines which will precipitate us from one abyss to another, if we consider them as our people too often consider them, and as they have been too often considered in the schools, in an abstract and detached manner. The fact then is too certain. Let us attend to the principal causes of it.

Four principal causes may be assigned: 1.

A party-spirit. 2. The choice of teachers. 3. A hurry of business. Above all, 4. The love of pleasure. As we shall take the liberty of pointing out the causes of this malady, we shall also prescribe the remedy, whether our most humble remonstrances regard the people, the pastors, or even the sovereign, whose noblest office, as well as most sacred and inviolable duty, it is to watch for the support of the truth, and the government of the church.

1. The first cause that we have assigned is a *party-spirit*. This is a disposition that cannot be easily defined, and it would be difficult to include in a definition of it even its genus and species: it is a monstrous composition of all bad genuses and of all bad species; it is a hydra that reproduces while it seems to destroy itself, and which, when one head hath been cut off, instantly produces a thousand more. Sometimes it is superstition, which inclines us to deify certain idols, and, after having formed, to prostrate first before them. Sometimes it is ignorance which prevents our perceiving the importance of some revealed truths, or the dreadful consequences of some prejudices that we had embraced in childhood. Sometimes it is arrogance, which rashly maintains whatever it has once advanced, advanced perhaps inconsiderately, but which will afterwards be resolutely defended till death, for no other reason but because it has been once asserted, and because it is too mortifying to yield, and say, *I am wrong, I was mistaken*. Sometimes it is a spirit of malice and barbarity, which abhors, exclaims against, persecutes, and would even exterminate, all who dare contradict its oracular propositions. Oftener still it is the union of all these vices together. A party-spirit is that disposition which evenenoms so many hearts, separates so many families, divides so many societies, which has produced so many excommunications, thundered out so many anathemas, drawn up so many canons, assembled so many councils, and has been so often on the point of subverting the great work of the reformation, the noblest opposition that was ever formed against it.

This spirit, which we have faintly described, must naturally incapacitate a man for considering the whole of religion: it must naturally incline him to take it only by bits and shreds. On the one hand, it contracts the mind: for how can a soul that harbours and cherishes all the phantoms which a party-spirit produces, how can such a soul study and meditate as religion requires? On the other hand, a party-spirit depraves the heart, and eradicates the desire of knowing religion. A man animated with the spirit of party, directs all his attention to such propositions of religion as seem to favour his erroneous opinions, and irregular passions, and diverts it from all that oppose them; his system includes only what strengthens his party, it is exclusive of every thing that weakens or opposes it.

This is the first cause of the malady. The remedy is easily discovered. Let us divest ourselves of a party-spirit. Let us never determine an opinion, by its agreement or disagreement with what our masters, our parents, or our teachers have inculcated, but by its conformity or contrariety to the doctrine of Jesus

Christ and his apostles. Let us never receive or reject a maxim because it favours or opposes our passions, but as it agrees with, or opposes the laws of that tribunal, the basis of which are justice and truth. Let us be fully convinced that our chief study should be, to know what God determines, and to make his commands the only rules of our knowledge and practice.

2. The second cause of the evil we would remove is, *The choice of teachers.* In general, we have three sorts of teachers. The first are catechists, who teach our children the principles of religion. The second are ministers. The third prepare the minds of young people for the ministry itself.

The carelessness that prevails in the choice of the first sort of teachers cannot be sufficiently lamented. The care of instructing our children is committed to people more fit for disciples than masters, and the meanest talents are thought more than sufficient to teach the first principles of religion. The narrowest and dullest genius is not ashamed to profess himself a divine and a catechist. And yet what capacity does it not require to lay the first foundations of the edifice of salvation! What address to take the different forms necessary to insinuate into minds of catechumens, and to conciliate their attention and love! What dexterity to proportion instruction to the different ages and characters of learners! How much knowledge, and how many accomplishments are necessary to discern what is fundamental to a youth of fifteen years of age! What one child of superior talents cannot be ignorant of without danger, and what another of inferior talents may remain innocently unacquainted with! Heads of families, this article concerns you in a particular manner. What account can ye render to God of the children with whom he has intrusted you, if, while ye take so much pains, and are at so much expense to teach them the liberal arts, and to acquaint them with human sciences, ye discover so much negligence in teaching them the knowledge of salvation? Not only in a future state ought ye to fear the punishment of so criminal a conduct; ye will be punished in this present world. Children ignorant of religion will but little understand their duty to their parents. They will become the cross, as they will be the shame and infamy of your life. They will shake off your yoke as soon as they have passed their childhood; they will abandon you to the weakness, infirmities, and disquietudes of old age; when you arrive at that distasteful period of life, which can be rendered agreeable only by the care, the tenderness, and assiduity of a well-bred son. Let us unite all our endeavours, my dear brethren, to remove this evil. Let us honour an employment which nothing but the licentiousness of the age could have rendered contemptible. Let us consider that, as one of the most important trusts of the state, one of the most respectable posts of society, which is appointed to seminate religious principles in our children, to inspire them with piety, to guard them against the snares that they will meet with in the world, and, by these means, to render them dutiful in child-

hood, faithful in conjugal life, tender parents, good citizens, and able magistrates.

The pastors of our churches are our second class of teachers. I know that all *our sufficiency is of God*, 2 Cor. iii. 5; that though Paul may plant, and Apollos water, *God only giveth the increase*: that holy men, considering the end of the ministry, have exclaimed, *Who is sufficient for these things?* 1 Cor. iii. 6. Yet the ordinary means which God uses for the conversion of sinners, are the ministry of the word, and the qualifications of ministers, for *faith cometh by hearing*, Rom. x. 17. Now this word, my brethren, is not preached with equal power by all; and, though the *foundation* which each lays be the same, it is too true that some *build upon this foundation the gold and precious stones* of a solid and holy doctrine, while others build with the *wood, hay, and stubble*, 1 Cor. iii. 12, of their own errors, the productions of a confused imagination, and a mistaken eloquence. And as the word is not preached with the same power, so it is not attended with the same success.

But when the word proceeds from the mouth of a man whom God has sealed, and enriched with extraordinary talents; when it proceeds from a man, who has *the tongue of the learned and the wisdom of the wise*, as the Scripture speaks, Isa. l. 4. When it proceeds from a *Boanerges*, a son of thunder, from a *Moses, mighty in words and in deeds*, Mark iii. 17. Acts vii. 22, who maintains the dignity of his doctrine by the purity of his morals, and by the power of his good example, then the word is heard with attention; from the ear it passes to the mind, from the mind to the heart, from the heart to the life; it penetrates, it inflames, it transports: It becomes a *hammer* breaking the hardest hearts, a *two-edged sword*, dividing the father from the son, the son from the father, dissolving all the bonds of flesh and blood, the connexions of nature, and the love of self.

What precaution, what circumspection, and, in some sort, what dread, ought to prevail in the choice of an office, which so greatly influences the salvation of those among whom it is exercised! There needs only the bad system of a pastor to produce and preserve thousands of false notions of religion in the people's minds: notions, which fifty years' labour of a more wise and sensible ministry will scarcely be able to eradicate. There needs only a pastor sold to sordid interest to put up, in some sort, salvation to sale, and to regulate places in paradise according to the diligence or negligence with which the people gratify the avarice of him who distributes them. There needs only a pastor fretted with envy and jealousy against his brethren to poison their ministry by himself, or by his emissaries. Yea, sometimes, there needs only the want of some less essential talents in a minister to give advantage to the enemies of religion, and to deprive the truths which he preaches of that profound respect which is their due: a respect that even enemies could not withhold, if the gospel were properly preached, and its truths exhibited in their true point of view.

It would be unreasonable, perhaps, to de-

velope this article now. How many of our people would felicitate themselves if we were to furnish them with pretences for imputing their unfruitfulness to those who cultivate them! But, if this article must not be developed, what grave remonstrances, what pressing exhortations, what fervent prayers, should it occasion! Let the heads of families consider the heinousness of their conduct in presuming to offer impure victims to the Lord, and in consecrating those children to the holy ministry, in whom they cannot but discover dispositions that render them unworthy of it. May ecclesiastical bodies never assemble for the election of pastors, without making profound reflections on the importance of the service in which they are engaged, and the greatness of the trust which the sovereign commits to them! May they never ordain without recollecting, that, to a certain degree, they will be responsible for all the sad consequences of a faithless or a fruitless ministry! May they always prostrate themselves on these occasions, before God, as the apostles in the same case did, and pray, "Lord, show whom thou hast chosen," Acts i. 24. May our rulers and magistrates be affected with the worth of those souls whom the pastors instruct; and may they unite all their piety, all their pity, and all their power, to procure holy men, who may adorn so eminent, so venerable a post!

What has been said on the choice of pastors still more particularly regards the election of tutors, who are employed to form pastors themselves. Universities are public springs, whence rivulets flow into all the church. Place at the head of these bodies sound philosophers, good divines, wise casuists, and they will become seminaries of *pastors after God's heart*, who will form the minds, and regulate the morals, of the people, gently bowing them to the yoke of religion. On the contrary, place men of another character at the head of our universities, and they will send out poisoned ministers, who will diffuse through the whole church the fatal venom which themselves have imbibed.

3. The third cause which we have assigned, of the infancy and novitiate of most Christians in religious knowledge, is the multitude of their secular affairs. Far be it from us to aim at inspiring you with superstitious maxims. We do not mean that they who fill eminent posts in society should give that time to devotion which the good of the community requires. We allow, that in some critical conjunctures, the time appointed for devotion must be yielded to business. There are some urgent occasions when it is more necessary to fight than to pray: there are times of important business in which the closet must be sacrificed to the cares of life, and second causes must be attended to, even when one would wish to be occupied only about the first. Yet, after all, the duty that we recommend is indispensable. Amidst the most turbulent solitudes of life, a Christian desirous of being saved, will devote some time to his salvation. Some part of the day he will redeem from the world and society, to meditate on eternity. This was the practice of those eminent saints, whose lives are proposed as patterns to us.

The histories of Abraham, Moses, Samuel, and David, are well known, and ye recollect those parts of their lives to which we refer, without our detaining you in a repetition now.

The last cause of the incapacity of so many Christians for seeing the whole of religion in its connexion and harmony: the last cause of their taking it only by bits and shreds, is their love of sensual pleasure. We do not speak here of those gross pleasures at which heathens would have blushed, and which are incompatible with Christianity. We attack pleasures more refined, maxims for which reasonable persons become sometimes apologists: persons who on more accounts than one, are worthy of being proposed as examples: persons who would seem to be "the salt of the earth," the flower of society, and whom we cannot justly accuse of not loving religion. How rational, how religious soever they appear in other cases, they make no scruple of passing a great part of their time in gaming, in public diversions, in a round of worldly amusements; in pleasures, which not only appear harmless, but, in some sort, suitable to their rank, and which seem criminal only to those who think it their duty not to float on the surface of religion, but to examine the whole that it requires of men, on whom God hath bestowed the inestimable favour of revealing it. We may presume, that if we show people of this sort, that this way of life is one of the principal obstacles to their progress in religion, and prevents their knowing all its beauties, and relishing all its delights, we shall not speak without success. In order to this, pardon me if I conjure you to hear this article, not only with attention, but with that impartiality which alone can enable you to know whether we utter our own speculations, or preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. Recollect here that general notion of religion which we have laid down: it contains truths of speculation, and truths of practice. Such sensual pleasures as we have just now mentioned, form invincible obstacles to the knowledge of both.

I. To the knowledge of speculative truths. How is it possible for a man to obtain a complete system of the doctrines of the gospel, while he is a slave to sensual pleasures!

1. To obtain a complete system of the doctrines of the gospel, there must be a certain habit of thinking and meditating. In vain ye turn over whole volumes, in vain ye attend methodical sermons, in vain ye parade with bodies of divinity, ye can never comprehend the connexion of religious truths unless ye acquire a habit of arranging ideas, of laying down principles, of deducing consequences, in short, of forming systems yourselves. This habit cannot be acquired without exercise, it is unattainable without serious attention, and profound application. But how can people devoted to pleasure, acquire such a habit? Sensual pleasure is an inexhaustible source of dissipation: it dissipates in preparing, it dissipates in studying, it dissipates after the study is at an end.

2. To counterbalance the difficulty of meditation and study, there must be a relish for it. Those who make study a duty, or a trade, seldom make any great progress in knowledge;



at least a prodigious difference has always been observed between the proficiency of those who study by inclination, and those who study by necessity. But nothing is more capable of disgusting us with the spiritual pleasures of study and meditation, than the love of sensual pleasures. We will not intrude into the closets of these persons. But is there not a prodigious difference between their application to study and their attention to pleasure? The one is a violence offered to themselves, the other a voluptuousness, after which they sigh. The one is an intolerable burden, eagerly shaken off as soon as the time appointed expires: the other is a delicious gratification, from which it is painful to part, when nature exhausted can support it no longer, or troublesome duty demands a cessation. In the one, hours and moments are counted, and the happiest period is that which terminates the pursuit: but in the other, time glides away imperceptibly, and people wish for the power of prolonging the course of the day, and the duration of life.

3. To acquire a complete knowledge of religious truths, it is not enough to study them in the closet, in retirement and silence; we must converse with others who study them too. But the love of sensual pleasure indisposes us for such conversations. Slaves to sensual pleasures have but little taste for those delicious societies, whose mutual bond is utility, in which impartial inquirers propose their doubts, raise their objections, communicate their discoveries, and reciprocally assist each other's edification: for, deprive those who love sensual pleasures, of gaming and diversions, conversation instantly languishes, and converse is at an end.

But, secondly, if the love of sensual pleasure raise such great obstacles to the knowledge of speculative truths, it raises incomparably greater still to the truths of practice. There are some Scripture maxims which are never thought of by the persons in question, except it be to enervate and destroy them; at least, they make no part of their system of morality.

In your system of morality, what becomes of this Scripture maxim, "evil communications corrupt good manners?" 1 Cor. xv. 33. Nothing forms connexions more intimate, and at the same time more extravagant, than an immoderate love of pleasure. Men who differ in manners, age, religion, birth, principles, educations, are all united by this bond. The passionate and the moderate, the generous and the avaricious, the young and the old, agree to exercise a mutual condescension and patience towards each other, because the same spirit actuates, and the same necessities haunt them; and because the love of pleasure, which animates them all, can only be gratified by the concurrence of each individual.

In your system of morality, what becomes of those maxims of Scripture, which say that we must "confess Jesus Christ before men," that "whosoever shall be ashamed of him before men, of him will he be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father?" Matt. x. 32. Mark viii. 38. A man who is engaged in the monstrous assembly which the love of pleasure forms, must hear religion disputed, the morality of the gospel attacked, good manners

subverted, the name of God blasphemed: and he must hear all these without daring to discover the sentiments of his heart, because, as I just now observed, patience and compliance animate that body to which he is attached by such necessary and intimate ties.

In your system of morality, what becomes of those Scripture maxims, which threaten those with the greatest punishments who injure others? The love of sensual pleasure causes offences of the most odious kind; I mean, it betrays your partners in pleasure into vice. Ye game without avarice; but do ye not excite avarice in the minds of those who play with you? Ye do not injure your families; but do ye not occasion other men to injure theirs? Ye are guilty of no fraud; but do ye not tempt others to be fraudulent?

What becomes in your moral system of those maxims of Scripture that require us to contribute to the excision of "all wicked doers from the city of the Lord," Psal. ci. 8; to discountenance those who commit a crime as well as to renounce it ourselves? The love of sensual pleasure makes us countenance people of the most irregular conduct, whose snares are the most dangerous, whose examples are the most fatal, whose conversations are the most pernicious to our children and to our families, to civil society and to the church of God.

In your system of morality, what becomes of those maxims of Scripture which expostulate with us, when the Lord chastiseth us, to "be afflicted and mourn, to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God; to enter into our chambers, and shut the doors about us, to hide ourselves until the indignation be overpast; to examine ourselves before the decree bring forth; to prepare ourselves to meet our God, to hear the rod, and who hath appointed it," James iv. 9. 1 Pet. v. 6. Isa. xxvi. 20. Zeph. ii. 1, 2. Amos iv. 12. Micah vi. 9; to mourn in sackcloth and ashes; and while we feel present miseries, to remember those that are past, tremble for those that are yet to come, and endeavour, by extraordinary efforts, to avert the anger of heaven? The love of sensual pleasure turns away people's attention from all these maxims, and represents those who preach them, as wild visionaries or dry declaimers. The people of whom we speak, these pious people, these people who love their salvation, these people who pretend to the glory of being proposed for examples, can in times of the deepest distress, when the church is bathed in tears, while the arm of God is crushing our brethren and our allies, when the same terrible arm is lifted over us, when we are threatened with extreme miseries, when the scourges of God are at our gates, when there needs only the arrival of one ship, the blowing of one wind, the wafting of one blast, to convey pestilence and plague into our country; these people can . . . . O God! "open their eyes that they may see!" 2 Kings vi. 17.

In your system of morality, what becomes of Scripture exhortations to "redeem the time, to know the time of our visitation, to do all that our hands find to do, because there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither we go?" The love of pleasure inclines mortals, who may die in a

few days, people who perhaps have only a few days to bid their last adieus, to embrace their families, to settle their temporal affairs, to examine the neglected parts of religion, to re-establish the injured reputation of a neighbour, in a word, to prepare themselves to appear before that terrible tribunal to which death cites them: the love of sensual pleasure inclines these poor creatures, who have so short a time to live, and so great a task to perform; the love of sensual pleasure inclines these people to waste a considerable part of this fleeting life in amusements, that obliterate both the shortness of life, and the necessity of death.

How often have we seen old age as greedy of pleasure as youth! how often have we seen people bowing under the weight of age, how often have we seen them, even when their trembling hands could scarcely hold the cards, or the dice, make their feeble efforts to game; and, when their decayed eyes were incapable of distinguishing the spots, assist nature by art, their natural sight with artificial glasses, and thus consecrate the remains, those precious remains, of life to gaming, which God had granted for repentance!

All these causes of the infancy and novitiate of Christians in regard to religion, unite in one, which in finishing this discourse, we cannot but lament, nor can we lament it too much: We do not understand our own religion: we are, most of us, incapable of perceiving the admirable order, the beautiful symmetry, of its component parts. Why? It is because we have so little zeal for our salvation; it is because we form such languid desires to be saved.

Indeed I know, that, except some unnatural creatures, except some monsters, to whom this discourse is not addressed, every body professes to desire to be saved, yea, to prefer salvation to whatever is most pompous in the universe, and most pleasant in this life. But, when the attainment of it in God's way is in question, in the only way that agrees with the holiness of his nature to direct, and with our happiness to obey, what a number of people do we meet with, whose desires vanish? I desire to be saved, says each to himself; I desire to be saved, but not by such a religion as the gospel prescribes, such as Jesus Christ preached, such as the apostles and ministers of the gospel preach after him; but I desire to be saved by such a religion as I have conceived, such a one as gratifies my passions and caprices. I desire to be saved, but it is on condition, that, while I obey some of the precepts of Jesus Christ, he will dispense with my obedience of others. I desire to be saved: but not on condition of my correcting my prejudices, and submitting them to the precepts of Jesus Christ; but on condition that the precepts of Jesus Christ should yield to my prejudices. I desire to be saved: but on condition of retaining my prepossessions, the system that I have arranged, the way of life that I pursue, and intend to pursue till I die. To desire salvation in this manner is too common a disposition among Christians. But to desire salvation in saying to God, with a sincere desire of obeying his voice, "Lord, what

wilt thou have me to do?" Acts ix. 6.; Lord, what wilt thou have me to believe? Lord, what wilt thou have me to love? Lord, what inclinations wilt thou have me to oppose, to mortify, to sacrifice? To be willing to be saved in receiving, without exception, all the practical truths, which compose an essential part of that religion which God has given us: Ah! my brethren, how rare is this disposition among Christians!

Without this disposition, however, (and let us not be ingenious to deceive ourselves,) without this disposition there is no salvation. It implies a contradiction to say that God will save us in any other way: for, as it is contradictory to say that he will give to an equal number the qualities of an unequal number, or to bodies the properties of spirits, or to spirits the properties of bodies; so also is it a contradiction to say, that vice shall reap the rewards of virtue, that the highway to hell is the path to paradise.

So that nothing remains in concluding this discourse, but to ask you, what are your intentions? What designs have ye formed? What projects do ye resolve to pursue? What are your aims? Have ye any thing more precious than your souls? Can ye conceive a nobler hope than that of being saved? Can ye propose a more advantageous end than your own salvation? Can ye persuade yourselves that there is a greater felicity than the fruition of God? Will ye destroy yourselves? Do ye renounce those delightful hopes that are set before you in the gospel? And shall all the fruit of our ministry be to accuse and confound you before God?

Young man, thou mayest live fifty or sixty years: but at the expiration of those fifty or sixty years, time finishes and eternity begins. People of mature age, your race is partly run; ten, fifteen, or twenty years more, through the dissipations and employments inseparable from your lives, will vanish with an inconceivable rapidity; and then, time finishes and eternity begins with you. And ye old people, a few years, a few months, a few days more, and behold your race is at an end; behold your time finishes and your eternity begins. And can we resist this idea? Alas! what hearts! what Christians! what a church!

Grant, Almighty God, that our prayers may supply the defect of our exhortation; may we derive from thy bosom of infinite mercies what we despair of obtaining from the insensibility of our hearers! O thou Author of religion, thou divine Spirit, from whom alone could proceed this beautiful system which thou hast condescended to reveal to us, impress it in all its parts on our minds. Pluck up every plant which thy good hand hath not planted. Triumph over all the obstacles that our sins oppose to thine empire. Shut the gulfs of hell. Open the gates of heaven. Save us, even in spite of ourselves. Amen.

To the Father, to the Son, to the Holy Ghost, be honour and glory, dominion and power, for ever. Amen.

## SERMON II.

## THE ETERNITY OF GOD.

Preached in the French Church at Rotterdam,  
on the first Lord's Day of the Year 1724.

2 PET. iii. 8.

*Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.*

WE could not meditate on the words which you have heard, my brethren, without recollecting that miraculous cloud which conducted the Israelites through the desert. It was all luminous on one side, and all opaque on the other.\* The Jews say that it was the throne, or the triumphal chariot, of that Angel who marched at the head of the camp of Israel; of that Angel whom they call the *Prince of the world*, the *Schekinah*, the *presence of the divine Majesty*, the Deity itself. It is not needful to examine this opinion. I do not know whether the pillar of a cloud were a throne of God, but it was a beautiful symbol of the Deity. What is the Deity in regard to us? If it be the most radiant of all light, it is at the same time the most covered with darkness. Let the greatest philosophers, let the most extraordinary geniuses, elevate their meditations, and take the loftiest flights of which they are capable, in order to penetrate into the nature of the divine essence, the stronger efforts they make to understand this fearful subject, the more will they be absorbed in it: the nigher they approach the rays of this sun, the more will they be dazzled with its lustre. But yet, let the feeblest and most confined genius seek instructions, in meditating on the divine grandeurs, to direct his faith, to regulate his conduct, and to sweeten the miseries that embitter this valley of tears; he shall happily experience what the prophet did: "does he look to him? he shall be lightened." Ps. xxxiv. 5.

God presents himself to your eyes to-day, as he once presented himself to the Israelites in that marvellous phenomenon. Light on one side, darkness on the other. "A thousand years are with the Lord as one day, and one day as a thousand years." Let the greatest philosophers, let those extraordinary beings in whose formation God seems to have united an angelic intelligence to a human body, let them preach in our stead, let them fully explain the words of my text. From what abysses of existence does the perfect Being derive that duration, which alike overspreads the present, the future, and the past? how conceive a continuation of existence without conceiving a succession of time? how conceive a succession of time, without conceiving that he who is subject to it acquires what he had not before? how affirm that he who acquires what he had not before, considers "a thousand years as one day, and one day as a thousand years?" So many questions, so many abysses, obscurities, dark-nesses, for poor mortals.

But if ye confine yourselves to a conviction of the truth of the words of my text; particu-

larly, if ye desire to consider them in regard to the influence which they ought to have on your conduct, ye will behold light issuing from every part, nor is there any one in this assembly who may not approach it with confidence. This has encouraged us to turn our attention to a subject, which at first sight, seems more likely to confound than to edify us.

St. Peter aims to rouse the piety of Christians by the idea of that great day wherein the world must be reduced to ashes; when the new heavens and a new earth shall appear to the children of God. Libertines regarded that day as a chimera. "Where (said they) is the promise of the Lord's coming: for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation?" 2 Pet. iii. 4, &c. The words of my text are an answer to this objection; an idea which we will presently explain, but which ye must, at least in a vague manner, retain all along, if ye mean to follow us in this discourse, in which we would wish to include all the different views of the apostle. In order to which three things are necessary.

I. We will examine our text in itself, and endeavour to establish this proposition, *That one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.*

II. We will prove what we have advanced; that is, that St. Peter's design in these words was to answer the objections of libertines against the doctrine of the conflagration of the world; and we will show you that they completely answer the purpose.

III. We will draw from this doctrine, secured against the objections of libertines, such motives to piety as the apostle presents us with.

In considering these words in this point of light, we will apply them to your present circumstances. The renewal of the year, properly understood, is only the anniversary of the vanity of our life, and thence the calls to detach yourselves from the world. And what can be more proper to produce such a detachment than this reflection, that not only the years which we must pass on earth are consuming, but also that the years of the world's subsistence are already consumed in part, and that the time approaches, in which it must be delivered to the flames, and reduced to ashes!

Let us first consider the words of our text in themselves, and let us prove this proposition, "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

The notion which I have of God is my principle: the words of my text are the consequence. If I establish the principle, the consequence will be incontestable. 1. *Eternity*.—2. *Perfect knowledge*, and, in some sort, the sight and presence of all that has been, of all that is, and of all that shall be.—3. *Supreme happiness*: are three ideas which form my notion of the Deity: this is my principle. "A thousand years" then "are as one day, and one day as a thousand years with the Lord:" this is my consequence. Let us prove the truth of the principle, by justifying the notion which we form of the Deity.

1. God is an *eternal* being. This is not a chimera of my mind; it is a truth accompanied

\* See Rabbi Menachem in Parasch. Beschalec. Exod. xiv. 19. fol. 63. edit. de Venise 5283. S.

with all the evidence of which a proposition is capable. I exist, I speak, you hear me, at least you seem to hear me. These are facts, the certainty of which all the philosophers in the world can never destroy. I am not able to new-mould myself, nor can I help the perception of truths, the knowledge of which (if I may be allowed to say so) is as essential to me as my own existence. It does not depend on me not to regard Pyrrho and Academus, those famous defenders of doubt and uncertainty, as fools who extinguished the light of common sense, or rather as impostors, who pronounced propositions with their mouths, the falsity of which it was impossible their minds should not perceive. I repeat it again, the most subtle objections of all the philosophers in the world united, can never diminish in me that impression which the perception of my own existence makes on my mind, nor hinder my evidence of the truth of these propositions; I exist, I speak, you hear me, at least (for with the people whom I oppose, one must weigh each expression, and, in some sort, each syllable) at least I have the same impressions as if there were beings before my eyes who heard me.\*

If I am sure of my own existence, I am no less sure that I am not the author of it myself, and that I derive it from a superior Being. Were I altogether ignorant of the history of the world; if I had never heard that I was only "of yesterday," as the Psalmist speaks, Psal. xc. 4; if I know not that my parents, who were born like me, are dead; were I not assured that I should soon die; if I knew nothing of all this, yet I should not doubt whether I owed my existence to a superior Being. I can never convince myself that a creature so feeble as I am, a creature whose least desires meet with insurmountable obstacles, a creature who cannot add "one cubit to his stature," Matt. v. 27, a creature who cannot prolong his own life one single instant, one who is forced to yield, willing or unwilling, to a greater power which cries to him, "Dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return," Gen. iii. 19; I can never convince myself that such a creature existed from all eternity, much less that he owes his existence only to himself, and to the eminence of his own perfections. It is then sure that I exist: it is also certain that I am not the author of my own existence.

This certainty is all I ask, I ask only these two propositions, I exist, I am not the author of my own existence, to convince me that there is an eternal Being. Yes, though a revelation emanating from the bosom of Omniscience had never given me this idea of the Divinity; though Moses had never pronounced this oracle, "before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting thou art God," Psalm xc. 2; though the four and twenty elders, who surround the throne of God, had never rendered homage to his eternity, or, prostrating before him, incessantly cried, "We give thee thanks, Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; Rev. xi. 17;

though the eternal Being had never said of himself, "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last," Rev. i. 8; yea, though the eternal Being had never convinced me of his grandeur, by the works of his hands, if I had been all alone in the nature of beings, I should have been forced to admit an eternal Being. And this proposition, "There is an eternal Being," naturally flows from those, I exist, and I am not the author of my own existence, for if I be not the author of my own existence, I owe it to another Being. That Being to whom I owe my existence, derives his from himself, or like me, owes it to another. If he exist of himself, behold the eternal Being whom I have been seeking; if he derive his existence from another, I reason about him as about the former. Thus I ascend, thus I am constrained to ascend, till I arrive at that Being who exists of himself, and who has always so existed.

Let such of you, my brethren, as cannot follow this reasoning, blame only themselves. Let not such people say, These are abstruse and metaphysical reflections, which should never be brought into these assemblies. It is not fair that the incapacity of a small number, an incapacity caused by their voluntary attachment to sensible things, and (so to speak) by their criminal interment in matter; it is not right that this should retard the edification of a whole people, and prevent the proposing of the first principles of natural religion. Eternity enters then into the idea of the creative Being; and this is what we proposed to prove.

2. "Omniscience, intimate acquaintance, and, in a manner, the presence of all that is, of all that has been, of all that shall be," is the second idea which we form of the Deity. The more we meditate on the essence and self-existence of the eternal Being, the more are we convinced that omniscience necessarily belongs to eternity; so that to have proved that God possesses the first of these attributes, is to have proved that he possesses the second. But, as I am certain, that a great number of my hearers would charge those reflections with obscurity, of which they are ignorant only through their own inattention, I will not undertake to prove, by a chain of propositions, that the eternal Being knows all things: that, as author of all, he knows the nature of all; that, knowing the nature of all, he knows what must result from all. It will be better to give you this subject ready digested in our Holy Scriptures, than to oblige you to collect it by your own meditation. Recall then on this article these expressions of the sacred writers: "O Lord, thou knowest all things," John xxi. 17.—"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it? I the Lord search the heart and try the reins," Jer. xvii. 9, 10.—"Known unto him are all his works from the beginning," Acts xv. 18.—The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight, Heb. iv. 12, &c. Some interpreters think, that by

\* Des Cartes reasoned in the same manner, and made *Ego cogo, erga sum, I think, therefore, I am*, the first axiom of his system. J. S.

the *word of God*, we must understand here, not the gospel of Jesus Christ, as the phrase is generally understood, but his person. If this be St. Paul's idea, he uses, methinks, the same metaphysical reasoning which we have proposed: that is, that he who created all, knows all. Observe how this reasoning is followed and developed in the apostle's words. *The Word of God*, or, as it is in the Greek, the *Logos, the Word of God is quick and powerful*; that is to say, that as Jesus Christ, as God, has a fund of life and existence, he has also freely and effectually communicated life and existence to others. In this sense it is elsewhere said, that "by him were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers," Col. i. 16. And in St. John's Gospel, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made," John i. 1. 3. "But this Word, *quick and powerful*, who has given being to all, perfectly knows all; sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart; neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight, but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." Omniscience, intimate knowledge, and, as I said before, the presence of all that is, of all that was, of all that shall be, are as essential to God as eternity. This also, we hope, is sufficiently proved.

3. *Supreme felicity* is the third idea which we have formed of God; it flows immediately from the two first. Every intelligent being is capable of happiness, nor can he regard happiness with indifference; he is inclined by his very nature to render himself happy. He cannot love misery as misery; he never suffers a present misery but in hopes of a future pleasure; or else he supports a misery because it appears to him more tolerable than the means proposed to deliver him. Even those who have wilfully plunged themselves into the gulfs of hell, in a fit of black melancholy, would not have taken that dreadful step, had they not revolved this melancholy imagination in their distracted minds, that the assurance of being plunged into hell is less tolerable than hell itself. It implies a contradiction, that an intelligent being, capable of being happy or miserable, should be indifferent to his own happiness or misery. If any thing be wanting to the felicity of God, the defect must not be attributed to his will, the cause must be sought in his weakness, that is, in his want of power.

But who can conceive that a Being who existed from all eternity, who gave existence to all things, and who knows all things, has only a finite and limited power? I am well aware of the difficulty of following the attributes of the Deity, and that, in the greatest part of our reasonings on this grand subject, we suppose what ought to be proved. But as far as we are capable of penetrating this profound subject, we have grounds for reasoning in this manner: God has given being to all things,

and he saw what must result from them; it depended then entirely on him to form the plan of the world or not to form it; to be alone or to impart existence: it depended on him to form the plan of such a world as we see, or to form another plan. He has followed, in the choice which he has made, that which was most proper for his own glory. If, to these feeble speculations, we join the infallible testimony of revelation, we shall find a perfect agreement with our ideas on this article; that the Creator is the *happy God* by excellence, 1 Tim. i. 41,\* and that because he is eternal and omniscient, he must for those very reasons be infinitely happy. This article also is sufficiently proved.

These three ideas of the Deity are three sources of proofs, in favour of St. Peter's proposition in the words of my text, "a thousand years before the Lord are as one day, and one day as a thousand years."

God is an eternal Being. Then "a thousand years with him are as one day, and one day as a thousand years;" that is to say, "a thousand years and one day" are such inconsiderable measures of duration, that, whatever disproportion they have to each other, they appear to have none when compared with the duration of eternity. There is a great difference between one drop of water and twenty thousand baths which were contained in that famous vessel in Solomon's temple, which, on account of its matter and capacity, was called the *sea of brass*, 1 Chron. xviii. 8; but this vessel itself, in comparison of the sea, properly so called, was so small, that when we compare all it could contain, with the sea, the twenty thousand baths, that is, one hundred and sixty thousand pounds weight, appear only as a drop of water. The extreme difference between that quantity of water and a little drop vanishes when compared with the ocean. One drop of water with the sea is as twenty thousand baths, and twenty thousand baths are as one drop of water. There is a great difference between the light of a taper and that of a flambeau; but expose both to the light of the sun, and their difference will be imperceptible. The light of a little taper before the sun is as the light of a flambeau, and the light of a flambeau as that of a little taper. In like manner, eternal duration is so great an object, that it causes every thing to disappear that can be compared with it. *A thousand years* are no more before this than *one day*, nor *one day* than *a thousand years*; and these two terms, so unequal in themselves, seem to have a perfect equality when compared with eternity. We, minute creatures, we consider a day, an hour, a quarter of an hour, as a very little space in the course of our lives; we lose without scruple a day, an hour, a quarter of an hour: but we are very much to blame; for this day, this hour, this quarter of an hour, should we even live a whole age, would be a considerable portion of our life. But, if we attend to the little probability of our living a whole age; if we reflect that this little space

\* 1 Tim. i. 11. *bienheureux dieu, μακαριος Θεος, μακαριος, quasi magna existens, id est, multum et valde gaudens; beatus Deus, que sibi sufficiens erat ad beatitudinem.* Vide Nov. Test. Græc. cum notis, Londini, 1768.

of time, of which we are so profuse, is the only space we can call our own; if we seriously think that one quarter of an hour, that one hour, that one day, is perhaps the only time given us to prepare our accounts, and to decide our eternal destiny; we should have reason to acknowledge, that it was madness to lose the least part of so short a life. But God revolves (if I may venture to say so) in the immense space of eternity. Heap millions of ages upon millions of ages, add new millions to new millions, all this is nothing in comparison of the duration of the eternal Being. In this sense, "a thousand years are as one day, and one day as a thousand years."

2. God knows all. Then, "a thousand years are with him as one day, and one day as a thousand years;" because he sees no more in a *thousand years* than in *one day*; because he sees as much in *one day* as he can see in a *thousand years*. Ignorance and uncertainty are the principal causes that make us think a short space of time a long duration; especially, when our ignorance and uncertainty respect things which we ardently desire to know: "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick," Prov. xiii. 12, is a saying of the wise man. The very time in which we are in suspense about an apprehended evil, is insupportable to us. It seems to us, while we expect a fatal sentence, that we are every moment suffering its execution.

God knows all. He sees all that was, all that is, all that ever will be. The moment which he assigned for the formation of this universe, is as present to his mind as that which he has determined for its destruction. He knows the success of the various plans which at present exercise the speculations of the greatest geniuses, and which occasion an infinite number of different opinions among politicians. He knows to what lengths that tyrant, who is the scourge of the whole earth, shall carry his rage. He knows how long that empire shall maintain its dignity, which at present subsists with so much glory. He knows during what space Antichrist shall yet oppose the dominion of the king Messiah; and when the king Messiah shall make him lick the dust. He knows when the air shall resound with that comfortable exclamation, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit!" Rev. xviii. 2.

3. In fine, God is supremely happy. Then, "a thousand years with him are as one day, and one day as a thousand years." In the enjoyment of perfect happiness, the duration of time is imperceptible. Placed, as we are, my dearest brethren, in this valley of miseries, tasting only imperfect and embittered pleasures, it is very difficult for us to conceive the impression which felicity makes on an intelligence supremely happy. If the enjoyment of some small good makes us conceive, to a certain degree, a state in which ages appear moments, the miseries inseparable from our lives presently replunge us into a state in which moments appear ages; in which sorrows of the body, and sorrows of the mind, frequently less tolerable than those of the body, so powerfully

apply our minds to each indivisible space of time spent in pain, that we think our sufferings have been long, when we have scarcely begun to suffer. But God is always happy, and always supremely happy; he always enjoys that perfect felicity, which makes a *thousand years*, ten thousand millions of years, vanish with an inconceivable rapidity. It would be unhappy not to enjoy this kind of felicity more than ten or twelve millions of years, because the impression which that felicity would make on the soul would be so powerful and lively, that it would render him who enjoyed it insensible to time; time would expire, and he would hardly perceive that he had enjoyed any thing, even when he had possessed happiness as long as I have supposed. God would be unhappy (allow me this expression) if his felicity were not eternal. But this is one of the subjects which must intimidate a preacher through the difficulty he meets with in furnishing matter. We must have ideas beyond human. We must have terms which mankind have not yet invented. We ourselves must have participated the felicity of God; we must speak to men who also had partaken of it; and afterwards, we must have agreed together on a new language to express each idea excited by the happiness, of which we had made so blessed an experience. Represent to yourselves a Being, or rather think, think, my dear hearers, on the difficulty of representing a Being, who, having in the prodigious capacity of his intelligence all possible plans of this universe, has preferred that which appeared to him the wisest, the best, the most conformable to the holiness of his attributes; represent a Being who has executed this plan, a Being who has created in this vast extent which our imagination fancies, in that which our whole mind, more capable still of conceiving grand objects than our imagination alone, or our senses admire; represent to yourselves a Being who has created whatever is most capable of contributing to perfect felicity; represent a Being who loves, and who is beloved by objects worthy of his love; a Being who knows how to repress the madness of those who rebel against his empire; a Being who shares his felicity with spirits, whom he esteems, and by whom he is esteemed above all things; a Being who has the pleasure of rendering the objects of his esteem happy, and who acknowledge that all their happiness comes from him;—spirits who continually praise the author of their felicity, and who, casting their crowns at his feet, incessantly cry, Holy, holy, holy, Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of thy glory," Isa. vi. 3; represent to yourselves a Being who is approved by intelligences skilful in virtues, in grandeurs, in objects worthy of praise; a Being who loves only order, and who has power to maintain it; a Being who is at the summit of felicity, and who knows that he shall be so for ever. O ages! O millions of ages! O thousands of millions of ages! O duration, the longest that can be imagined by an intelligence composed (if I may speak so) of all intelligences, how short must ye appear to so happy a Being! There is no time with him; there is no measure of time. One thousand years, ten thousand years, one quar-

ter of an hour, one instant, is almost the same. "A thousand years are with him as one day, and one day as a thousand years."

We have considered our text in itself; we will now show the end of the apostle in proposing it, and that it was very proper to answer that end. This is our second part.

St. Peter, as we said before, St. Peter meant to refute the odious objections of some profane persons of his own time, who pretended to make the doctrine of a universal judgment doubtful, and who said, in order to obscure its truth, or enervate its evidence, "Where is the promise of his coming, for since the fathers fell asleep all things remain as they were?" 2 Pet. iii. 4. I am aware that this comment is disputed, and some have thought that the destruction of Jerusalem was the subject of this whole chapter, and not the end of the world; but, however averse we are to the decisive tone, we will venture to demonstrate that the apostle had far greater objects in view than the fatal catastrophes of the Jewish nation. This I think clearly appears,

1. By the nature of the objection which libertines made. "Where is the promise of his coming, for since the fathers fell asleep all things remain as they were?" These libertines did not mean that from the beginning of the world the commonwealth of Israel had suffered no considerable alteration; they did not mean from that false principle, to draw this false consequence, that Jerusalem would always remain as it then was. How could they be such novices in the history of their nation, as not to know the sad vicissitudes, the banishments and the plunderings, which the Jews had undergone? They meant, that though some particular changes had happened in some parts of the world, the generality of creatures had always remained in the same state; thence they pretended to conclude that they would always remain so.

This appears further by the manner in which the apostle answers them in the verses preceding the text. He alleges against them the example of the deluge. "This," says he, "they are willingly ignorant of, that the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished," ver. 5, 6. To this he adds, "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the things that are therein, shall be burnt up," ver. 10. On which we reason thus: The world that was formerly destroyed with water, is the same which shall be destroyed by fire; but the world that was destroyed with water, was not the Jewish nation only: St. Peter then predicts a destruction more general than that of the Jews. 3. This appears further by this consideration. The people to whom St. Peter wrote, did not live in Judea, but were dispersed through Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. These people could have but little to do with the destruction of Jerusalem. Whether Jesus Christ terminated the duration of that city suddenly or slowly, was a question that regarded them indirectly only; but the day of which St. Peter speaks, interests all Christians, and St. Peter exhorts all Christians to prepare for it, as being personally concerned in it.

4. Add a fourth consideration, taken from what follows our text, ver. 15, 16. "Even as our beloved brother Paul also speaks of these things, in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable, wrest unto their own destruction." What are *these things hard to be understood*? Many interpreters, ancient and modern, have thought that the doctrine of justification was intended; a doctrine established by St. Paul, and wrested by many to *their own destruction*, as from thence they concluded that good works were useless. But, I think, it is more probable that St. Peter designs some parts of the First Epistle to the Thessalonians, where the apostle had spoken as if the day of judgment was very nigh, 1 Thess. iv. 13, &c. and in v. 1, &c. and from which many concluded, that it would immediately appear, and the mistake caused a general subversion of society. Since then, St. Paul had spoken of the day of judgment, and St. Peter speaks of the same things, it follows, that St. Peter designed to establish the truth of a general judgment, against those infidels who had endeavoured to subvert it.

But how is what the apostle says, "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day;" how is such a proposition proper to refute the odious objection of infidels, who said, "Where is the promise of his coming?" If a man who possesses great riches, promise a small sum to an indigent person, if he defer the fulfilment of his promise, in vain ye endeavour to exculpate him by saying, the promiser is so opulent that a small sum with him is as great riches, and great riches are as a small sum.

In like manner, to say that "a thousand years with God are as one day, and one day as a thousand years," is that to answer the objection? The question is not what the time of delay is to the eternal Being; the question is, what that time is to poor mortals, who are confined to the earth, loaded with miseries, and to whom one day is as a thousand years, and not a thousand years as one day.

This difficulty is solved by the connexion of our text with the following verses: "Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." This answer is conclusive, as ye will more fully perceive by the following paraphrase. The delay of the day of judgment may be considered either in relation to men who must be judged, or to God himself who will judge them. If ye consider it in regard to men who must be judged, they have no room to complain that God defers this important period; on the contrary, they ought to consider the pretended slackness of which they complain, as an effect of the adorable love of their judge, who invites them to conversion. The manner in which God ordinarily takes men out of this life, is much more proper to incline them to conversion than the terrible retinue of his coming to judgment. How terrible will his appearance be! What eye will not be dazzled? Whose conscience will not

be alarmed? Here blow the trumpets, the dreadful sounds of which proclaim the approach of the Judge of this universe. There, the heavens, which once opened to receive the Son of God, open again that he may return to the earth, to execute his threatenings on rebellious men. Here, earth and sea restore the bodies which they have devoured. There, those *thousand thousands*, those *ten thousand times ten thousand*, who are continually before God, Dan. vii. 10, offer their ministry to him, and are the witnesses, admirers, and executors of his judgment. Here, open the eternal books, in which so many unrighteous thoughts, so many unprofitable words, so many criminal actions, have been registered. There, sentences are preparing, destinies determining, final decrees just pronouncing. Who then could have presence of mind enough to recur to genuine repentance, even supposing there were yet time for repentance? Men then have no reason to complain that the day of judgment is not yet come. "The Lord is patient towards all men, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

If ye consider the pretended delay of judgment in regard to God, as ye have considered it in regard to men, ye will readily acknowledge, that what appears delay to you, does not appear so to him. Why? Because "a thousand years are with him as one day, and one day as a thousand years;" because this long term that offends you is but as an instant to the perfect Being.

It seems to me that this reasoning is conclusive. This shall suffice for the present. Let us conclude, and let us employ the few moments which remain, to infer from the doctrine of the general conflagration, secured against the objections of libertines, such motives to piety as the apostle intended we should draw from them. "Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burnt up." This is the doctrine that the apostle establishes. "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God?" This is the consequence which he deduces; the justness of which inference will appear by five descriptions, which the general conflagration traces before your eyes: 1. A description of the power of our Judge. 2. A description of the horrors of vice. 3. A description of the vanity of the present world. 4. A description of the beauties of the world to come. 5. A description of the excellence of piety. This is the third part, and the conclusion of this discourse.

I. The destruction of the universe affords us a picture of the power of our Judge. How powerful, my brethren, is this Judge! "Who

can resist his will?" Rom. ix. 19. Once there was no sea, no earth, no firmament; one frightful night covered the whole face of the universe. *He said* (Gen. i. 3,) and all these beings appeared: now we behold a sea, an earth, and a firmament. *He will say*, and the sea shall be dry, and the earth shall be consumed, the stars shall disappear, the firmament shall be found no more. Such is the God whom the sinner attacks. A God "who taketh up the isles as a very little thing," Isa. xl. 15. A God who "removeth the mountains and overturneth them in his anger, who shaketh the earth out of her place, and the pillars thereof tremble. A God, who commandeth the sun and it riseth not, and sealeth up the stars; who doth great things past finding out, yea, and wonders without number," Job ix. 5—7. 10. This, sinner, is the God whom thou attackest. But doth the idea of a God so powerful never excite terror in thy rebellious soul? "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?" 1 Cor. x. 22: are we stronger than he?—"Who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered?—Can any resist my power?" Job ix. 4. "Who would set the thorns and briars against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together. O let them make peace with me, and they shall make peace with me," Isa. xxvii. 4, 5.

2. The conflagration of the universe affords us a picture of the horrors of vice. Behold how far God carries his resentment against sin. It is not enough to condemn to eternal flames, and to confine in chains of darkness, those who have fled from his justice. It is not enough to pour out his wrath upon those who have committed the crime, he detests even the instruments of the crime; he designs that all things that have served sin, shall bear the marks of his anger. If, under the law, a man had defiled himself with a beast, he must die with the brutal object of his passion, Lev. xx. 15, 16. Thus God, not content to punish the avaricious with unquenchable fire, will destroy even objects of avarice, and dissolve the gold and silver with which the miser committed idolatry. Not content to punish the ambitious, he will destroy even the instruments of ambition, and overturn those thrones and palaces which have caused it. Not content to punish the voluptuous, he will destroy even objects of voluptuousness, and consume the heavens, the earth, and the elements, which have afforded matter for concupiscence. Heavens, earth, elements, are ye guilty? But if ye be treated with so much rigour for having been the unconscious instruments of the crime, what must the condition of the criminal be?

3. In the burning of the universe we find a representation of the vanity of the present world. What is this world which fascinates our eyes? It is a funeral pile that already begins to burn, and will soon be entirely consumed; it is a world which must end, and all that must end is far inferior to an immortal soul. The thought of death is already a powerful motive to us to place our affections on another world; for what is death? it is to every individual what, one day, the final ruin will be to the generality of mankind; it is the destruction of the heavens, which *pass away with a*



*great noise*: it is the dissolution of elements; it is the entire conflagration of the world, and of the works which are therein. Yet vanity has invented refuges against this storm. The hope of an imaginary immortality has been able to support some men against the fear of a real death. The idea of existing in the minds of those who exist after them, has, in some sort, comforted them under the miserable thought of being no more. Hence pompous buildings, and stately edifices; hence rich monuments, and superb mausoleums; hence proud inscriptions and vain-glorious titles, inscribed on marble and brass. But behold the dissolution of all those bonds. The destruction of the world deprives us of our imaginary being, as death deprives us of our real existence. Ye will not only be shortly stretched in your tombs, and cease to use the houses, and fields, and palaces, which ye inhabit; but these houses, these palaces, these fields, will be consumed, and the memory of all that is fastened to the world, will vanish with the world. Since, then, this is the condition of all sensible things, since all these sensible things must perish; immortal man, infinite spirit, eternal soul, dost thou fasten thyself to vanity and instability? Dost thou not seek for a good more suitable to thy nature and duration? "Seeing all these things must be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?"

4. The conflagration of the universe furnishes a description of the world to come. Ye often hear us declaim on the nothingness of earthly things; we frequently diminish the worth of all that is great and glorious; we frequently cry with Solomon, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity," vanity in pleasures, vanity in grandeurs, vanity in riches, vanity in sciences, vanity in all. But yet, my brethren, how substantial would this vanity be, how amiable would this nothingness appear, if by a happy assemblage of all that the world has of the beautiful, we could acquire the reality of a life, of which it is easy to form to one's self the idea! Could I extract the choicest dignities and fortunes; could I inhabit the most temperate clime, and the most pleasant country; could I choose the most benevolent hearts, and the wisest minds; could I take the most happy temper, and the most sublime genius; could I cultivate the sciences, and make the fine arts flourish; could I collect and unite all that could please the passions, and banish all that could give pain:—a life formed on this plan, how likely to please us! How is it that God, who has resolved to render us one day happy, does not allow us to continue in this world, and content himself with uniting all these happy circumstances in our favour? "It is good to be here," Matt. xvii. 4. O that he would allow us here to build our *tabernacles*. Ah! my brethren, a life formed on this plan might indeed answer the ideas of happiness which feeble and finite geniuses form, but such a plan cannot even approach the designs of an infinite God. A life formed on this plan might indeed exhaust a terrestrial love, but it could never reach the love of an infinite God. No, all the charms of this society, of this fortune, and of this life; no, all the softness of these climates,

and of these countries, no, all the benevolence of these hearts, and all the friendship of these minds; no, all the happiness of this temper, and all the sublimity of this genius; no, all the secrets of the sciences, and all the discoveries of the fine arts; all the attractions of these societies, and all the pleasures of the passions, have nothing, I do not say which exhausts the love of God in Jesus Christ, I do not say which answers, I venture to say which approaches it. To accomplish this love, there must be another world; there must be new heavens and a new earth; there must be objects far more grand.

Finally, the destruction of the universe displays the excellence of piety. O that I could represent the believer amidst fires, flames, winds, tempests, the confusion of all nature, content, peaceable, unalterable! O that I could represent the heavens passing away, the elements dissolving with fervent heat, the earth and the things which are in it burning up, and the believer, that man, that inconsiderable man, little by his nature, but great by the privileges with which piety endows him, without suspicion, rising fearless above all the catastrophes of the universe, and surviving its ruins! O that I could describe the believer, while all the "tribes of the earth mourn and smite their breasts," Matt. xxiv. 30.; while the wicked shall be "as if they were giving up the ghost," Luke xxi. 26.; while their despair exhales in these dreadful howlings, "Mountains fall on us, hills cover us from the face of him who sits on the throne, and from the face of the Lamb!" Rev. vi. 16. O that I could describe the believer assured, triumphant, founded on the rock of ages, "hasting unto the coming of the day of God," 2 Pet. iii. 12, as our apostle expresses it; aiming with transports of joy which we cannot express, (O may we one day experience these transports!) aiming to approach the presence of Jesus Christ, as his tenderest friend and deliverer, literally proving the truth of this promise, "when thou passest through the waters they shall not overflow thee, when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt," Isa. xlii. 2. O that I could represent him crying, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly," Rev. xxii. 20.; come, receive a creature once defiled with sin; sometimes even rebellious, yet always having at the bottom of his heart principles of love to thee; but now ravished with transports of joy, because he is entering an economy, in which he shall be always submissive, and always faithful.

What shall I say to you, my dear brethren, to incline you to piety, if all these grand motives be without success? If the words of my text, if the voice of an apostle—what do I say, the voice of an apostle?—"if the sun darken, if the moon changed into blood, if the stars fallen from heaven, if the powers of heaven shaken, if the heavens passing away with a great noise, if the elements dissolving with fervent heat, if the earth consumed with all that is therein," if the universal destruction of nature and elements be incapable of loosening and detaching you from the present world?

It is said, that some days before the destruction of Jerusalem, a voice was heard proceeding from the holy place and crying, "Let us

go hence, let us go hence.”\* My brethren, such a voice addresses you.

We ground our exhortations to-day, not on the destruction of one people only; we preach (if I may be allowed to say so) in the sight of the ruins of this whole universe: yes, from the centre of the trembling world and crashing elements, a voice sounds, *Let us go hence*; let us quit the world; give our hopes more solid bases than enkindled worlds, which will shortly be burnt up. And then, pass away heavens with a great noise, consume elements, burn earth with all thy works, perish universe, perish nature, our felicity is above all such catastrophes, we cleave to the God of ages, to God who is the source of existence and duration, to God before whom “a thousand years are as one day, and one day as a thousand years.” “O Lord, of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thine hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed. But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end. The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee,” Ps. cii. 26, &c. God grant we may experience these great promises! To him be honour and glory. Amen.

### SERMON III.

#### THE OMNIPRESENCE OF GOD.

PSALM CXXXIX. 7—12.

*Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea: even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.*

COULD I have one wish, to answer my proposed end of preaching to-day with efficacy, Christians, it should be to show you God in this assembly. Moses had such an advantage, no man, therefore, ever spoke with greater success. He gave the law to the people in God the legislator's presence. He could say, This law which I give you proceeds from God; here is his throne, there is his lightning, yonder is his thunder. Accordingly, never were a people more struck with a legislator's voice. Moses had hardly begun to speak, but at least for that moment, all hearts were united, and all Sinai echoed with one voice, crying, “All that thou hast spoken we will do,” Exod. xix. 8.

But in vain are our sermons drawn from the sacred sources; in vain do we say to you, “Thus saith the Lord:” ye see only a man; ye hear only a mortal voice in this pulpit;

God hath put his “treasure into earthen vessels,” 2 Cor. iv. 7.; and our auditors, estimating the treasure by the meanness of the vessel, instead of supporting the meanness of the vessel for the sake of the treasure, hear us without respect, and generally, derive no advantage from the ministry.

But were God present in this assembly, could we show you the Deity amongst you, authorizing our voice by his approbation and presence, and examining with what dispositions ye hear his word, which of you, which of you, my brethren, could resist so eminent and so noble a motive?

Christians, this idea is not destitute of reality: God is every where; he is in this church. Veils of flesh and blood prevent your sight of him; these must fall, and ye must open the eyes of your spirits, if ye would see a God who is a spirit, John iv. 24. Hear our prophet; hear his magnificent description of the immensity and omnipresence of God. “Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there. If I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea: even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.”

In a text less abundant in riches, we might make some remarks on the terms *Spirit* and *presence*; but we will content ourselves at present with indicating what ideas we affix to them, by observing, that by the *Spirit* and *presence* of God, we understand God himself. I know, some divines discover great mysteries in these terms, and tell us that there are some passages in Scripture where the word *presence* means the second person in the most holy Trinity, and where the term *Spirit* is certainly to be understood of the third. But as there are some passages where these terms have not this signification, it is beyond all doubt, that this, which we are explaining, is precisely of the latter kind. But however, if any dispute our comment, we shall leave them to dispute it; for it would be unjust to consume that time which is dedicated to the edification of a whole congregation, in refuting a particular opinion. The other expressions in our text, *heaven, hell; the wings of the morning*, a figurative expression denoting the rapidity of the light in communicating itself from one end of the world to the other; these expressions, I say, need no comment. The *presence* of God, the *Spirit* of God, signify then the divine essence: and this assemblage of ideas, “whither shall I go from thy Spirit? whither shall I flee from thy presence?” means, that God is immense, and that he is present in every place.

But wherein consists this immensity and omnipresence? If ever a question required developing, this certainly does; not only because it presents to the mind an abstract subject, which does not fall under the observation of the senses, but because many who have treated this matter, (pardon an opinion which does

\* Jose hus de Bell. Jud. lib. vi. cap. 31.

not proceed from a desire of opposing any individual, but only from a love to the truth,) many who have handled the subject, have contributed more to perplex than to explain it. We may observe in general, that unless we be wholly unacquainted with the history of the sciences, it is impossible not to acknowledge, that all questions about the nature of spirits, all that are any way related to metaphysics, were very little understood before the time of that celebrated philosopher, whom God seems to have bestowed on the world to purify reason, as he had some time before raised up others to purify religion.\*

What heaps of crude and indigested notions do we find among the schoolmen of the immensity of God! One said that God was a point, indivisible indeed, but a point, however, that had the peculiar property of occupying every part of the universe. Another, that God was the place of all beings, the immense extent in which his power had placed them. Another, that his essence was *really* in heaven, but yet, *repletively*, as they express it, in every part of the universe. In short, this truth has been obscured by the grossest ignorance. Whatever aversion we have to the decisive tone, we will venture to affirm, that people who talked in this manner of God, had no ideas themselves of what they advanced.

Do not be afraid of our conducting you into these wild mazes; do not imagine that we will busy ourselves in exposing all these notions for the sake of labouring to refute them. We will content ourselves with giving you some light into the omnipresence of God:

I. By removing those false ideas, which at first seem to present themselves to the imagination;

II. By assigning the true.

I. Let us remove the false ideas, which at first present themselves to the imagination; as if, when we say that God is present in any place, we mean that he is actually contained there; as if, when we say that God is in every place, we mean to assign to him a real and proper extension. Neither of these is designed; and to remove these ideas, my brethren, two reflections are sufficient.

God is a Spirit. A spirit cannot be in a place, at least in the manner in which we conceive of place.

1. God is a Spirit. What relation can ye find between wisdom, power, mercy, and all the other attributes which enter into your notion of the Divinity, and the nature of bodies? Pulverize matter, give it all the different forms of which it is susceptible, elevate it to its highest degree of attainment, make it vast, and immense; moderate, or small; luminous, or obscure; opaque, or transparent; there will never result any thing but figures, and never will ye be able, by all these combinations, or divisions, to produce one single sentiment, one single thought, like that of the meanest and most contracted of all mankind. If matter then cannot be the subject of one single operation of the soul of a mechanic,

how should it be the subject of those attributes which make the essence of God himself?

But perhaps God, who is spiritual in one part of his essence, may be corporeal in another part, like man, who, although he hath a spiritual soul, is yet united to a portion of matter? No; for however admirable in man that union of spiritual and sensible may be, and those laws which unite his soul to his body, nothing more fully marks his weakness and dependence, and consequently nothing can less agree with the divine essence. Is it not a mark of the dependence of an immortal and intelligent soul, to be enveloped in a little flesh and blood, which, according to their different notions, determine his joy or sorrow, his happiness or misery? Is it not a mark of the weakness of our spirits to have the power of acting only on that little matter to which we are united, and to have no power over more? Who can imagine that God hath such limits? He hath no body; he is united to none; yet he is united to all. That celebrated philosopher, shall I call him? or atheist,\* who said, that the assemblage of all existence constituted the divine essence, who would have us consider all corporeal beings as the body of the Divinity, published a great extravagance, if he meant that the divine essence consisted of this assemblage. But there is a very just sense in which it may be said, that the whole universe is the body of the Deity. In effect, as I call this portion of matter my body, which I move, act, and direct as I please, so God actuates by his will every part of the universe: he obscures the sun, he calms the winds, he commands the sea. But this very notion excludes all corporeity from God, and proves that God is a spirit. If God sometimes represents himself with feet, with hands, with eyes, he means, in these portraits, rather to give us emblems of his attributes, than images (properly speaking) of any parts which he possesseth. Therefore, when he attributes these to himself, he gives them so vast an extent, that we easily perceive, they are not to be grossly understood. Has he hands? they are hands which "weigh the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance, which measure the waters in the hollow of his hand, and mete out the heavens with a span," Isa. xl. 12. Has he eyes? they are eyes that penetrate the most unmeasurable distances. Has he feet? they are feet which reach from heaven to earth, for the "heaven is his throne, and the earth is his footstool," Isa. lvi. 1. Has he a voice? it is as "the sound of many waters, breaking the cedars of Lebanon, making mount Sirion skip like a unicorn, and the hinds to calve," Ps. xxix. 3, 5, 6, 9.

This reminds me of a beautiful passage in Plato. He says that the gods, particularly the chief good, the ineffable beauty, as he calls him, cannot be conceived of but by the understanding only, and by quitting sensible objects; that in order to contemplate the divinity, terrestrial ideas must be surmounted; that the eyes cannot see him; that the ears cannot hear him. A thought which Julian the apostate, a

\* The philosopher intended by Mr. S. I suppose, is his countryman *Des Cartes*, born in 1596. *Vie de Desc. par Baillet.*

\* Mr. S. means, I should suppose, Spinoza: whose system of atheism, says a sensible writer, is more gross, and, therefore, less dangerous, than others; his poison carrying its antidote with it.

great admirer of that philosopher, so nobly expresses in his satire on the Cæsars. Thus every thing serves to establish our first principle, that God is a Spirit.

2. But to prove that God is a Spirit, and to prove that he occupies no place, at least as our imagination conceives, is, in our opinion, to establish the same thesis.

I know how difficult it is to make this consequence intelligible and clear, not only to those who have never been accustomed to meditation, and who are therefore more excusable for having confused ideas; but even to such as, having cultivated the sciences, are most intent on refining their ideas. I freely acknowledge, that after we have used our utmost efforts to rise above sense and matter, it will be extremely difficult to conceive the existence of a spirit, without conceiving it in a certain place. Yet, I think, whatever difficulty there may be in the system of those who maintain that an immaterial being cannot be in a place, properly so called, there are greater difficulties still in the opposite opinion: for what is immaterial hath no parts; what hath no parts hath no form; what hath no form hath no extension; what hath no extension can have no situation in place, properly so called. For what is it to be in place? is it not to fill space? is it not to be adjusted with surrounding bodies? how adjust with surrounding bodies without parts? how consist of parts without being corporeal? But if ye ascribe a real and proper extension to a spirit, every thought of that spirit would be a separate portion of that extension, as every part of the body is a separate portion of the whole body; every operation of spirit would be a modification of that extension, as every operation of body is a modification of body; and, were this the case, there would be no absurdity in saying, that a thought is round, or square, or cubic, which is nothing less than the confounding of spirit with matter. Thus the idea which our imagination forms of the omnipresence of God, when it represents the essence of the Supreme Being filling infinite spaces, as we are lodged in our houses, is a false idea that ought to be carefully avoided.

II. What notions then must we form of the immensity of God; in what sense do we conceive that the infinite Spirit is every where present? My brethren, the bounds of our knowledge are so straight, our sphere is so contracted, we have such imperfect ideas of spirits, even of our own spirits, and for a much stronger reason, of the Father of spirits, that no genius in the world, however exalted ye may suppose him, after his greatest efforts of meditation, can say to you, Thus far extend the attributes of God; behold a complete idea of his immensity and omnipresence. Yet, by the help of sound reason, above all, by the aid of revelation, we may give you, if not complete, at least distinct, ideas of the subject: it is possible, if not to indicate all the senses in which God is immense, at least to point out some; it is possible, if not to show you all the truth, at least to discover it in part.

Let us not conceive the omnipresence of God as a particular attribute (if I may venture to say so) of the Deity, as goodness or

wisdom, but as the extent or infinity of many others. The omnipresence of God is that universal property by which he communicates himself to all, diffuses himself through all, is the great director of all, or, to confine ourselves to more distinct ideas still, the infinite Spirit is present in every place.

1. By a boundless knowledge.
2. By a general influence.
3. By a universal direction.

God is every where, because he *seeth* all, because he *influenceth* all, because he *directeth* all. This we must prove and establish. But if ye would judge rightly of what ye have heard, and of what ye may still hear, ye must remember that this subject has no relation to your pleasure, nor to your policy, nor to any of those objects which occupy and fill your whole souls; and consequently, that if ye would follow us, ye must stretch your meditation, and go, as it were, out of yourselves.

1. The first idea of God's omnipresence is his *omniscience*. God is every where present, because he *seeth* all. This the prophet had principally in view. "O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine up-rising; thou understandest my thoughts afar off. Thou compassed my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it," ver. 1—3, &c. Then follow the words of our text: "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?" and so on.

Let us then not consider the Deity, after the example of the schoolmen, as a point fixed in the universality of beings. Let us consider the universality of beings as a point, and the Deity as an immense eye, which sees all that passes in that point, all that can possibly pass there; and which, by an all-animating intelligence, makes an exact combination of all the effects of matter, and of all the dispositions of spirit.

1. God knows all the effects of matter. An expert workman takes a parcel of matter proportioned to a work which he meditates, he makes divers wheels, disposes them properly, and sees, by the rules of his art, what must result from their assemblage. Suppose a sublime, exact genius, knowing how to go from principle to principle, and from consequence to consequence, after foreseeing what must result from two wheels joined together, should imagine a third, he will as certainly know what must result from a third, as from a first and second; after imagining a third, he may imagine a fourth, and properly arrange it with the rest in his imagination; after a fourth, a fifth, and so on to an endless number. Such a man could mathematically demonstrate, in an exact and infallible manner, what must result from a work composed of all these different wheels. Suppose further, that this workman, having accurately considered the effects which would be produced on these wheels, by that subtle matter which in their whirlings continually surrounds them, and which, by its perpetual action and motion, chafes, wears,

and dissolves all bodies; this workman would tell you, with the same exactness, how long each of these wheels would wear, and when the whole work would be consumed. Give this workman life and industry proportional to his imagination, furnish him with materials proportional to his ideas, and he will produce a vast, immense work, all the different motions of which he can exactly combine; all the different effects of which he can evidently foresee. He will see, in what time motion will be communicated from the first of these wheels to the second, at what time the second will move the third, and so of the rest: he will foretell all their different motions, and all the effects which must result from their different combinations.

Hitherto this is only supposition, my brethren, but it is a supposition that conducts us to the most certain of all facts. This workman is God. God is this sublime, exact, infinite genius. He calls into being matter, without motion, and, in some sense, without form. He gives this matter form and motion. He makes a certain number of wheels, or rather he makes them without number. He disposes them as he thinks proper. He communicates a certain degree of motion agreeable to the laws of his wisdom. Thence arises the world which strikes our eyes. By the forementioned example, I conceive, that God, by his own intelligence, saw what must result from the arrangement of all the wheels that compose this world, and knew, with the utmost exactness, all their combinations. He saw that a certain degree of motion, imparted to a certain portion of matter, would produce water; that another degree of motion, communicated to another portion of matter, would produce fire; that another would produce earth, and so of the rest. He foresaw, with the utmost precision, what would result from this water, from this fire, from this earth, when joined together, and agitated by such a degree of motion as he should communicate. By the bare inspection of the laws of motion, he foresaw fires, he foresaw shipwrecks, he foresaw earthquakes, he foresaw all the vicissitudes of time, he foresaw those which must put a period to time, when "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, when the elements shall melt with fervent heat, when the earth, with all the works that are in it, shall be burnt up," 2 Pet. iii. 10.

2. But, if God could combine all that would result from the laws of motion communicated to matter, he could also combine all that would result from intelligence, freedom of will, and all the faculties which make the essence of spirits; and, before he had formed all those spiritual beings which compose the intelligible world, he knew what all their ideas, all their projects, all their deliberations, would for ever be.

I am aware, that a particular consequence, which follows this doctrine, has made some divines exclaim against this thesis, and, under the specious pretence of exculpating the Deity from the entrance of sin into this world, they have affirmed that God could not foresee the determinations of a free agent; for, say they, had he foreseen the abuse which man would

have made of his liberty, in resolving to sin, his love to holiness would have engaged him to prevent it. But to reason in this manner is, in attempting to solve a difficulty, to leave that difficulty in all its force.

All that they say on this article proceeds from this principle, that a God, infinitely just, and infinitely powerful, ought to display (if it be allowable to say so) all the infinity of his attributes to prevent sin. But this principle is notoriously false. Witness that very permission of sin which is objected to us. Ye will not acknowledge that God foresaw man's fall into sin; acknowledge, at least, that he foresaw the possibility of men's falling, and that, in forming a creature free, he knew that such a creature might choose virtue or vice; acknowledge, at least, that God could have created man with so much knowledge, and could have afforded him so many succours; he could have presented such powerful motives to holiness incessantly, and discovered to him the dreadful consequences of his rebellion so effectually; he could have united obedience to his commands with so many delights, and the most distant thought of disobedience with so many disgusts; he could have banished from man every temptation to sin, so that he would never have been a sinner. Yet God created man in another manner; consequently it is not true, even in your system, that God hath exerted all the power he could to prevent sin's entrance into the world. Consequently it is false, that a being, who perfectly loves holiness, ought to display the whole extent of his attributes to prevent sin, and to establish virtue. Consequently, the principle on which ye ground your denial of God's comprehension of all the dispositions of spirits, is an unwarrantable principle, and to attempt to solve the difficulty, in this manner, is to leave it in all its force.

But, if ye consult revelation, ye will find that God claims a universal knowledge of spirits. He says, that he "searcheth and knoweth them," Jer. xvii. 10.; Rev. ii. 23.; Gen. xv. 13.; Exod. iii. 19. He foresaw, he foretold, the afflictions which Abraham's posterity would endure in Egypt, the hardening of Pharaoh, the infidelity of the Jews, the faith of the Gentiles, the crucifixion of the Messiah, the coming of the *prince* or leader, that is of Vespasian, or Titus, who would "destroy the city and the sanctuary," Dan. ix. 25, 26. And consequently, we have a right to affirm, that God knows all the thoughts of the mind, and all the sentiments of the heart, as well as that he knows all the motions of matter.

Perhaps ye wish, my brethren, that our speculations were carried further; perhaps ye would have us disentangle the subject from all its difficulties; perhaps ye wish we could make you comprehend, in a clear and distinct manner, how it is possible that such immense objects can be always present to the Supreme Intelligence? but what mortal mouth can express such sublime truths, or what capacity is able to conceive them! On this article, we are obliged with our prophet to exclaim, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, it is high: I cannot attain unto it!" ver. 6. In general, we conceive that the sphere of divine know-

ledge is not contracted by any of the limits that confine the spirits of mankind.

The human spirit is united to a portion of matter. Man can perform no operation without the agitation of his brain, without the motion of his animal spirits, without the help of his senses. But the brain wearies, the spirits dissipate, the senses are blunted, and the minutest alteration of body clogs the most penetrating and active genius. But God, as we have represented him, thinks, understands, meditates, without brain, without spirits, without any need of senses; not participating their nature, he never participates their alteration, and thus hath intelligence immediately from the treasure of intelligence itself.

The spirit of man owes its existence to a superior Spirit, to a foreign cause, to a Being who gives him only such ideas as he thinks proper, and who hath been pleased to conceal numberless mysteries from him. But God, God not only does not owe his existence to a foreign cause, but all that exist derive their existence from him. His ideas were the models of all beings, and he hath only to contemplate himself perfectly to know them.

The spirit of man is naturally a finite spirit; he can consider only one circle of objects at once, many ideas confound him; if he would see too much he sees nothing, he must successively contemplate what he cannot contemplate in one moment. But God is an infinite Spirit; with one single look he beholdeth the whole universe. This is the first idea of the omnipresence of God. As I am accounted present in this auditory, because I see the objects that are here, because I am witness of all that passes here, so God is every where, because he sees all, because veils the most impenetrable, darkness the most thick, distances the most immense, can conceal nothing from his knowledge. Soar to the utmost heights, fly into the remotest climates, wrap thyself in the blackest darkness, every where, every where, thou wilt be under his eye. "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?"

But, 2. The knowledge of God is not a bare knowledge, his presence is not an idle presence; it is an active knowledge, it is a presence accompanied with action and motion. We said, just now, that God was every where, because he *influenced* all, as far as influence could agree with his perfections. Remark this restriction, for, as we are discussing a subject the most fertile in controversy, and, as in a discourse of an hour, it is impossible to answer all objections, which may be all answered elsewhere, we would give a general preservative against every mistake. We mean an influence which agrees with the divine perfections; and if, from any of our general propositions, ye infer any consequences injurious to those perfections, ye may conclude, for that very reason, that ye have stretched them beyond their due bounds. We repeat it then, God *influenceth* all things, as far as such influence agrees with his perfections.

When new beings appear, he is there. He influences their production. He gives to all *life, motion, and being*, Acts xvii. 28. Neh. ix.

6.; "Thou, even thou, art Lord alone, thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all things that are therein, the seas and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all, and the host of heaven worshippeth thee. O Lord, I will praise thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well." Ps. cxxxix. 14—16.; "My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance yet being imperfect, and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them. Thine hands have made me, and fashioned me together round about. Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh, and hast fenced me with bones and sinews." Ps. xxxvi. 5, 6. When beings are preserved, he is there. He influences their preservation. "Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens, and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds. Thou preservest man and beast. When thou openest thy hand, they are filled with good: thou hidest thy face, they are troubled; thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created, and thou renewest the face of the earth," Ps. civ. 28—30.

When the world is disordered, he is there. He *influenceth* wars, pestilence, famines, and all the vicissitudes which disorder the world. If nature refuse her productions, it is because he has "made the heaven as iron, and the earth as brass," Lev. xxvi. 19. If peace succeed war, he makes both. If "lions slay the inhabitants of Samaria," it is "the Lord who sends them," 2 Kings xvii. 25. When tempestuous winds break down those immense banks which your industry has opposed to them, when a devouring fire reduceth your houses to ashes, it is he who "makes the winds his messengers, and his ministers flames of fire," Ps. civ. 4.

When every thing succeeds according to our wishes, he is there. He *influenceth* prosperity. "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it. Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. It is in vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows. It is God who giveth his beloved sleep," Ps. cxxvii. 1, 2.

When our understanding is informed, he is there. He *influenceth* our knowledge. For "in his light we see light," Ps. xxxvi. 10. "He lighteth every man that cometh into the world," John i. 9.

When our heart disposeth us to our duties, he is there. He *influenceth* our virtues. It is he who "worketh in us, both to will and to do of his own good pleasure," Phil. ii. 13. It is he who "giveth us not only to believe, but to suffer for his sake," Phil. i. 29. It is he who "giveth to all that ask him liberally, and upbraideth not," James i. 5.

When the grossest errors cover us, he is there. He *influenceth* errors. It is God who "sends strong delusions that men should believe a lie," 2 Thess. ii. 11. "Go make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears

heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears," Isa. vi. 10.

When we violate the laws of righteousness, he is there. He influenceth sins, even the greatest sins. Witness Pharaoh, whose "heart he hardened," Exod. iv. 21. Witness Shimei, whom "the Lord bade to curse David," 2 Sam. xvi. 11. Witness what Isaiah said, "the Lord hath mingled a perverse spirit in the midst of Egypt," Isa. xix. 14.

When magistrates, our earthly gods, consult and deliberate, he is there. He influenceth policy. It is he who "hath the hearts of kings in his hand, and turneth them as the rivers of water," Prov. xxi. 1. It is he who "giveth kings in his anger, and taketh them away in his wrath," Hos. xiii. 11. It is he who maketh "the Assyrian the rod of his anger," Isa. x. 5. "Herod and Pilate, the Gentiles and the people of Israel, did what his hand and his counsel determined before to be done," Acts iv. 27, 28.

When we live, when we die, he is there. He influenceth life and death. "Man's days are determined, the number of his months are with him, he has appointed his bounds that he cannot pass," Job xiv. 5. "To God the Lord belong the issues from death," Ps. lxxviii. 20. "He bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up," 2 Sam. ii. 6.

He influences the least events as well as the most considerable. Not being fatigued with the care of great things, he can occupy himself about the smallest without prejudice to the rest; "number the hairs of our heads," and not let even "a sparrow fall without his will," Matt. x. 29, 30.

But, 3. When God communicates himself to all, when he thus acts on all, when he diffuseth himself thus through the whole, he relates all to his own designs, and makes all serve his own counsels: and this is our third idea of his immensity and omnipresence. God is present with all, because he *directs* all.

Doth he call creatures into existence? it is to manifest his perfections. It is to have subjects on whom he may shower his favours; it is, as it were, to go out of himself, and to form through the whole universe a concert resounding the Creator's existence and glory. "For the invisible things of God, even his eternal power and Godhead, are understood by the things that are made," Rom. i. 20. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handy-work. Day unto day uttereth speech, night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard," Ps. xix. 1—3.

Doth he preserve creatures? it is to answer his own designs, the depth of which no finite mind can fathom; but designs which we shall one day know, and admire his wisdom when we know them, as we adore it now, though we know them not.

Doth he send plagues, wars, famines? it is to make these feel his justice who have abused his goodness, it is to avenge the violation of his law, the contempt of his gospel, the forgetting and the forsaking of the interest of his church.

Doth he afford us prosperity? it is to "draw

us with the bands of love," Hos. xi. 4; it is to reveal himself to us by that love which is his essence; it is to engage us to imitate him, who "never leaves himself without witness in doing good," Acts xiv. 17.

Doth he impart knowledge to us? it is to discover the snares that surround us, the miseries that threaten us, the origin from which we sprang, the course of life that we should follow, and the end at which we should aim.

Doth he communicate virtues? it is to animate us in our race; it is to convince us that there is a mighty arm to raise us from the abyss into which our natural corruption hath plunged us; it is that we may "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, knowing that God worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure," Phil. ii. 12, 13.

Doth he send us error? it is to make us respect that truth we have resisted.

Doth he abandon us to our vices? it is to punish us for some other vices which we have committed voluntarily and freely, so that, if we could comprehend it, his love for holiness never appears more clearly, than when he abandons men to vice in this manner.

Doth he raise up kings? it is always to oblige them to administer justice, to protect the widow and the orphan, to maintain order and religion. Yet, he often permits them to violate equity, to oppress their people, and to become the scourges of his anger. By them he frequently teacheth us how little account he makes of human grandeurs; seeing he bestows them sometimes upon unworthy men, upon men allured by voluptuousness, governed by ambition, and dazzled with their own glory; upon men who ridicule piety, sell their consciences, negotiate faith and religion, sacrificing the souls of their children to the infamous passions that govern themselves.

Doth he prolong our life? it is because he "is long suffering to us," 2 Pet. iii. 9; it is because he opens in our favour "the riches of his goodness and forbearance, to lead us to repentance," Rom. ii. 4.

Doth he call us to die? it is to open those eternal books in which our actions are registered; it is to gather our souls into his bosom, "to bind them up in the bundle of life," 1 Sam. xxv. 29; to mix them with the ransomed armies of all "nations, tongues, and people," Rev. vii. 9.

Such are our ideas of the omnipresence of God. Thus God seeth all, influenceth all, directeth all. In this sense we are to understand this magnificent language of Scripture. "Will God indeed dwell on the earth; behold the heaven, and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee," 1 Kings viii. 27. Thus saith the Lord, "The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house that ye build unto me? do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord?" Isa. lxvi. 1. "Am I a God at hand, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him?" Jer. xxiii. 23, 24. This is what the heathens had a glimpse of, when they said, that God was a circle, the centre of which was every where, and its circumference no where. That all things were full of Jupiter. That he filled all his works. That, fly whither we would, we

were always before his eyes. This is what the followers of Mohammed meant, when they said, that where there were two persons, God made the third; where there were three God made the fourth. Above all, this was our prophet's meaning throughout the Psalm, a part of which we have explained. "O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me. Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine up-rising, thou understandest my thoughts afar off. Thou compasses my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thy hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there. If I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be a light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee," ver. 1, and following.

But perhaps, during the course of this meditation, ye may have murmured at our presenting an object of which all the preaching in the world can give you but imperfect ideas. Suspend your judgments, we are going to show you whither this discourse, all glimmering as it is, ought to conduct you. Ye are going to see what salutary consequences follow our efforts, even the weak efforts that we have been making to explain the grandeur and omnipresence of God. Let us pass to the conclusion, the chief design of this discourse.

1. Our first reflection is on the difficulties that we meet with in fixing our minds on such subjects as we have been hearing. Ye have doubtless experienced, if ye have endeavoured to follow us, that ye are weary, and wander when ye would go beyond matter. Our minds find almost nothing real, where they meet with nothing sensible. As if the whole essence of beings were corporeal, the mind loses its way when it ceases to be directed by bodies, and it needs the help of imagination, to represent even those things which are not susceptible of images; and yet whatever is most grand and noble in the nature of beings is spirit. The sublimest objects, angels who are continually before God, *seraphims who cover their faces* in his presence, cherubims who are the ministers of his will, "thousand thousands which minister unto him, ten thousand times ten thousand which stand before him," Isa. vi. 2. Dan. vii. 10; what is most glorious in man, what elevates him above other animals, a soul made in the image of God himself; the Being of beings, the Sovereign Beauty; all these beings are spiritual, abstract, free from sense and matter. Moreover, what pleases and enchants us in bodies, even that comes from a subject, abstract, spiritual and incorporeal. Without your soul, ailments have no taste, flowers no smell, the earth no enamel, fire no heat, the stars no brilliancy, the sun no light. Matter of itself is

void, and gross, destitute of all the qualities with which our imagination clothes it, and which are proper to our souls. What ought we to conclude from this reflection? My brethren, have ye any idea of your dignity, and primitive grandeur? Have ye yet some few faint resemblances of beings formed in the Creator's image? ye ought, feeble as ye are, confined as ye are in a manner to matter, ye should deplore your misery, ye should groan under that necessity, which, in some sort, confounds your soul with a little dust; ye should sigh after that happy state in which your rapid, free, and unlogged souls shall meditate like themselves. This is the first duty that we would prescribe to you.

2. Our next reflection is on the majesty of our religion. That must certainly be thought the true religion which gives us the grandest ideas of God. Let our religion be judged by this rule. Where do we see the attributes of the Supreme Being placed in so clear a light? what can be more noble than this idea of God? what can be conceived more sublime than a Being whom nothing escapes, before whom "all things are naked and open," Heb. iv. 13.; who, by one single look, fully comprehends all beings past, present, and to come; all that do exist, all that possibly can exist? who thinks in the same instant, with equal facility on bodies and spirits, on all the dimensions of time and of matter? What more noble can be conceived than a Being who imparts himself to all, diffuses himself through all, influences all, gives life and motion to all? What can be conceived more noble than a Being who directs the conduct of the whole universe, who knows how to make all concur to his designs, who knows how to relate alike to the laws of order and equity, the virtues of the righteous, the vices of the wicked, the praises of the happy, the blasphemies of the victims sacrificed to his vengeance in hell? When we find in any heathen philosopher, amidst a thousand false notions, amidst a thousand wild imaginations, some few leaves of the flowers with which our Bibles are strewed, we are ready to cry a miracle, a miracle! we transmit these shreds of the Deity (if I may be allowed to speak so) to the most distant posterity, and these ideas, all maimed, and all defiled as they are, procure their authors an immortal reputation. On this principle, what respect, what veneration, what deference ought we to have for the patriarchs and the prophets, for the Evangelists and the apostles, who spoke of God in so sublime a manner! But be not surprised at their superiority over the great pagan geniuses; if the biblical writers, like them, had been guided only by human reason, like them they would have wandered too. If they spoke so nobly of God, it was because they had received that "spirit who searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God," 1 Cor. ii. 10. It was because "all Scripture was given by inspiration," 2 Tim. iii. 16. It was because "the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," 2 Pet. i. 21.

3. Make a third reflection. This grandeur of God removes the greatest stumbling-blocks that skeptics and infidels pretend to meet with in religion. It justifies all those dark mysteries



which are above the comprehension of our feeble reason. We would not make use of this reflection to open a way for human fancies, and to authorize every thing that is presented to us under the idea of the marvellous. All doctrines that are incomprehensible are not divine, nor ought we to embrace any opinion merely because it is beyond our knowledge. But when a religion, in other respects, hath good guarantees, when we have good arguments to prove that such a revelation comes from heaven, when we certainly know that it is God who speaks, ought we to be surprised if ideas of God, which comes so fully authenticated, absorb and confound us? I freely grant, that had I consulted my own reason only, I could not have discovered some mysteries of the gospel. Nevertheless, when I think on the grandeur of God, when I cast my eyes on that vast ocean, when I consider that immense all, nothing astonishes me, nothing stumbles me, nothing seems to me inadmissible, how incomprehensible soever it may be. When the subject is divine, I am ready to believe all, to admit all, to receive all; provided I be convinced that it is God himself who speaks to me, or any one on his part. After this I am no more astonished that there are three distinct persons in one divine essence; one God, and yet a Father, a Son, and a Holy Ghost. After this I am no more astonished that God foresees all without forcing any; permits sin without forcing the sinner; ordains free and intelligent creatures to such and such ends, yet without destroying their intelligence, or their liberty. After this I am no more astonished, that the justice of God required a satisfaction proportional to his greatness, that his own love hath provided that satisfaction, and that God, from the abundance of his compassion, designed the mystery of an incarnate God; a mystery which angels admire while skeptics oppose; a mystery which absorbs human reason, but which fills all heaven with songs of praise; a mystery which is the "great mystery," 1 Tim. iii. 16, by excellence, but the greatness of which nothing should make us reject, since religion proposeth it as the grand effort of the wisdom of the incomprehensible God, and commandeth us to receive it on the testimony of the incomprehensible God himself. Either religion must tell us nothing about God, or what it tells us must be beyond our capacities, and, in discovering even the borders of this immense ocean, it must needs exhibit a vast extent in which our feeble eyes are lost. But what surprises me, what stumbles me, what frightens me, is to see a diminutive creature, a contemptible man, a little ray of light glimmering through a few feeble organs, convert a point with the Supreme Being, oppose that Intelligence who sitteth at the helm of the world; question what he affirms, dispute what he determines, appeal from his decisions, and, even after God hath given evidence, reject all doctrines that are beyond his capacity. Enter into thy nothingness, mortal creature. What madness animates thee? How durst thou pretend, thou who art but a point, thou whose essence is but an atom, to measure thyself with the Supreme Being, with him who fills heaven and earth, with him whom "heaven, the heavens contain?" 1 Kings viii.

27. "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection? high as heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than hell, what canst thou know?" Job xi. 7. "He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing. He bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds, the pillars of heaven tremble, and are astonished at his reproof. Lo, these are parts of his ways, but how little a portion is heard of him? but the thunder of his power who can understand?" Job xxvi. 7. 11. 14. "Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof? who hath stretched the line upon it? whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? who laid the corner-stone thereof, when the morning-stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? Who shut up the sea with doors, when I made the cloud the garment thereof, and thick darkness a swaddling band for it? when I brake up for it my decreed place, and set bars and doors, and said, Hitherto shalt thou come and no farther: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed?" Job xxxviii. 3—5, &c. "He that reproveth God, let him answer this. O Lord, such knowledge is too wonderful for me: it is too high, I cannot attain unto it!" Job xl. 2.

4. But, my brethren, shall these be the only inferences from our text? shall we reap only speculations from this discourse? shall we only believe, admire, and exclaim? Ah! from this idea of God I see all the virtues issue which religion prescribes! If such be the grandeur of the God whom I adore, miserable wretch! what ought my repentance to be! I, a contemptible worm, I, a creature whom God could tread beneath his feet, and crush into dust by a single act of his will, I have rebelled against the great God, I have endeavoured to *provoke him to jealousy*, as if I had been *stronger than he*, 1 Cor. x. 22. I have insulted that Majesty which the angels of God adore; I have attacked God, with madness and boldness, on his throne, and in his empire. Is it possible to feel remorse too cutting for sins which the grandeur of the offended, and the littleness of the offender, make so very atrocious?

5. If such be the grandeur of God, what should our humility be! Grandees of the world, mortal divinities, who swell with vanity in the presence of God, oppose yourselves to the immense God. Behold his eternal ideas, his infinite knowledge, his general influence, his universal direction; enter his immense ocean of perfections and virtues, what are ye? a grain of dust, a point, an atom, a nothing!

6. If such be the grandeur of God, what ought our confidence to be! "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Rom. viii. 31. Poor creature, tossed about the world, as by so many winds, by hunger, by sickness, by persecution, by misery; by nakedness, by exile; fear not in a vessel of which God himself is the pilot.

7. But above all, if such be the grandeur of God, if God be every where present, what should our vigilance be! and, to return to the idea with which we began, what impression

should this thought make on reasonable souls! God seeth me. "When thou wast under the fig-tree," said Jesus Christ to Nathanael, "I saw thee," John i. 48. See Eccles. ii. 23—25. We do not know what Jesus Christ saw under the fig-tree, nor is it necessary now to inquire: but it was certainly something which, Nathanael was fully persuaded, no mortal eye had seen. As soon, therefore, as Jesus Christ had uttered these words, he believed, and said, "Rabbi, thou art the Christ, the son of the living God." My brethren, God useth the same language to each of you to-day: "when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee."

Thou hypocrite, when, wrapped in a veil of religion, embellished with exterior piety, thou concealedst an impious heart, and didst endeavour to impose on God and man, *I saw thee*, I penetrated all those labyrinths, I dissipated all those darkneses, I dived into all thy deep designs.

Thou worldling, who, with a prudence truly infernal, hast the art of giving a beautiful tint to the most odious objects: who appearest not to hate thy neighbour, because thou dost not openly attack him; not to falsify thy promise, because thou hast the art of eluding it; not to oppress thy dependants, because thou knowest how to impose silence on them: *I saw thee*, when thou gavest those secret stabs, when thou didst receive bribes, and didst accumulate those wages of unrighteousness, which cry for vengeance against thee.

Thou slave to sensuality, ashamed of thine excesses before the face of the sun, *I saw thee*, when, with bars and bolts, with obscurity and darkness, and complicated precautions, thou didst hide thyself from the eyes of men, "defile the temple of God, and make the members of Christ the members of a harlot," 1 Cor. vi. 15.

My brethren, the discourses, which we usually preach to you, absorb your minds in a multitude of ideas. A collection of moral ideas, perhaps, confound instead of instructing you, and when we attempt to engage you in too many reflections, ye enter really into none. Behold an epitome of religion. Behold a morality in three words. Return to your houses, and every where carry this reflection with you, *God seeth me, God seeth me*. To all the wiles of the devil, to all the snares of the world, to all the baits of cupidity, oppose this reflection, *God seeth me*. If, clothed with a human form, he were always in your path, were he to follow you to every place, were he always before you with his majestic face, with eyes flashing with lightning, with looks inspiring terror, dare ye, before his august presence, give a loose to your passions? But ye have been hearing that his majestic face is every where, those sparkling eyes do inspect you in every place, those terrible looks do consider you every where. Particularly in the ensuing week, while ye are preparing for the Lord's supper, recollect this. Let each examine his own heart, and endeavour to search into his conscience, where he may discover so much weakness, so much corruption, so much hardness, so many unclean sources overflowing with so many excesses, and let this idea strike each of you, *God seeth me*. God seeth me, as I see myself, unclean, ungrateful,

and rebellious. O may this idea produce contrition and sorrow, a just remorse and a sound conversion, a holy and a fervent communion, crowned with graces and virtues. Happy, if, after our examination, we have a new heart! a heart agreeable to those eyes that search and try it! Happy, if, after our communion, after a new examination, we can say with the prophet, "O Lord, thou hast proved mine heart, thou hast tried me, and hast found nothing," Ps. xvii. 3. So be it. To God be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

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## SERMON IV.

### THE GRANDEUR OF GOD.

ISAIAH xl. 12—28.

*Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand? and meted out heaven with a span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Who hath directed the spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and showed to him the way of understanding? Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt-offering. All nations before him are as nothing, and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity. To whom then will he liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him? The workman melteth a graven image, and the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold, and casteth silver chains. He that is so impoverished that he hath no oblation, chooseth a tree that will not rot; he seeketh unto him a cunning workman to prepare a graven image that shall not be moved. Have ye not known? have ye not heard? Hath it not been told you from the beginning? Have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in: that bringeth the princes to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity. Yea, they shall not be planted, yea, they shall not be sown, yea, their stock shall not take root in the earth: and he shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble. To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names, by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power, not one faileth. Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel; My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God? hast thou not known? hast thou not heard that the Lord is the everlasting God?*

THE words, the lofty words of the text, require two sorts of observations: The first are

necessary to explain and confirm the prophet's notions of God; the second to determine and to enforce his design in describing the Deity with so much pomp.

The prophet's notions of God are diffused through all the verses of the text. "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with a span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure? Who hath weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Behold, the nations are as the drop of a bucket. Behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers."

The prophet's design in describing the Deity with so much magnificence is to discountenance idolatry, of which there are two sorts. The first, I call religious idolatry, which consists in rendering that religious worship to a creature, which is due to none but God. The second, I call moral idolatry, which consists in distrusting the promises of God in dangerous crises, and in expecting that assistance from men which cannot be expected from God. In order to discountenance idolatry in religion, the prophet contents himself with describing it. "The workman melteth a graven image, the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold."

For the purpose of discrediting idolatry in morals, he opposeth the grandeur of God to the most grand objects among men, I mean earthly kings. "God (saith the prophet) bringeth the princes to nothing, he shall blow upon them, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble. Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel; My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God?" and so on.

This subject may seem perhaps too copious for one discourse, however, it will not exceed the limits of this; and we will venture to detain you a moment before we attend to the matter, in remarking the manner, that is, the style of our prophet, and the expressive sublimity of our text. It is a composition, which not only surpasses the finest passages of the most celebrated profane authors, but perhaps exceeds the loftiest parts of the holy Scriptures.

"Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand? Who hath meted out heaven with a span? Who hath comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure? Who hath weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? All nations before him are as the drop of a bucket. He taketh up the isles as a very little thing. He sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers." What loftiness of expression! the deference that we pay to the sacred writers is not founded on the beauty of their diction. They do not affect to come to us "with the enticing words of man's wisdom," 1 Cor. ii. 4. We cannot help observing, however, in some of their writings, the most perfect models of eloquence. God seems to have dispensed talents of this kind, in the same manner as he has sometimes bestowed temporal blessings of another kind. Riches and grandeurs are too mean, and too unsatis-

fying, to constitute the felicity of a creature formed in the image of God. Immortal men, who are called to participate felicity and glory with their God, are indifferent to the part which they act, during their short existence on the stage of time. To them it is a matter of very little importance, whether they occupy the highest or the lowest, the most conspicuous or the most obscure posts in society. It signifies but little to them, whether they ride in sumptuous equipages, or walk on foot. To them it is a matter of very little consequence, whether superb processions attend their funerals, or their bodies be laid in their graves without pomp or parade. Yet, when it pleases God to signalize any by gifts of this kind, he does it like a God, if ye will allow the expression, he does it so as to show that his mighty hands hold all that can contribute to ennoble and elevate mankind. Observe his munificence to Solomon. "I have given thee riches and glory," said the Lord to him, "so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee," 1 Kings iii. 12, 13. In virtue of this promise, God loaded Solomon with temporal blessings: he gave him all. In virtue of his promise, "silver was no more esteemed than stones in Jerusalem, the capital of this favourite of heaven, "nor the cedars of Lebanon than the sycamore trees of the plain," 2 Chron. ix. 27.

God has observed the same conduct to the heralds of religion, in regard to the talents that form an orator. The truths which they teach are too serious, and too interesting, to need the help of ornaments. The treasures of religion, which God commits to them are so valuable, that it is needless for us to examine whether they be presented to us "in earthen vessels," 2 Cor. iv. 7. But when the Holy Spirit deigns to distinguish any one of his servants by gifts of this kind, my God! with what a rich profusion hath he the power of doing it! He fires the orator's imagination with a flame altogether divine: he elevates his ideas to the least accessible region of the universe, and dictates language above mortal mouths.

What kind of elocution can ye allege, of which the sacred authors have not given us the most perfect models?

Is it the style proper for history? An historian must assume, it should seem, as many different forms of speaking, as there are different events in the subjects of his narration. And who ever gave such beautiful models of this style as Moses? Witness these words, which have acquired him the eulogium of a pagan critic: "God said, Let there be light, and there was light," Gen. i. 3. Witness these, "Isaac said, My father; Abraham answered, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering," chap. xxii. 7, 8. Witness these words. "Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him, and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me: and

\* Longinus, sect. ix.

there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. And he lifted up his voice and wept, and said unto his brethren, I am Joseph: doth my father yet live? Come near to me, I pray you, I am Joseph, your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt," chap. xlv. 1.

Is it the tender style? Who ever gave such beautiful models as the prophet Jeremiah? Witness the pathetic descriptions, and the affecting complaints in the Lamentations:—"The ways of Zion mourn, because none come to the solemn feasts: All her gates are desolate: her priests sigh: her virgins are afflicted: and she is in bitterness. Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold and see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow. For these things I weep: mine eye, mine eye runneth down," chap. i. 4. 12. 16.

Is it a style proper to terrify and confound? Who ever gave more beautiful models of this style than Ezekiel? Witness, among many others, these expressions: "How weak is thine heart, saith the Lord God, seeing thou dost all these things: the work of an imperious whorish woman? A wife that committeth adultery, which taketh strangers instead of her husband! They give gifts to all whores: but thou givest thy gifts to all lovers, and hirest them, that they may come unto thee on every side for thy whoredom," chap. xvi. 30. 32, 33.

Above all, is it the lofty, noble, and sublime style? Whose models are comparable to the prophet Isaiah's? Christian preacher, thou who studiest to convince, to persuade, to carry away the hearts of the people to whom God hath sent thee, neither make Cicero nor Demosthenes thy models; investigate the ideas, and appropriate the language of the inspired writers.—Heat thine imagination at the fire which inflamed them, and with them, endeavour to elevate the mind to the mansions of God, to "the light which no man can approach unto," 1 Tim. vi. 16. Learn of these great masters to handle "the sword of the Spirit," and to manage "the word of God quick and powerful, even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit; and of the joints and marrow," Heb. iv. 12.

But when I propose my text as a pattern of elocution, far from your minds be the idea of a trifling orator's fraudulent art, whose ambition it is to exceed his subject, and to lend his hero the virtues that he wants. The portrait drawn by the prophet is infinitely inferior to his original. Ye will be fully convinced of this, if ye attend to the four following considerations of the grandeurs of God:—

1. The sublimity of his essence. 2. The immensity of his works. 3. The efficiency of his will. 4. The magnificence of some of his mighty acts, at certain periods, in favour of his church.

First, *The sublimity of his essence.* The prophet's mind was filled with this object. It is owing to this that he repeats the grand title of *Jehovah, THE LORD*, which signifies *I am* by excellence, and which distinguishes, by four grand characters, the essence of God, from the essence of creatures.

1. The essence of God is *independent in its course.* God is a self-existent Being. We exist, but ours is only a borrowed existence, for existence is foreign from us. There was time when we were not, and our origin is nothing: and as we should cease to be if God were only to give the word, so his word was necessary to give us existence at first. But God exists of himself: existence is his own; and he owes it only to himself, and to the eminence of his own perfections. An idea, in which it is difficult not to lose one's self, and which is incomprehensible to us, because it relates to an infinite attribute, and because all that is infinite absorbs a finite mind: but an idea, however, as true as it is incomprehensible. The existence of a mite, or of a grain of dust, or even of the most diminutive being in nature, is sufficiently necessary to conduct us to the independent, self-existent God.

Even the atheist is obliged by his own principles to agree with us in this article: I mean the atheist of some knowledge; the modern atheist. Let us thankfully own, my brethren, that the improvements which a sound philosophy has produced in the sciences, have been communicated even to atheism. Formerly, atheists could digest such propositions as these: The world has not always subsisted; it was made of nothing. Now these propositions are too gross for any to hazard his reputation on the advancing of them. Indeed, to affirm that nothing has made the world, is not only to advance an absurdity, it is to advance a contradiction. To say that nothing has created the world, is to say that nothing has not created the world; and to say that nothing has not created a world which actually exists, is to deny the existence of the world. No rules of reasoning require us to answer people who contradict themselves in so glaring a manner: and on this article, we rank them with idiots. Modern atheists admit, as we do, a self-existent being. All the difference between them and us is this: they attribute this eminent perfection to matter; but we attribute it to God. The atheist derives his existence from a collection of atoms, which a blind chance had assembled: we ascribe our existence to a Being possessed of all possible perfections. The atheist discovers his God and Creator in a confused conjunction of bodies destitute of reason: we find our God and Creator in the Supreme Being, the fountain of all existence. But both we and the atheist are obliged to own an uncreated, self-existent Being. And as it is easy for a reasonable person to decide the question, whether this perfection agree to God or to matter, it is easy for him also to comprehend that God is a self-existent Being.

2. The essence of God is *universal in its extent.* God possesses the reality of every thing that exists. A celebrated infidel, educated in your provinces, (would to God none were educated here still!) this infidel, I say, invented a new way of publishing atheism, by disguising it. I am mistaken in saying *new*: for it would be easy to prove, that the miserable Spinoza\* had not the glory of inventing

\* Benedict de Spinoza was born at Amsterdam, and was educated in the same city under Francis Vander Ende.

it; he only revived a pagan notion.\* He says, that there is a God, but that this God is only the universality and assemblage of creatures: that every being is a modification of God; that the sun is God, as giving light, that ailments are God, as affording nourishment; and so of the rest. What a system! What an abominable system! But this system, all abominable as it is, has, however, some truth, or some foundation. God is not diffused through all these different beings: God is not divided; but he possesses all the perfections of the universe, and it is by this notion of God, that the true religion is distinguished from superstition. The superstitious, struck with the beauty of some particular being, made that being the object of their adoration. One, struck with the beauty of the stars, said, that the stars were gods. Another, astonished at the splendour of the sun, said that the sun was God. Democritus, surprised at the beauty of fire, said, that God was a material fire. Chrysippus, amazed at the beauty of that necessity, which causeth every thing to answer its destination, said, that God was fate. Parmenides, affected with the beautiful extent of heaven and earth, said, that God was that extent.

But God is all this, because he eminently possesses all this. An ancient heathen said of Camillus, that he was the whole Roman republic to him: and Toxaris, when he had procured Anacharsis the acquaintance of Solon, said to him: "This is Athens, this is Greece; thou art no longer a stranger, thou hast seen the whole." Let us sanctify this thought by applying it to God. God is all the Roman republic, all Greece, the whole world and all its inhabitants. Yes, he is the beauty of the stars, the brightness of the sun, the purity of fire, the subtilty of ethereal matter, the expanse of heaven, and the law of fate; he is the sagacity of the politician, the penetration of the philosopher, the bravery of the soldier, the undaunted courage, and the cautious coolness of the general. If, among these qualities, there be any incompatible with the purity of his essence, and therefore inapplicable to him, yet in this sense they belong to him, all are subject to his empire, and act only by his will. He is, as an ancient writer expresses it, a boundless ocean of existence. From this ocean of existence all created beings, like so many rivulets, flow. From this ocean of light proceeded the sun with its brightness, the stars with their glitter, along with all the brilliances of other beings that approach their nature. From this ocean of wisdom came those profound politicians, who penetrate the deepest recesses of the human heart; hence those sublime philosophers, who explore the heavens by the marvels of dioptrics, and descend into the bowels of the earth by their knowledge of nature; and hence all those superior geniuses, who cultivate the sciences, and the liberal arts, and who constitute the beauty of the intelligent world. "In him we live, and move, and have our being," Acts xvii. 28. We breathe his air, and we are animated by his spirit; it is

his power that upholds, his knowledge that informs, and his wisdom that conducts us.

3. The essence of God is *unchangeable in its exercise*. Creatures only pass from nothing to existence, and from existence to nothing. Their existence is rather a continual variation than a permanent state; and they are all carried away with the same vicissitudes. Hardly are we children before we become men: hardly are we arrived at manhood before we become old; and as soon as we become old we die. We love to-day what we hated yesterday, and to-morrow we shall hate what to-day we love. David has given us a just definition of man. He defines him a phantom, who only *appears*, and who appears only in a *vain show*, Ps. xxxix. 6. But "I the Lord change not: the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," Mal. iii. 6. Heb. xiii. 8. He is, as it were, the fixed point, on which revolve all the creatures in the universe, without the partaking himself of their revolutions.

4. Finally, the divine essence is *eternal in its duration*: "Hast thou not known (saith our prophet,) that he is the everlasting God, the Lord, the creator of the ends of the earth?" When we attempt to measure the duration of God, by tracing it beyond the first periods of this universe, we lose ourselves in the unfathomable depths of eternity: we heap ages upon ages, millions of years upon millions of years; but no beginning of his existence can we find. And when we endeavour to stretch our thoughts, and to penetrate the most remote futurity, again we heap ages upon ages, millions of years upon millions of years, and lose ourselves again in the same abyss, perceiving, that he can have no end, as he had no beginning. He is "the ancient of days, the alpha and omega, the first and the last," Dan. vii. 9. "He is, he was, he is to come," Rev. i. 8. "Before the mountains were brought forth, before the earth and the world were formed, even from everlasting to everlasting he is God," Ps. xc. 2. And, when the mountains shall be dissolved, when the foundations of the earth shall be destroyed, when all sensible objects shall be *folded up like a vesture*, he will be the *everlasting God*, Heb. i. 12; will be, when they exist no more, as he was before they existed at all.

Secondly, Having judged of the grandeur of God by the sublimity of his essence, judge of it by the *immensity of his works*. The prophet invites us to this meditation in the words of his text. "It is he that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things. It is he who bringeth out their host by number, he calleth them all by names. By the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power, not one faileth." But who can pretend to discuss, in a single article of one sermon, a subject, which whole volumes could not contain? For if there be a subject, in which simple narration resembles rhetorical bombast, it is undoubtedly this.

A novice is frightened at hearing what astronomers assert; that the sun is a million times bigger than the earth: that the naked eye dis-

\* See Dr. Clarke on the Attributes, Vol. I. prop. 3.

covers more than a thousand fixed stars, which are so many suns to enlighten unknown systems: that with the help of glasses, we may discover an almost infinite number: that two thousand have been reckoned in one constellation; and that, without exaggerating, they may be numbered at more than two millions: that what are called nebulous stars, of which there is an innumerable multitude, that appear to us as if they were involved in little misty clouds, are all assemblages of stars.

A novice is frightened, when he is told, that there is such a prodigious distance between the earth and the sun, that a body, moving with the greatest rapidity that art could produce, would take up twenty-five years in passing from the one to the other: that it would take up seven hundred and fifty thousand to pass from the earth to the nearest of the fixed stars: and to the most distant more than a hundred millions of years.

A novice is frightened: (do not accuse me, my brethren, of wandering from the subject of this discourse, for the saints, who are proposed in scripture as patterns to us, cherished their devotions with meditations of this kind: at the sight of these grand objects, they exclaimed, "O Lord, when we consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained; what is man that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that thou visitest him?" Psal. viii. 3, 4. And my text engages me to fix your attention upon these objects: *lift up your eyes on high and behold.*)

A novice is frightened, when he is assured, that although the stars, which form a constellation, seem to touch one another, yet the distances of those that are nearest together can be ascertained, and that even words are wanting to express the spaces which separate those that are the greatest distances from each other; that if two men were observing two fixed stars, from two parts of the earth, the most distant from each other, the lines that went from their eyes, and terminated on that star, would be confounded together; that it would be the same with two men, were one of them upon earth, and the other in the sun, though the sun and the earth are at such a prodigious distance from each other; so inconsiderable is that distance in comparison of the space which separates both from the star. All this startles a novice: and yet, what are these bodies, countless in their number, and enormous in their size? What are these unmeasurable spaces, which absorb our senses and imaginations? What are all these in comparison of what reason discovers? Shall we be puerile enough to persuade ourselves that there is nothing beyond what we see? Have we not reason to think, that there are spaces far, far beyond, full of the Creator's wonders, and affording matter of contemplation to the *thousand thousands*, to the *ten thousand times ten thousand* intelligences that he has made? Dan. vii. 10.

Here let us pause. Over all this universe God reigns. But what is man even in comparison of this earth? "Let him reflect on himself" (I borrow the words of a modern author,) "let him consider what he is in comparison of the whole that exist beside: let him regard himself as confined in this obscure by-corner of nature:

and from the appearance of the little dungeon where he is lodged, that is, of this visible world, let him learn to estimate the world, its kingdoms, and himself at their real value." Isaiah estimates their real value in the words of my text. "*Behold,*" says he, "all nations before him are as a drop of a bucket;" they are of no more value than the *small dust that cleaves to the balance*: God sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers;" yea, they are still less considerable, "all nations before him are as nothing."

Thirdly, The immensity of the Creator's works leads us to the *efficiency of his will*: and the idea of the real world conducts us to that of the possible world. There needs no train of propositions to discover a connexion between what God has done, and what he can do. The idea of a creature leads to that of a Creator: for, in supposing that some beings have been created, we suppose an author of their creation. The idea of a creative Being includes the idea of a Being whose will is efficient: for as soon as ye suppose a creative Being, ye suppose a Being whose will is self-efficient. But a Being, whose will is self-efficient, is a Being who, by a single act of his will, can create all possible beings: that is all, the existence of which implies no contradiction; there being no reason for limiting the power of a will that hath been once efficient of itself. So that as soon as ye conceive a Being who has once created, ye conceive a Being, who can always create.

Let us then form this notion of God: a Being who, by a single act of his will, can create now in empty space as he hath formerly created. He can say, of light which doth not exist, what he once said of that which doth exist, "Let there be light;" and there shall be light, like that which actually is. He can say, of luminaries which are not, what he has said of luminaries which already are, "Let there be lights in the firmament of heaven;" and luminaries, that are not, shall be, and those that once were not are now, and will owe their existence to that will, which is always irresistible, and always efficient; or, as the prophet says in the words of my text, to the *greatness of his might*, to the *strength of his power*.

Lastly, to convince you of the grandeur of God, I am to remark to you, "the magnificence of some of his mighty acts, at certain periods, in favour of his church." The prophet had two of these periods in view. The first was the return of the Jews from that captivity in Babylon which he had denounced: and the second, the coming of the Messiah, of which their return from captivity was only a shadow.

What wonders did God work in the first of these periods! Nebuchadnezzar, the tyrant of the Jews, had obtained universal monarchy, or, as the prophet Jeremiah expresses it, he was become the *hammer of the whole earth*, Jer. i. 23. The inspired writers represent the rapidity of his victories under the emblem of the swiftness of an eagle. We can hardly imagine the speed with which he overran Ethiopia, Arabia, Palestine, Persia, Media, Egypt, Idumea, Syria, and almost all Asia, and with which he conquered all those extensive countries as he marched through them. Cyrus had

been appointed by the Lord, and nominated by the prophets, to stop his career, and to subdue those Babylonians who had subdued so many nations. But who was this Cyrus? Son of a father, whose meanness and obscurity had prevailed with Astyages, king of Media, to give him his daughter Mandana in marriage; how will he perform such prodigious enterprises? This is not all. Astyages was afraid that Mandana's son should fulfil a dream, of which his diviners had given him frightful interpretations. He caused her therefore to reside at court during her pregnancy, and commanded Harpagus, one of his most devoted courtiers, to put the child to death as soon as he should be born. But God preserved the child, and all the power of Astyages could not make one hair fall from his head without the divine permission. Harpagus trembled at his commission, resigned it to the overseer of the king's flocks, and ordered him to expose Mandana's son: but, when he was preparing to obey him, his wife, affected with the beauty of young Cyrus, prevailed with her husband to expose her own son in his stead.

Thus, by a train of miracles, was this *anointed of God* preserved, and by a train of greater miracles still, did he stir up the Persians against the Medes, march at the head of them against the cruel Astyages, defeat him, conquer Media, and at length besiege Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar had surrounded that city with a triple wall, and had replaced the bricks of Semiramis with free-stone, which contributed, says Dion, less to the magnificence than to the eternity of the empire. The walls were a hundred feet high, and fifty broad, so that it was said of that great city, it was alike incredible how art could form, or art destroy it. But what walls, what fortifications, can resist the blows of an arm supported by "the greatness of the might, the strength of the power," of the omnipotent God! Every thing submits to the valour of Cyrus: he takes Babylon, and before he has well secured his conquest, does homage for the victory to the God who had foretold it; and releases the Jews from captivity. These accounts are related by heathen authors, and particularly by Herodotus and Justin: God having determined that the bitterest enemies of revelation should preserve those monuments which demonstrate the divinity of our prophecies.

But I said just now, that the return of the Jews from their captivity in Babylon was only a shadow of that deliverance, which the Messiah was to bring into the world: and that the mighty acts, which God wrought in the first period, were only faint images of what he would operate in the second. Accordingly, our prophet had the second of these periods much more in view than the first in the words of my text. It is not a love for the marvellous; it is neither a prejudice of education, nor a blind submission to the confessions of faith; (motives that produce so much superstition among Christians:) these are not the reasons of our comment: it is the nature of the thing; it is the magnificence of the prophecies connected with my text; it is the authority of St. Paul, who, in the eleventh chapter of his epistle to the Romans, ver. 34; and in the second of his first

epistle to the Corinthians, ver. 16; interprets these words of my text of the gospel, *Who has known the mind of the Lord? who has been his counsellor?* Accordingly, in this second period, God has displayed treasures of wisdom and knowledge. But we have elsewhere treated this subject at large, and we choose rather only to hint this article to-day than to incur the just reproach of treating it imperfectly.

Such then are the grandeurs of God; and all that I have lisped out is more properly the title of the subject, upon which I would fix your attention, than the subject itself well digested. Nevertheless, how imperfect soever the sketch may be, it may serve to convince us, that there is no extravagance in the prophet's ideas; that if his language is lofty, it is not hyperbolical, and that he is always below the truth, even when he uses these sublime expressions, "Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand? meted the heavens with a span, comprehended the dust of the earth with a measure, weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? But why does he describe the Deity with so much pomp? This remains to be considered in the second part of this discourse, which shall also be the application.

II. We observed in the beginning, that the prophet's design was to render two sorts of idolatry odious: idolatry in religion; and idolatry in morals.

Idolatry in religion consists in rendering those religious homages to creatures, which are due to the Creator only. To discredit this kind of idolatry, the prophet contents himself with describing it. He shames the idolater by reminding him of the origin of idols, and of the pains taken to preserve them. What is the origin of idols? "The workman melteth an image (says our prophet,) and the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold." What pains does the idolater take to preserve his idols? He *casteth silver chains* to fasten them, and to prevent thieves from stealing them, or perhaps for fear they should escape through their own inconstancy. The heathens had been accustomed, when they besieged a city, to evoke the tutelary gods (Maorbius has preserved a long form of these evocations;\*) and the besieged, to prevent the effects of these evocations, and to secure their gods from going into their enemies' camps, used to fasten their images with chains. Many proofs of this might be alleged, but one passage of Quintus Curtius shall suffice. He tells us, that "a citizen of Tyre having publicly declared that he had seen in a dream the image of Apollo quitting the city, the citizens immediately used the precaution of fastening it with a chain of gold."<sup>†</sup>

\* Saturn. III. 9. The following is the form of the incantation. "If you be a God, or a Goddess, under whose guardianship the people and the city of the Carthaginians is, and you, particularly, who have taken upon you the protection of that people and city, I worship you, and humbly beg you would be pleased to forsake the people and city of the Carthaginians, to abandon their places, temples, religious ceremonies and cities, and come away." &c. Bayle, Soranus Rem. E.

† L. IV. 3. 21. Metu aurea catena devinxere simulacrum, araque Herculis, cuius nimumi urbem dicevant, inseruere vinculum, quasi illo Deo Apollinem retenturi.

But the prophet no less intended to shame idolatry in morals, which consists in distrusting the promises of God in extreme dangers and in expecting from men a succour that cannot be expected from God. A man is guilty of moral idolatry, when, in dangerous crises, he says, "My way is hid from the Lord; my judgment is passed over from my God." Be not surprised at my giving so odious a name to a disposition of mind, which is too common even among those whose piety is the least suspected, and the best established. The essence of idolatry, in general, is to disrobe the Deity of his perfections, and to adorn a creature with them. There are indeed many degrees of this disposition. He, who renders divine honours to the glimmering light of a taper, is guilty perhaps of a more gross idolatry, than he who worships the sun. The Egyptian, who worships a rat, is perhaps more absurd than the Roman, who ranks a Cæsar with the gods. But, after all, there is so small a difference between the meanest insect and the greatest emperor, the glimmering of a taper and the glory of the sun, when compared with the Supreme Being, that there can be no great difference between these two sorts of idolatry.

Let us apply this to our subject. God is the sole arbiter of events. Whenever ye think, that any more powerful being directs them to comfort you, ye put the creature in the Creator's place; whether ye do it in a manner more or less absurd: whether they be formidable armies, impregnable fortresses, and well-stored magazines, which ye thus exalt into deities; or whether it be a small circle of friends, an easy income, or a country-house; it does not signify, ye are alike idolaters.

The Jews were often guilty of the first sort of idolatry. The captivity in Babylon was the last curb to that fatal propensity. But this miserable people, whose existence and preservation, whose prosperities and adversities, were one continued train of obvious miracles, immediately from heaven; this miserable people, whose whole history should have prevailed with them to have feared God only, and to have confided in him entirely; this miserable people trembled at Nebuchadnezzar, and his army, as if both had acted independently of God. Their imaginations prostrated before these second causes, and they shuddered at the sight of the Chaldean Marmosets, as if they had afforded assistance to their worshippers, and had occasioned their triumphs over the church:

Thanks be to God, my dear brethren, that the light of the gospel hath opened the eyes of a great number of Christians, in regard to idolatry in religion. I say a great number, and not all: for how many parts of the Christian world still deserve the prophet's reproach? "the workman melteth a graven image, the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold. Have ye not known? have ye not heard?" Blessed be God, we are quite free from this kind of idolatry! But how many idolaters of the second kind do I see?

Ye, who, in order to avert public calamities, satisfy yourselves with a few precautions of worldly prudence, and oppose provisions to

scarcity, medicines to mortality, an active vigilance to the danger of a contagion; and take no pains to extirpate those horrible crimes, which provoke the vengeance of heaven to inflict punishments on public bodies; ye are guilty of this second kind of idolatry, ye stand exposed to this malediction, "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm." Jer. xvii. 5. Were your confidence placed in God, ye would endeavour to avert national judgments by purging the state of those scandalous commerces, those barbarous extortions, and all those wicked practices, which are the surest forerunners, and the principal causes, of famine, and pestilence, and war.

Desolate family, ye who rested all your expectations upon one single head; ye, who made one single person the axis of all your schemes and hopes, ye, who lately saw that person cut down in the midst of his race, and carried away with the torrent of human vicissitudes; ye, who see nothing around you now but indigence, misery, and famine; who cry in the bitterness of your grief, no more support, no more protector, no more father: ye are guilty of this second kind of idolatry. Ye "trusted in man, ye made flesh your arm." Were God the object of your trust, ye would recollect, amidst all your grief, that Providence is not enclosed in your patron's tomb: ye would remember, that an invisible eye incessantly watches over, and governs, this world; that God, "who feedeth the fowls of heaven, and clothes the lilies of the valley," Luke xii. 24. 28; that a God so good and compassionate, can easily provide for the maintenance and encouragement of your family.

And thou, feeble mortal, lying on a sick bed, already struggling with the king of terrors, Job xviii. 14; in the arms of death; thou, who tremblingly complainest, I am undone! physicians give me over! friends are needless! remedies are useless! every application is unsuccessful! a cold sweat covers my whole body, and announces my approaching death! thou art guilty of this second kind of idolatry, thou hast "trusted in man," thou hast "made flesh thine arm." Were God the object of thy trust, thou wouldst believe, that though death is about to separate thee from men, it is about to unite thee to God: thou wouldst preclude the slavish fear of death by thy fervent desires: thou wouldst exult at the approach of thy Redeemer, "Come, Lord, come quickly! Amen." Rev. xxii. 20. How easy would it be, my brethren, to enlarge this article!

"Dearly beloved, flee from idolatry," 1 Cor. x. 14; is the exhortation of an apostle, and with this exhortation we conclude this discourse, and enforce the design of the prophet in the text. "Flee from idolatry," not only from gross idolatry, but from that which, though it may appear less shocking, is no less repugnant to the spirit of religion. "Why sayest thou, O Jacob; why speakest thou, O Israel; My way is hid from the Lord; my judgment is passed over from my God?" The guardianship of you is that part of the dominion of God of which he is most jealous. His love for you is so exquisite, that he con-



descends to charge himself with your happiness. The happiness which ye feel in communion with him, is intended to engage you to him; and the noblest homage that ye can return, the purest incense that ye can offer, is to say to him, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? there is none upon earth I desire besides thee. It is good for me to draw near to God," Ps. lxxiii. 25. 28.

If ye place your hopes upon creatures, ye depend upon winds, and waves, and precarious seasons: upon the treachery, iniquity, and inconstancy, of men: or, to say all in one word, ye depend upon death. That poor man is a self-deceiver, who, like the man in the gospel, saith *within himself*, "My soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years: take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry," Luke xii. 17. 19. But, I expect to find him, yes, I expect to find him, at the sound of that voice, which may this very night require his soul, I expect to find him in a sick bed. There, all pale, distorted, and dying, let him assemble his gods; let him call for his treasures, and send for his domestics, and acquaintances; in that fatal bed let him embrace his Drusillas and Dalilahs; let him form harmonious concerts, amuse himself with fashionable diversions, or feast his eyes with gaudy decorations, the vacuity and vanity of which, in spite of himself, he will be obliged to discover.

O give me more solid foundations for my hopes! May I never build my house upon the sand, endangered by every wind and wave; may the edifice of my felicity be superior to human vicissitudes, and "like mount Sion, which cannot be removed," Ps. cxxv. 1; may I build upon the rock of ages, and be able in public calamities and in my private misfortunes, above all, in the agonies of death to appropriate those precious promises which God hath made to his church in general, and to every individual in it: "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed," Isa. liv. 10.

To this God, of whose grandeur we form such elevated notions, and upon whose promises we found such exalted hopes, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

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## SERMON V.

### THE GREATNESS OF GOD'S WISDOM, AND THE ABUNDANCE OF HIS POWER.

JEREMIAH xxxii. 19.

*Great in counsel, and mighty in work.*

THESE words are connected with the two preceding verses: "Ah, Lord God, behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched-out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee. Thou showest loving-kindness unto thousands, and recompensest the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them: the great, the mighty God, the Lord of hosts is his name, great in counsel, and mighty in work."

The text that we have read to you, my brethren, and which, though very short, hath doubtless already excited many grand ideas in your minds, is a homage which the prophet Jeremiah paid to the perfections of God, when they seemed to counteract one another. To make this plain to you, we will endeavour to fix your attention on the circumstances in which our prophet was placed, when he pronounced the words. This is the best method of explaining the text, and with this we begin.

Jeremiah was actually a martyr to his ministry, when he addressed that prayer to God, of which this text is only a part. He was reduced to the disagreeable necessity of not being able to avail himself of the rites of religion, without invalidating the maxims of civil government. This is one of the most difficult straits, into which the ministers of the living God can be brought; for, however they may be opposed, people always regard them, if not with entire submission, yet with some degree of respect, while they confine themselves to the duties of their own office, and while, content with the speaking of heavenly things, they leave the reins of government in the hands of those to whom Providence has committed them. But when religion and civil policy are so united that ministers cannot discharge their functions without becoming, in a manner, ministers of state, without determining whether it be proper to make peace or to declare war, to enter into alliances or to dissolve them: how extremely delicate and difficult does their ministry become! This was our prophet's case. Jerusalem had been besieged for the space of one year by Nebuchadnezzar's army, and it was doubtful whether the city should capitulate with that prince, or hold out against him. God himself decided this question, by the ministry of the prophet, and commanded him in his name, to address the Israelites: "Thus saith the Lord; Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall take it. And Zedekiah king of Judah shall not escape out of the hand of the Chaldeans; but shall surely be delivered into the hands of the king of Babylon . . . though ye fight with the Chaldeans, ye shall not prosper," ver. 3—5.

A prediction so alarming was not uttered with impunity: Jeremiah was thrown into prison for pronouncing it: but before he could well reflect on this trial, he was exercised with another that was more painful still. God commanded him to transact an affair, which seems at first sight more likely to sink his ministry into contempt, than to conciliate people's esteem to it. He commanded him to avail himself of the right, which every Israelite enjoyed, when his nearest relation offered an estate to sale: a right founded upon an institute recorded in Leviticus. God required the Israelites to consider him as their sovereign, and his sovereignty over them was absolute, Lev. xxv. They cannot be said to have possessed any thing as proper owners; they held every thing conditionally, and in trust; and they had no other right in their patrimonial estates than what they derived from the arbitrary will of God. In order to preserve in them a sense of this dependence, they were forbidden to sell

the lands which they inherited from their ancestors: "The lands shall not be sold for ever (saith the Levitical law,) for the land is mine, and ye are strangers and sojourners with me," ver. 23. This was not unknown to the heathens, for Diodorus of Sicily says, that "the Jews could not sell their inheritances."\*

But as it might happen that a landholder might become indigent, and be reduced by this prohibition to the danger of dying with hunger, even while he had enough to supply all his wants, God had provided, that, in such a case, the lands might be sold under certain restrictions, which were proper to convince the seller of that sovereignty, from which he would never depart. The principle of those restrictions were two; one, that the estate should be rather mortgaged than sold, and, at the jubilee, should return to its first master; and hence it is, that to sell an estate *for ever*, in the style of the Jewish jurisprudence, is to mortgage it till the jubilee. The other restriction was, that the nearest relation of him who was obliged to sell his land, should have the right of purchasing it before any others, either more distant relations or strangers.

In virtue of this law, Jeremiah had a right to purchase an estate, which Hanameel, the son of Shallum, had offered to sale. The land lay at Anathoth, a town in the tribe of Benjamin, where our prophet was born, and was actually occupied by the Chaldeans at that time. Jerusalem was besieged, and Jeremiah was fully persuaded, and even foretold that it would be taken; that the Jews would be carried away into captivity; and would not be re-established in their own country till their return from Babylon at the expiration of seventy years. What a time to purchase an estate! What a season to improve a right of redemption!

But this command of God to the prophet was full of meaning; God gave it with views similar to, but incomparably surer than, those which the Romans had, when they publicly offered to sell the land where Hannibal was encamped when he was besieging the city of Rome. What the prophet was commanded to do, was designed to be an image of what the Jews should have the liberty of doing after their re-establishment. Ye may ascertain that this was the design of the command given to Jeremiah, if ye attend to the words which he addressed to God himself, in the twenty-fourth verse of this chapter: "Behold the mounts, the city is given into the hands of the Chaldeans: and thou hast said unto me, O Lord God, buy thee the field for money," ver. 25. 27. To this the Lord answers, "Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh, is there any thing too hard for me? Like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so I will bring upon them all the good that I have promised them. And fields shall be bought in this land, whereof ye say, It is desolate without man or

beast, it is given into the hand of the Chaldeans. Men shall buy fields for money, and subscribe evidences," ver. 42—44.

Jeremiah entered into these views, obeyed the command, and believed the promise: but, to fortify himself against such doubts as the distance of its accomplishment might perhaps produce in his mind, he recollected the eminent perfections, and the magnificent works, of him from whom the promise came. "Now when I had delivered the evidence of the purchase unto Baruch (says the prophet,) I prayed unto the Lord, saying, Ah! Lord God, behold thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched-out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee. . . . Thou art the great, the mighty God, the Lord of hosts is thy name, great in counsel, and mighty in work."

The considering of the circumstances that attended the text, is a sufficient determination of its end and design. The prophet's meaning, which is quite clear, is, that the wisdom of God perfectly comprehended all that would be necessary to re-establish the Jewish exiles in their own land; and that his power could effect it. The words are, however, capable of a nobler and more extensive meaning, and in this larger view we intend to consider them. God is "great in counsel;" either, as the words may be translated, "great in designing, and mighty in executing;" or, as the same phrase is rendered in Isaiah, "wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working," xxviii. 29. We will endeavour to give you a just notion of this sublime subject in two different views.

I. We will consider the subject speculatively.

II. We will consider it in a practical light.

We intend by considering the subject speculatively, to evince the truth of the subject, the demonstration of which is very important to us. By considering it practically, we intend to convince you on the one hand, of the monstrous extravagance of those men, those little rays of intelligence, who, according to the wise man, pretend to set their "wisdom and counsel against the Lord," Prov. xxi. 30; and on the other, of the wisdom of those, who, while they regulate their conduct by his laws alone, commit their peace, their life, and their salvation, to the care of his Providence. This is what I propose to lay before you.

I. "O Lord, thou art great in counsel, and mighty in work." Let us consider this proposition speculatively. I shall establish it on two kinds of proofs. The first shall be taken from the nature of God: the second from the history of the world, or rather from the history of the church.

1. My first proofs shall be taken from the nature of God; not that it belongs to a preacher to go very deeply into so profound a subject, nor to his auditors to follow all the reflections that he could make: yet we wish, when we speak of the Supreme Being, that we might not be always obliged to speak superficially, under pretence that we always speak to plain people. We wish ye had sometimes the laudable ambition, especially when ye assist in this sacred place, of elevating your minds to those sublime objects, of the meditation of which, the occupations, to which your frailties

\* The case of the daughters of Zelophehad, related in Numbers xvii. 8, procured a general law of inheritance. If a man died without a son, his daughters were to inherit: if without children, his brethren were to inherit: if without brethren, his uncle was to inherit: if without uncle, his nearest relation was his heir. Grotius says that this law, which preferred an uncle before a nephew, passed from the Jews to the Phœnicians, and from the Phœnicians into all Africa. Saurin. Discert. Tom. II. Disc. vii.

and miseries, or, shall I rather say, your vitiated tastes, enslave you, ye are deprived in the ordinary course of your lives.

The nature of God proves that he is "great in counsel." Consider the perfect knowledge that he has of all possible beings, as well as of all the beings which do actually exist. We are not only incapable of thoroughly understanding the knowledge that he has of possible beings; but we are even incapable of forming any idea of it. I am not sure that the reduction of all the objects of our knowledge to two ideas is founded in reason. I do not know whether we be not guilty of some degree of temerity in comprising all real existences in two classes: a class of bodies, and a class of spirits. I leave this question to philosophers; but I maintain, that it argues the highest presumption to affirm, even allowing that every being within our knowledge is either body or spirit, that every thing must be reducible to one of these classes, that not only all real existence, but even all possible existence, must necessarily be either body or spirit. I wonder how human capacities, contracted as they are within limits so narrow, dare be so bold as to prescribe bounds to their Creator, and to restrain his intelligence within their own sphere. If it were allowable to advance any thing upon the most abstract subject that can be proposed, I would venture to say that it is highly probable, that the same depth of divine intelligence, which conceived the ideas of body and spirit, conceives other ideas without end: it is highly probable, that possibility (if I may be allowed to say so,) has no other bounds than the infinite knowledge of the Supreme Being. What an unfathomable depth of meditation, my brethren! to glance at it is to confound one's self. What would our perplexity be if we should attempt to enter it? The knowledge of all possible beings, diversified without end by the same intelligence that imagines them: what designs, or, as our prophet expresses himself, what "greatness of counsel," does it afford the Supreme Being!

But let us not lose ourselves in the world of possible beings; let us confine our attention to real existences: I am willing even to reduce them to the two classes, which are just now mentioned. Let each of you imagine, my brethren, as far as his ability can reach, how *great the counsel* of an intelligence must be, who perfectly knows all that can result from the various arrangements of matter, and from the different modifications of mind.

What greatness of counsels must there be in an intelligence, who perfectly knows all that can result from the various arrangements of matter? What is matter? What is body? It is a being divisible into parts, which parts may be variously arranged without end, and from which as many different bodies may arise, as there can be diversities in the arrangement of their parts. Let us proceed from small things to great. Put a grain of wheat to a little earth, warm that earth with the rays of the sun, and the grain of wheat will become an ear laden with a great many grains like that which produces them. Give the parts of these grains an arrangement different from that which they had in the ear,

separate the finer from the coarser parts, mix a few drops of water with the former, and ye will procure a paste: produce a small alteration of the parts of this paste, and it will become bread: let the bread be bruised with the teeth, and it will become flesh, bone, blood, and so on. The same reasoning, that we have applied to a grain of wheat, may be applied to a piece of gold, or a bit of clay, and we know what a multitude of arts in society have been produced by the knowledge which mankind have obtained of the different arrangements of which matter is capable.

But mankind can perceive only one point of matter; a point placed between two infinities; an infinitely great, and an infinitely small. Two sorts of bodies exist besides those that are the objects of our senses, one sort is infinitely great, the other infinitely small. Those enormous masses of matter, of which we have only a glimpse, are bodies infinitely great, such as the sun, the stars, and an endless number of worlds in the immensity of space, to us indeed imperceptible, but the existence of which, however, we are obliged to allow. Bodies infinitely small are those minute particles of matter, which are too fine and subtle to be subject to our experiments, and seem to us to have no solidity, only because our senses are too gross to discover them, but which lodge an infinite number of organized beings.

Having laid down these indisputable data, let us see what may be argued from them. If the knowledge that men have obtained of one portion of matter, and a few different arrangements of which it is capable, has produced a great number of arts that make society flourish, and without the help of which life itself would be a burden; what would follow if they could discover all matter? What would follow their knowledge of those other bodies, which now absorb their capacities by their greatness, and escape their experiments by their littleness? What would follow if they could obtain adequate ideas of the various arrangements of which the parts of bodies infinitely great, and those of bodies infinitely small, are capable? What secrets! what arts! what an infinite source of supplies would that knowledge become?

Now this, my brethren, is the knowledge of the Supreme Being. The Supreme Being knows as perfectly all bodies infinitely great, and all bodies infinitely small, as he knows those bodies between both, which are the objects of human knowledge. The Supreme Being perfectly knows what must result from every different arrangement of the parts of bodies infinitely small; and he perfectly knows what must result from every different arrangement of the parts of bodies infinitely great. What treasures of plans! what myriads of designs! or, to use the language of my text, what *greatness of counsel* must this knowledge supply!

But God knows spirits also as perfectly as he knows bodies. If he knows all that must result from the various arrangements of matter, he also knows all that must result from the different modifications of mind. Let us pursue the same method in this article that we have pursued in the former; let us pro-

ceed from small things to great ones. One of the greatest advantages that a man can acquire over other men with whom he is connected, is a knowledge of their different capacities, the various passions that govern them, and the multiform projects that run in their minds. This kind of knowledge forms profound politicians, and elevates them above the rest of mankind. The same observation, that we have made of the superiority of one politician over another politician, we may apply to one citizen compared with another citizen. The interest which we have in discovering the designs of our neighbours in a city, a house, or a family, is in the little what policy among princes and potentates is in the great world.

But as I just now said of the material world, that we knew only one point, which was placed between two undiscoverable infinities, an infinitely great, and infinitely small; so I say of the world of spirits: an infinite number of spirits exist, which, in regard to us, are some of them infinitely minute, and others infinitely grand. We are ignorant of the manner of their existence; we hardly know whether they do exist. We are incapable of determining whether they have any influence over our happiness, or, if they have, in what their influence consists: so that in this respect we are absolutely incapable of *counsel*.

But God the Supreme Being knows the intelligent world as perfectly as he knows the material world. Human spirits, of which we have but an imperfect knowledge, are thoroughly known to him. He knows the conceptions of our minds, the passions of our hearts, all our purposes, and all our powers. The conceptions of our minds are occasioned by the agitation of our brains; God knows when the brain will be agitated, and when it will be at rest, and before it is agitated he knows what determinations will be produced by its motion: consequently he knows all the conceptions of our minds. Our passions are excited by the presence of certain objects; God knows when those objects will be present, and consequently he knows whether we shall be moved with desire or aversion, hatred or love. When our passions are excited we form certain purposes to gratify them, and these purposes will either be effected or defeated according to that degree of natural or civil power which God has given us. God, who gave us our degree of power, knows how far it can go; and consequently he knows not only what purposes we form, but what power we have to execute them.

But what is this object of the divine knowledge? What is this handful of mankind, in comparison of all the other spirits that compose the whole intelligent world, of which we are only an inconsiderable part? God knows them as he knows us; and he diversifies the counsels of his own wisdom according to the different thoughts, deliberations, and wishes, of these different spirits. What a depth of knowledge, my brethren! What "greatness of counsel! Ah, Lord God, behold thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched-out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee. The great, the

mighty God, the Lord of hosts is thy name, thou art great in counsel."

We have proved then, by considering the divine perfections, that God is *great in counsel*, and we shall endeavour to prove by the same method, that he is *mighty in work*.

These two, wisdom and power, are not always united; yet it is on their union that the happiness of intelligent beings depends. It would be often better to be quite destitute of both, than to possess one in a very great, and the other in a very small degree. Wisdom very often serves only to render him miserable, who is destitute of power; as power often becomes a source of misery to him who is destitute of wisdom.

Have ye never observed, my brethren, that people of the finest and most enlarged geniuses, have often the least success of any people in the world? This may appear at first sight very unaccountable, but a little attention will explain the mystery. A narrow contracted mind usually concentrates itself in one single object: it wholly employs itself in forming projects of happiness proportional to its own capacity, and as its capacity is extremely shallow, it easily meets with the means of executing them. But this is not the case with a man of superior genius, whose fruitful fancy forms notions of happiness grand and sublime. He invents noble plans, involuntarily gives himself up to his own chimeras, and derives a pleasure from these ingenious shadows, which for a few moments, compensate for their want of substance: but when his reverie is over, he finds real beings inferior to ideal ones, and thus his genius serves to make him miserable. A man is much to be pitied in my opinion, when the penetration of his mind, and the fruitfulness of his invention, furnish him with ideas of a delightful society cemented by a faithful, solid, and delicate friendship. Recall him to this world, above which his imagination had just now raised him; consider him among men, who know nothing of friendship but its name, or who have at best only a superficial knowledge of it, and ye will be convinced that the art of inventing is often the art of self-tormenting, or, as I said before, that *greatness of counsels* destitute of *abundance of power* is a source of infelicity.

It is just the same with *abundance of power* without *greatness of counsels*. What does it avail to possess great riches, to reign over a great people, to command formidable fleets and armies, when this power is not accompanied with wisdom?

In God, the Supreme Being, there is a perfect harmony of wisdom and power: the efficiency of his will, and the extent of his knowledge are equal. But I own I am afraid, were I to pursue my meditation, and to attempt to establish this proposition by proofs taken from the divine nature, that I should lose, if not myself, at least one part of my hearers, by aiming to conduct them into a world, with which they are entirely unacquainted. However, I must say, that with reluctance I make this sacrifice, for I suppress speculations, which would afford no small degree of pleasure to those who could pursue them. It is delightful to elevate our souls in meditating on the

grandeur of God; and although God "dwell-eth in a light which no man can approach unto," 1 Tim. vi. 16; although it is impossible for feeble mortals to have a free access to him; yet it is pleasing to endeavour to diminish the distance that separates them. I cannot but think, that without presuming too much upon natural reason, any one who habituates himself to consult it, may assure himself of finding sufficient evidence of this truth, that the efficiency of God's will is equal to the extensiveness of his ideas, and by close and necessary consequence, that he is as mighty in work as he is great in counsel.

Carry your thoughts back into those periods in which the Perfect Being existed alone. Sound reason must allow that he has so existed. What could then have been the rule or model of beings which should in future exist? The ideas of God were those models. And what could cause those beings that had only an ideal existence in the intelligence of God, actually to exist out of it? The efficiency of his will was the cause. The will of the same Being then, whose ideas had been the exemplars, or models, or the attributes of creatures, caused their existence. The Supreme Being therefore, who is "great in counsel," is "mighty in work."

This being granted, consider now the ocean of God's power, as ye have already considered the greatness of his counsel. God not only knows what motion of your brain will excite such or such an idea in your mind, but he excites or prevents that idea as he pleases, because he produces or prevents that motion of your brain as he pleases. God not only knows what objects will excite certain passions within you, but he excites or diverts those passions as he pleases. God not only knows what projects your passions will produce, when they have gained an ascendancy over you, but he inclines you to form, or not to form, such projects, because as it seems best to him, he excites those passions, or he curbs them.

What we affirm of men, we affirm also of all other intelligent beings: they are no less the objects of the knowledge of God than men, and like them, are equally subject to his efficient will: and hence it is that God knows how to make all fulfil his designs. It is by this that he makes every thing subservient to his glory; Herod and Pilate, our hatred and our love, our aversions and our desires; the ten thousand times ten thousand intelligences, some of which are superior to us, and others inferior, all that they are, all that they have, the praises of the blessed and the blasphemies of the damned, all by this mean are instrumental in the execution of his designs, because the determinations of his will are efficient, because to will and to do, to form a plan and to have the power of executing it, is the same thing with the Supreme Being, with him whose ideas were the only models of the attributes of all creatures, as his will was the only cause of their existence.

But perhaps I am falling into what I meant to avoid; perhaps I am bewildering my hearers and myself in speculative labyrinths too intricate for us all. Let us reason then no longer on

the nature of God; this object is too high for us: let us take another method, (and here I allege the second proof of the truth of my text, that is, the history of the world, or as I said before, the history of the church:) let us take, I say, another method of proving that God, who is "great in counsel," is also "mighty in work." What counsel can ye imagine too great for God to execute, or which he hath not really executed? Let the most fruitful imagination exert its fertility to the utmost; let it make every possible effort to form plans worthy of an infinite intelligence, it can invent nothing so difficult that God has not realized.

It should seem, according to our manner of reasoning, that greatness of wisdom and sufficiency of power never appear in greater harmony in an intelligent being, than when that intelligence produces effects by means, in all appearance, more likely to produce contrary effects. This, we are sure, God has effected, and does effect every day. And, that we may proportion this discourse, not to the extent of my subject, but to the length of these exercises, we will briefly remark, that God has the power of making, 1. The deepest afflictions of his children produce their highest happiness. 2. The contrivances of tyrants to oppress the church procure its establishment. 3. The triumphs of Satan turn to the destruction of his empire.

1. God has the power of making the deepest of his children's afflictions produce their highest happiness.

The felicity of the children of God, and, in general, the felicity of all intelligent beings, is founded upon order. All happiness that is not founded upon order, is a violent state, and must needs be of a short duration. But the essence of order, among intelligent beings, is the assigning of that place in their affections to every relative being which is fit for it. Now there is a fitness in having a higher esteem for a being of great excellencies, than for one of small. There is a fitness in my having a higher degree of affection for one from whom I have received more benefits, and from whom I still expect to receive more, than for one from whom I have received, and still hope to receive, fewer. But God is a being of the highest excellence; to God, therefore, I owe the highest degree of esteem. God is the being from whom I have received the most benefits, and from whom I expect to receive the most; consequently to God I owe the highest degree of affectionate gratitude.

Yet, how often do the children of God lose sight of this grand principle? I do not speak only of a few absent moments, in which the power of thought and reflection is, in a manner, gone; nor do I mean only those violent passions which criminal objects excite: I speak of a poison much less sensible, and therefore perhaps much more dangerous. We will give you one example out of many.

Two pious persons enter into the honourable state of marriage on principles of virtue, and compose a family that reveres the Creator by considering him as the only source of all the blessings which they enjoy. Their happiness consists in celebrating the beneficence and perfections of the adorable God, and all their possessions they devote to his glory. He blesses

their union by multiplying those who compose it, and their children imbibe knowledge and virtue from the womb. The parents taste the most delicious pleasure in the world, in cultivating the promising geniuses of their children, and in seeing the good grain, which they sow in a field favoured of Heaven, produce "in one thirty, in another sixty, in another a hundred fold;" and they delight themselves with the hopes of giving one child to the state, and another to the church; this to an art, and that to a science, and thus of enriching society with the most valuable of all treasures, virtuous and capable citizens. All on a sudden this delicious union is poisoned and dissolved; this amiable fondness is interrupted; those likely projects are disconcerted: an unexpected catastrophe sweeps away that fortune, by which alone their designs for their family could have been accomplished; the child of their greatest hopes is cut down in the beginning of his race; the head of the family expires at a time in which his life is most necessary to it. A disconsolate widow, a helpless family, exposed to every danger, are the sad remains of a house just now a model of the highest human happiness, and, in all appearance, of the purest piety. Is not this the depth of misery?

From this depth of misery, however, arises the highest felicity. The prosperity, of which we have been speaking, was so much the more dangerous by how much the more innocent it appeared; for if the persons in question had founded it in vice, they would have quickly forsaken it, as wholly incompatible with their pious principles; but, as they had founded it in piety, there is great reason to fear they had placed too much of their happiness in earthly prosperity, and that it had almost entirely engaged the attention of their minds, and set bounds to the desires of their hearts. But what is it to engage the mind too much in temporal prosperity? It is to lose sight of God, our chief good, in a world where at best we can obtain but an imperfect knowledge of him. What is it to confine the desires of our hearts to earthly happiness? It is to forget our best interest in a world, where, when we have carried that love which God so abundantly merits, to the highest pitch, we can offer him but a very imperfect service. Every object that produces such an effect, occupies a place in the heart which is due to none but God. And while any other fills the seat of God in the heart, we may indeed have a kind of happiness, but it must be a happiness contrary to order; it is violent and must be short. I am aware that the loss will be bitter in the same degree as the enjoyments had been sweet; but the bitterness will produce ineffable pleasures, infinitely preferable to all those that have been taken away. It will reclaim us again to God, the only object worthy of our love, the alone fountain of all our felicity. This may be inferred from many declarations of Scripture, and from the lives of many exemplary saints, as well as from your own experience, if, indeed, my dear hearers, when God has torn away the objects of your tenderest affection, ye have been so wise as to make this use of your losses, to re-establish order in your hearts, and

to give that place to God in your souls which the object held of which ye have been deprived.

2. God establishes his church by the very means that tyrants use to destroy it. But the reflections which naturally belong to this article, ye heard a few weeks ago, when we explained these words in the Revelation, "Here is the patience of the saints,"\* Rev. xiii. 10. We endeavoured then to prevent the gloomy fears that might be occasioned in your minds by those new edicts, which Rome, always intent upon making "the kings of the earth drunk with her fornication," Rev. xvii. 2; had extorted against your brethren. We exhorted you, in the greatest tribulations of the church, never to lose sight of that Divine Providence which watches to preserve it.

We reminded you of some great truths which proceeded from the mouth of God himself; such as, that the Assyrian was only "the rod of his anger," Isa. x. 5; that Herod and Pilate did only "what his hand and his counsel determined before to be done," Acts iv. 27, 28. These truths should be always in our minds; for there never was a time when we had more need to meditate on them. The distresses of our brethren seem to be past remedy. To incorporate our felicity with that of a church, a considerable part of which has been so long bathed in tears, seems as irrational as the conduct of Jeremiah, who, just before the dissolution of Judea, purchased an estate in that devoted country, with the money which he wanted to alleviate his captivity in Babylon. Yet, "O Lord God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, is there any thing too hard for thee? Thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power, and by thy stretched-out arm. Thou art the great, the mighty God, the Lord of hosts is thy name; great in counsel, and mighty in work," Numb. xvi. 22.

3. Finally, God turns the victories of Satan to the ruin of his empire. Here fix your attention upon the work of redemption, for the perfections of God, which we celebrate to-day, are more illustriously displayed in it than in any other of the Creator's wonders. It is, if I may be allowed to express myself so, the utmost effort of the concurrence of the greatness of his counsels with the abundance of his power. I resume this subject, not for the sake of filling up my plan, but because my text cannot be well explained without it. Those inspired writers, who lived under the Old Testament dispensation, always mixed something of the gospel redemption with the temporal deliverances which they foretold. One of the strongest reasons that they urged to convince the Jewish exiles that God would restore their country to them, was that their return was essential to the accomplishment of the promises relating to the Messiah. Jeremiah particularly uses this method in the verses which are connected with the text. Why does he exalt the greatness of God's counsel, and the abundance of his power? Is it only because, as he expresses it, "God would gather the Jews out of all countries whither he had driven them in his fury," Jer. xxxii. 37; so that "men should

\* This is the seventh sermon of the twelfth vol. and is entitled, *Le Nouveaux Malheurs de d'Eglise.*

buy fields in the places about Jerusalem?" No, but it is because he "would make an everlasting covenant with them," Jer. xxxii. 40. It is because "at that time he would cause the branch of righteousness to grow up unto David," Jer. xxxiii. 15. Who is this *branch*? It is he of whom our prophet had before spoken in the twenty-third chapter of his prophecy, ver. 5. "Behold the days come that I will raise unto David a righteous branch." It is he of whom Isaiah said, "The branch of the Lord shall be beautiful and glorious," Isa. iv. 2. It is he whom God promised by Zechariah, after the captivity, in order to convince the Jews that the promises concerning the *branch* had not been accomplished by their release: "Behold the man whose name is The Branch, he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord," Zech. vi. 12. It is he whom the Jews themselves have acknowledged for the Messiah. It is the *holy seed* who was promised to man after the fall, and who has been the object of the church's hope in all ages. It is eminently in behalf of this branch that God has displayed, as I said before, in all their grandeur, the abundance of his power, and the greatness of his counsel. I do not speak here of that counsel, which has been from all eternity, in the intelligence of God, touching the redemption of mankind. My capacity is absorbed, I own, in contemplating so grand an object, and to admire and to exclaim seem more suitable to our finite minds than to attempt to fathom such a prodigious depth; for where is the genius that can form adequate ideas of a subject so profound? A God, who, from all eternity, formed the plan of this universe: a God, who, from all eternity, foresaw whatever would result from its arrangement: a God, who, from all eternity, resolved to create mankind, although he knew from all eternity that they would fall into sin, and plunge themselves into everlasting miseries: but a God, who, foreseeing from all eternity the malady, from all eternity provided the remedy: a God, who, from everlasting determined to clothe his Son in mortal flesh, and to send him into the world: a God, who, according to the language of Scripture, *slew*, in his design from all eternity, the *lamb* . . . . Rev. xiii. 8. But, I repeat it again, my brethren, it better becomes such feeble minds as ours to admire and to exclaim, than to attempt to fathom. Let us content ourselves with beholding in the execution of this divine plan, how the victories of Satan have subverted his empire.

What a victory for Satan, when that Redeemer, that king Messiah, whose advent had been announced with so much pomp and magnificence, appeared in a form so mean, and so inferior to the expectations which the prophecies had occasioned, and to the extraordinary work for which he came into the world, when he lodged in a stable, and lay in a manger!

What a triumph for Satan, when Jesus had no attendants but a few forlorn fishermen, and a few publicans, as contemptible as their master!

What a victory for Satan, when Jesus was apprehended as a malefactor, dragged from

one tribunal to another, and, in fine, condemned by his judges to die!

What a victory had Satan obtained, when the object of Israel's hopes was nailed to an accursed tree, and there ended a life, upon which seemed to depend the salvation of mankind!

What a triumphant victory for Satan, when he had inspired the nation of the risen Redeemer to treat the report of his resurrection as an imposture, and to declare an everlasting war against him in the persons of all who durst declare in his favour!

But, however, the more impracticable the redemption of mankind seemed, the more did God display the greatness of his counsel, and the abundance of his power, in effecting it; for he turned all the triumphs of Satan to the destruction of his dominion.

The *Branch* was lodged in a stable, the king of the universe did lie in a manger; but a star in the heavens announced his birth, angels conducted worshippers to him from the most distant eastern countries, and joined their own adorations to those of the wise men, who offered to him their gold, their frankincense, and their myrrh.

His attendants were only a few fishermen and publicans; but this served the more effectually to secure his doctrine from the most odious objections that could be opposed against it. The meaner the vessel appears, the more excellent seems the treasure contained in it: the weaker the instruments employed in building the church appear, the more evident will the ability of the builder be. These fishermen confounded philosophers; these publicans struck the Rabbins dumb; the winds and the waves were subject to their authority; and to their commands all the powers of nature were seen to bow.

He was apprehended like a malefactor, and crucified; but upon the cross he bruised the serpent's head, while Satan vaunted of bruising his heel, Gen. iii. 15. Upon the cross "he spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it," Col. ii. 15.

He was wrapped in burying clothes, laid on a bier, and, with all the mournful furniture of death, deposited in a tomb; but by this he conquered death, and disarmed him of his sting, 1 Cor. xv. 56. By this he furnished thee, Christian, with armour of proof against the attacks of the tyrant, who would enslave thee, and whose formidable approaches have caused thee so many fears.

He was rejected by his own countrymen, even after he had risen victorious from the tomb, laden with the spoils of "the king of terrors," Job xviii. 15; but their rejection of him animated his apostles to shake off the dust from their feet against those execrable men, who, after they had murdered the Master, endeavoured to destroy the disciples, and put them upon lifting up the standard of the cross in every other part of the universe, and thus the heathen world was bound to his triumphal chariot, and the whole earth saw the accomplishment of those prophecies which had foretold that he should reign from sea to sea, and

from the river to the ends of the earth." How *great the counsel!* my dear brethren, how *mighty the work!* "Ah, Lord God, there is nothing too hard for thee." Thou art, "the great, the mighty God, the Lord of hosts is thy name, great in counsel and mighty in work."

Here we may pause, and very properly come to a conclusion of this discourse; for, though we proposed at first to consider "the greatness of God's counsel and the omnipotence of his working," in a practical light, after having examined them speculatively, yet, I think the examination of the subject in one point of light, is the explication of it in both. When we have proved that God is "great in counsel, and mighty in work," in my opinion, we have sufficiently shown, on the one hand, the extravagance of those madmen, who, in the language of the Wise Man, pretend to exercise "wisdom and understanding, and counsel, against the Lord," Prov. xxi. 20; and on the other, the wisdom of those, who, taking his laws for the only rules of their conversation, commit their peace, their lives, and their salvation, to the disposal of his Providence. Only let us take care, my dear brethren, (and with this single exhortation we conclude,) let us take care, that we do not flatter ourselves into an opinion that we possess this wisdom while we are destitute of it: and let us take care, while we exclaim against the extravagance of those madmen, of whom I just now spoke, that we do not imitate their dangerous examples.

But what! is it possible to find, among beings who have the least spark of reason, an individual mad enough to suppose himself wiser than that God who is "great in counsel," or, is there one who dares resist a God, "mighty in working?" My brethren, one of the most difficult questions, that we meet with in the study of human nature, is, whether some actions in men's lives proceed from intentions in their minds. To affirm, or to deny, is equally difficult. On the one hand, we can hardly believe that an intelligent creature can revolve intentions in his mind directly opposite to intelligence, and the extravagance of which the least ray of intelligence seems sufficient to discover. On the other, we can hardly think it possible, that this creature should follow a course of life altogether founded on such an intention, if indeed he have it not in his mind. The truth is, a question of this kind may be either affirmed or denied according to the different lights in which it is considered. Put these questions to the most irregular of mankind: Dost thou pretend to oppose God? Hast thou the presumption to attempt to prevail over him by thy superiority of knowledge and power? Put these questions simply apart from the conduct, and ye will hardly meet with one who will not answer No. But examine the conduct, not only of the most irregular men, but even of those who imagine that their behaviour is the most prudent; penetrate those secret thoughts, which they involve in darkness in order to conceal the horror of them from themselves; and ye will soon discover that they, who answered so pertinently to your questions when ye propos-

ed them simply, will actually take the opposite side when ye propose the same questions relatively. But who then, ye will ask me, who are those men, who presumptuously think of overcoming God by their superior knowledge and power?

Who? It is that soldier, who, with a brutal courage, defies danger, affronts death, resolutely marches amidst fires and flames, even though he has taken no care to have an interest in the Lord of hosts, or to commit his soul to his trust.

Who? It is that statesman, who, despising the suggestions of evangelical prudence, pursues stratagems altogether worldly; who makes no scruple of committing what are called *state-crimes*; who with a disdainful air, affects to pity us, when we affirm, that the most advantageous service that a wise legislator can perform for society, is to render the Deity propitious to it; that the happiest nations are those "whose God is the Lord." Ps. xxxiii. 12.

Who? It is that philosopher, who makes a parade of I know not what stoical firmness; who conceits himself superior to all the vicissitudes of life; who boasts of his tranquil expectation of death, yeo, who affects to desire its approach, for the sake of enjoying the pleasure of insulting his casuist, who has ventured to foretell that he will be terrified at it.

Who? It is that voluptuary, who opposes to all our exhortations and threatenings, to the most affecting denunciations of calamities from God in this life, and to the most awful descriptions of judgment to come in the next, to all our representations of hell, of an eternity spent in the most execrable company, and in the most excruciating pain; who opposes to all these the buz of amusements, the hurry of company, gaming at home, or diversions abroad.

Study all these characters, my brethren, lay aside the specious appearances that men use to conceal their turpitude from themselves, and ye will find that, to dare the Deity, to pretend by superior knowledge and strength to resist the wisdom and omnipotence of God, is not so rare a disposition as ye may at first have supposed.

Let us abhor this disposition of mind, my brethren; let us entertain right notions of sin; let us consider him who commits it as a madman, who has taken it into his head that he has more knowledge than God, the fountain of intelligence, more strength than He, beneath whose power all the creatures of the universe are compelled to bow. When we are tempted by sin, let us remember what sin is: let each ask himself, What can I, a miserable man, mean? Do I mean to provoke the Lord to jealousy? Do I pretend to be stronger than he? Can I resist his will? Shall I set briars and thorns against him in battle? "He will go through them, he will burn them together," 1 Cor. x. 22. Rom. ix. 19. Isa. xxvii. 5. Let us seek those benefits in a communion with the great God, of which our fanciful passions can only offer the shadows. Let us not pretend to deceive him by the subtlety of our stratagems; but let us endeavour to please him by acknowledging our doubts, our darkness, and our ignorance; the fluctuations of



our minds about the government of the state, the management of our families, and above all, the salvation of our souls. Let us not appear in his presence boasting of our natural power; but let us present ourselves before him weak, trembling, and undone. By the greatness of his compassion let us plead with him to pity our meanness and misery. Let our supplies flow from the fountains of his wisdom and power; this is real wisdom; may God inspire us with it. This is substantial happiness; may God impart it to us. Amen. To him be honour and glory for ever.

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## SERMON VI.

### THE HOLINESS OF GOD.

LEVITICUS XIX. 1, 2.

*And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy.*

I ADDRESS to all the faithful, whom the devotion of this day has assembled in this sacred place, the command which Moses by the authority of God addressed to all the congregation of Israel. However venerable this assembly may be, to which I am this day called by Providence to preach, it cannot be more august than that to which the Jewish legislator formerly spoke. It was composed of more than eighteen hundred thousand persons. There were magistrates appointed to exercise justice, and to represent God upon earth. There were priests and Levites, consecrated to the worship of God, and chosen by him to signify his will to the church. There were various ranks and degrees of men proportional to so great a multitude of people. God had given particular laws before, which were adapted to their different ranks, and to their various circumstances. But this is a general law: a law which equally belongs to magistrates, priests, and Levites: a law which must be observed at all times, and in all places. This is the law of holiness; "Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy."

I repeat it again, my brethren, I address to all the faithful, whom the devotion of this day has assembled in this sacred place, the same precept that God commanded Moses to address to all the congregation of Israel. The law of holiness, which I preach to-day, commands you, our supreme governors. Arbiters of your own laws, ye see no mortal upon earth to whom ye are accountable for your conduct, but there is a God in heaven whose creatures and subjects ye are, and who commands you to be holy. The law of holiness commands you, priests and Levites of the New Testament. The sacred character, with which ye are invested, far from dispensing with your obligation to holiness, enforceth it on you in a more particular manner. This law commands you all, my dear hearers, of what order, of what profession, of what rank soever ye be. "If ye be a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a

peculiar people, ye ought also to be a holy nation, that ye may show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light," 1 Pet. ii. 9. Whatever prerogative Moses had above us, we have the same law to prescribe to you that he had to Israel; and the voice of Heaven says to us now, as it said once to him, "Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy."

This discourse will have three parts. The term *holiness* is equivocal, and consequently, the command *ye shall be holy*, is so. We will endeavour to fix the sense of the term, and to give you a clear and distinct idea of the word *holiness*: this will be our first point.

*Holiness*, which in our text is attributed to God, and prescribed to men, cannot belong to such different beings in the same sense, and in all respects. We will therefore examine in what sense it belongs to God, and in what sense it belongs to men; and we will endeavour to explain in what respects *God is holy*, and in what respects men ought to be *holy*: this will be our second part.

Although the holiness that is attributed to God, differs in many respects from that which is prescribed to men, yet the first is the ground of the last. The connexion of these must be developed, and the motive enforced, "ye shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy:" this shall be our third part. And this is the substance of all that we intend to propose.

I. The term *holiness* is equivocal, and consequently, the command, *ye shall be holy*, is so. Let us endeavour to affix a determinate sense to the term, and to give you a clear and distinct idea of the meaning of the word *holiness*. The original term is one of the most vague words in the Hebrew language. In general, it signifies to prepare, to set apart, to devote. The nature of the subject to which it is applied, and not the force of the term, must direct us to determine its meaning in passages where it occurs. An appointment to offices the most noble, and the most worthy of intelligent beings, and an appointment to offices the most mean and infamous, are alike expressed by this word. The profession of the most august office of the high priesthood, and the abominable profession of a prostitute, are both called *holiness* in this vague sense.

The poorest languages are those in which words are the most equivocal, and this is the character of the Hebrew language. I cannot think with some, that it is the most ancient language in the world; the contrary opinion, I think, is supported by very sufficient evidence. However, it must be granted, that it has one grand character of antiquity, that is, its imperfection. It seems to have been invented in the first ages of the world, when mankind could express their ideas but imperfectly, and before they had time to render language determinate, by affixing arbitrary names to the objects of their ideas.\*

This remark may at first appear useless, par-

\* It is granted by the Rabbins, that the Hebrew words which have distinct imports were differently pronounced by the people; as *Sheol*, which signifies both Saul and the grave. J. S.

ticularly in such a discourse as this. It is, however, of great consequence; and I make it here for the sake of young students in divinity: for, as the writers of the holy Scriptures frequently make use of terms, that excite several ideas, the reasons of their choosing such terms will be inquired: and on such reasons as the fancies of students assign, some maxims, and even some doctrines will be grounded. I could mention more mysteries than one, that have been found in Scripture, only because on some occasions it uses equivocal terms. An interpreter of Scripture, should indeed assiduously urge the force of those emphatical expressions which the Holy Spirit sometimes uses to signify, if I may so speak, the ground and substance of the truth; but at the same time, he should avoid searching after the marvellous in other expressions, that are employed only for the sake of accommodating the discourse to the genius of the Hebrew tongue.

The force of the term *holiness*, then, not being sufficient to determine its meaning, its meaning must be sought elsewhere. We must inquire the object to which he devotes himself, who in our Scriptures is called *holy*. For, as all those words, *ye shall be holy, for I am holy*, are equal to these, *ye shall be set apart, or ye shall be devoted, for I am set apart, or devoted*, it is plain that they cannot be well explained unless the object of the appointment or designation be determined. This object is the matter of our present inquiry, and on the investigation of this depends our knowledge of what we call *holiness*. Now, this subject is of such a kind, that the weakest Christian may form some idea of it, while the ablest philosophers, and the most profound divines are incapable of treating it with the precision, and of answering all the questions that a desire of a complete explanation may produce.

The weakest Christians may form (especially if they be willing to avail themselves of such helps as are at hand) some just notions of what we call *holiness*. It seems to me, that in this auditory at least, there is not one person who is incapable of pursuing the following meditation: to which I entreat your attention.

Suppose, in a world entirely remote from you, a society, to which ye have no kind of relation, and to which ye never can have any. Suppose that God had dispensed with an obedience to his laws in favour of this society, had permitted the members of it to live as they thought proper, and had assured them that he would neither inflict any punishment upon them for what we call *vice*, nor bestow any rewards on an attachment to what we call *virtue*. Suppose two men in this society, making an opposite use of this independence. The one says to himself, Since I am the arbiter of my own conduct, and the Supreme Being, on whom I depend, has engaged to require no account of my actions, I will consult no other rule of conduct than my own interest. Whenever it may be my interest to deny a trust reposed in me, I will do it without reluctance. Whenever my interest may require the destruction of my tenderest and most faithful friend, I myself will become his executioner, and will stab him. Thus reasons one of them.

The other, on the contrary, says, I am free

indeed, I am responsible only to myself for my conduct, but, however, I will prescribe to myself some rules of action, which I will inviolably pursue. I will never betray a trust reposed in me, but I will, with the utmost fidelity discharge it, whatever interest I may have to do otherwise. I will carefully preserve the life of my friend, who discovers so much fidelity and love to me, whatever interest I may have in his destruction. We ask those of our hearers who are the least acquainted with meditations of this kind, whether they can prevail with themselves not to make an essential difference between those two members of the supposed society? We ask, whether ye can help feeling a horror at the first, and a veneration for the last of these men? Now this conduct, or the principles of this conduct, for which we cannot help feeling veneration and respect, although the whole passes in a world, and in a society to which we have no relation, and to which we never can have any, these are the principles, I say, to which he is devoted, whom our Scriptures call *holy*: these principles are what we call *virtue, rectitude, order*, or, as the text expresses it, *holiness*. "Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy."

Let us proceed a little farther in our meditation, and let us make a supposition of another kind. Ye have all some idea of God. Ye have at least this notion of him, that he is supremely independent, and that none can punish or reward him for the use he makes of his independence. Suppose, as well as ye can without blasphemy, that he should lavish his favours on the faithless depository, whom we just now mentioned, and should withhold them from the other: that he should heap benefits upon him who would stab his tenderest and most faithful friend, and expose the other to indigence and misery. Suppose, on the contrary, that God should liberally bestow his favours on the faithful depository, and refuse them to the other. I ask those of my hearers who are the least acquainted with a meditation of this kind, whether they can help making an essential difference between these two uses of independence? Can ye help feeling more veneration and respect for the Supreme Being in the latter case than in the former? Now, my brethren, I repeat it again, the laws according to which the Supreme Being acts, are the laws to which the person is appointed, or set apart, who in the holy Scriptures is denominated *holy*. Conformity to these laws is what we call *virtue, rectitude, order*, or as the text expresses it, *holiness*. In this manner, it seems to me, that the weakest Christian (if he avail himself of such helps as are offered to him) may form an adequate idea of *holiness*.

However, it is no less certain that the ablest philosophers, and the most consummate divines, find it difficult to speak with precision on this subject, and to answer all the questions that have arisen about it. Perhaps its perspicuity may be one principal cause of this difficulty: for it is a rule, of which we inform those to whom we teach the art of reasoning justly, that when an idea is brought to a certain degree of evidence and simplicity, every thing that is added to elucidate, serves only to ob-

scure and perplex it. Has not one part of our difficulties about the nature of right and wrong arisen from the breach of this rule?

From what we have heard, in my opinion, we may infer, that all mankind have a clear and distinct idea of holiness, even though they have no terms to express their ideas of it with justness and precision. It seems to me that every mechanic is able to decide the following questions, although they have occasioned so many disputes in schools. On what is the difference between a just and an unjust action founded; on interest only? or on the will of the Supreme Being only, who hath prescribed such or such a law? For, since we cannot help execrating a man who violates certain laws, though the violation does not at all affect our interest, it is plain, we cannot help acknowledging, when we reflect on our own ideas, that the difference between a just and an unjust action is not founded on interest only. And since we cannot help venerating the Supreme Being more when he follows certain laws than when he violates them, it is plain we cannot help acknowledging that there is a justice independent of the supreme law which has prescribed it.

Should any one require me to give him a clear notion of this *justice*, this *order*, or *holiness*, which is neither founded on the interest of him who obeys it, nor on the authority of the Supreme Being who commands it, this should be my answer.

By *justice* I understand that fitness, harmony, or proportion, which ought to be between the conduct of an intelligent being, and the circumstances in which he is placed, and the relations that he bears to other beings. For example, there is a relation between a benefactor who bestows, and an indigent person who receives, a benefit; from this relation results a proportion, a harmony, or a fitness between benefit and gratitude, which makes gratitude a virtue. On the contrary, between benefit and ingratitude, there is a disproportion, a dissonance, or an incongruity, which makes ingratitude injustice. In like manner, between one man, who is under oppression, and another who has the power of terminating the oppression by punishing the oppressor, there is a certain relation from which results a proportion, a harmony, or a fitness in relieving the oppressed, which makes the relief an act of generosity and justice.

All mankind have a general notion of this proportion, harmony, or fitness. If they are sometimes dubious about their duty, if they sometimes hesitate about the conduct that justice requires of them on certain occasions, it is not because they doubt whether every action ought to have that which I call *proportion*, *harmony*, or *fitness*; but it is because, in some intricate cases, they do not clearly perceive the relation of a particular action to their general notion of justice. Every man has an idea of equality and inequality of numbers. Every man knows at once to which of these two ideas some plain and simple numbers belong. Every body perceives at once a relation between the number three, and the idea of inequality; and every body perceives instantly a relation between the number two and the idea of equality. But

should I propose a very complex number to the most expert arithmetician, and ask him to which of the two classes this number belongs, he would require some time to consider, before he could return his answer: not because he had not very clear ideas of equality and inequality, but because he could not at first sight perceive whether the number proposed were equal or unequal. The arithmetician, whom I have supposed, must study to find out the relation: as soon as he discovers it he will readily answer, and tell me whether the number proposed be equal or unequal.

Apply this example to the subject in hand. All mankind, according to our reasoning, have a general notion of a fitness, that ought to be between the conduct of an intelligent being and the circumstances in which he is placed, and the relations that he bears to other beings. Always when a man perceives that a particular action has such a fitness, or has it not, he will declare without hesitation that the action is just or unjust. If he hesitate in some cases, it is because he does not perceive the relation of the action in question to this fitness. It belongs to casuists to solve difficulties of this kind. I perceive at once a relation between him who receives a benefit, and him who confers it; and from this relation I conclude, that there is a fitness between gratitude and the circumstances of the receiver: therefore I declare without hesitating, that gratitude is a virtue, and that ingratitude is a vice. But should I be asked whether it were a virtue or a vice to kill a tyrant, I might hesitate: because I might not at first perceive what relation there is between the killing of a tyrant, and the fitness that ought to subsist between the conduct of a subject and his relation to a tyrant.

Should any one still urge me to give him clearer ideas of that which I call the *proportion*, the *harmony*, or the *fitness* of an action, I would freely own that I could not answer his inquiry. But, at the same time, I would declare that my inability did not arise from the obscurity of my subject, but from the all-sufficiency of its evidence. I would recur to the maxim just now mentioned, that when a subject is placed in a certain degree of evidence and simplicity, every thing that is added to elucidate, serves only to darken and to perplex it.

Should my inquirer still reply that he had no idea of that which I call the *proportion*, the *harmony*, or the *fitness* of an action, I should consider him as a being of a species different from mine, and I should not think of conversing with him. There are some common ideas, some maxims that are taken for granted, even by the most opposite parties: and when those maxims are disputed, and those ideas not admitted, there is an end of conversing and reasoning.

This is a general notion of holiness. But the holiness that is attributed to God, and prescribed to men, in the text, cannot belong in the same sense, and in every respect, to such different beings. We are going to examine then, in the second place, in what sense it agrees to God, and in what sense it agrees to man.

II. What has been said of holiness, in ge-

neral, will serve to explain in what sense God is holy, and in what sense men ought to be holy. The general principle of holiness is common to God and man. The general principle of holiness, as has been already shown, is a perfect proportion, harmony, or fitness, between the conduct of an intelligent being and his relations to other beings. The holiness of God is that perfect harmony, proportion, or fitness, that subsists between his conduct (if I may be allowed to speak thus of God) and his relations to other beings. The holiness of man consists in the same. But as the circumstances and relations of God differ from those of men, the holiness of God and the holiness of men are of different kinds. And it is the difference of these relations that we must distinguish, if we would give a proper answer to the questions in hand: In what sense, and in what respects, is holiness ascribed to God? In what sense, and in what respects, is holiness prescribed to men?

The first question, that is, What relations has God with other beings, is a question so extensive, and so difficult, that all human intelligence, united in one mind, could not return a sufficient answer. We have been accustomed to consider our earth as the principal part of the universe, and ourselves as the most considerable beings in nature. Yet our earth is only an atom in the unbounded space in which it is placed: and we are only a very inconsiderable number in comparison of the infinite multitude and the endless variety of creatures which the Great Supreme has made. There is an infinite number of angels, seraphims, cherubims, thrones, dominions, powers, and other intelligences; of which we have no ideas, and for which we have no names. God has relations to all these beings; and on the nature of those relations depends the nature of that order, justice, or holiness, which he inviolably maintains in respect to them. But let us not lose ourselves in these immense objects. Let us only fix our meditation on God's relations to men, and we shall form sufficient ideas of his holiness.

What relation does God bear to us? God has called us into existence; and there are between us the relations of Creator and creature. But what harmony do we think there ought to be between the conduct of God to us, and the relation that he bears to us of a Creator to creatures? Harmony, or fitness, seems to require that God, having brought creatures into existence, should provide for their support, and, having given them certain faculties, should require an account of the use that is made of them. This is the first idea that we form of the holiness of God. It does not appear to us fit, or agreeable to order that God, after having created intelligent beings, should abandon them to themselves, and not regard either their condition or their conduct. On this principle we ground the doctrine of Providence, and reject the extravagant system of the Epicurians.

What relation does God bear to us? God has given us a revelation. He has proposed some principles to us. Between God and us there are the relations of tutor and pupil. But what fitness do we think there ought to be be-

tween the conduct of God and the relation of a tutor to a pupil, that subsists between him and us? It is fit, I think, that a revelation proceeding from God should be conformable to his own ideas; and on this principle we ground the doctrine of the truth, or, as the schools call it, the *veracity* of God, and maintain with St. Paul, even independently of the authority of St. Paul, that "it is impossible for God to lie," Heb. vi. 18.

What relation does God bear to us? God has made a covenant with us: to certain conditions in that covenant he has annexed certain promises. Between God and us there subsist the relations of two contracting parties. What fitness do we think, there ought to be between the conduct of God and that relation of an ally, which he bears to us? We think that there is a harmony, or a fitness, in his fulfilling the articles of the covenant, and on this principle we ground our expectation of the accomplishment of his promises, and believe that "all the promises of God are yea, and amen," 2 Cor. i. 20.

What relation subsists between God and us? God has given us certain laws. Between God and us there are the relations of a lawgiver and subjects. What harmony, do we think, there ought to be between the conduct of God and the relation of a legislator to a subject? We think, harmony requires that the laws prescribed to us should be proportional to our ability; that nothing should be required of us beyond our natural power, or the supernatural assistances that he affords: and on this principle we reject a cruel system of divinity, more likely to tarnish than to display the glory of the Supreme Being: on this principle we say with St. James; "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not," Jam. i. 12; on this principle we say with St. Paul, that "as many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law," Rom. ii. 12. Follow this train of reasoning, my brethren, reflect on the other relations that God bears to mankind; examine, as far as ye are capable of examining, the harmony that subsists between the conduct of God and those relations; and the farther ye proceed in meditations of this kind, the more just and the more enlarged will be your ideas of the holiness of God.

But perhaps some may accuse me of taking that for granted which remains to be proved, and of grounding my whole system of the holiness of God on a disputed principle, the truth of which I have not yet demonstrated: that is, that there does not subsist such a perfect harmony or fitness between the conduct of God and his relations to men. Perhaps I may be asked for the proofs of this principle, the ground of my whole system; for if the principle be doubtful, the whole system is hypothetical, and if it be false the system falls of itself. I answer, my brethren, that we have as strong and demonstrative evidence of the holiness of God as it is possible for finite creatures to have of the attributes of an infinite Being. We may derive sound notions of the conduct of God from three different sources, each of which will

prove that a perfect harmony subsists between the conduct of God and his relations to us, and all together will fully convince us that God possesses in the most eminent degree such a holiness as we have described.

1. We shall be fully convinced that God possesses this holiness if we regulate our ideas of his conduct by our notion of his nature. Let me beg leave to remark, to those who have been accustomed to argue, that I do not mean here an imaginary notion of God, like that which some divines and some philosophers have laid down as the ground of their arguments. They begin by supposing a perfect being: then they examine what agrees with a perfect being: and that they attribute to God. This is their argument: "Holiness is an attribute of a perfect being: God is a perfect being; therefore holiness is an attribute of God." We do not at present use this method. I suppose myself suddenly placed in this world, surrounded with a variety of creatures. I do not suppose that there is a holy Supreme Being: but I inquire whether there be one; and in this manner I obtain a full demonstration. My knowledge of creatures produces the notion of a Creator. My notion of a Creator is complex, and includes in it the ideas of a grand, infinite, almighty Being. But the notion of a Being, who is grand, infinite, and almighty, includes in it, I think, the idea of a holy Being. At least, I cannot perceive, in this Being, any of the principles that tempt men to violate the laws of order. Men sometimes transgress the laws of order through ignorance: but the grand, the mighty, the infinite Being thoroughly understands the harmony that ought to subsist between the laws of order and the most difficult and most complicated action. Men sometimes violate the laws of order because the solicitations of their senses prevail over the rational deliberations of their minds: but the great, the powerful, the infinite Being is not subject to a revolution of animal spirits, an irregular motion of blood, or an inundation of bodily humours. Men sometimes violate the laws of order because they are seduced by a present and sensible interest: but this principle of a violation of the laws of order can have no place in God. The great, the mighty, the infinite Being can have no interest in deceiving such contemptible creatures as we. If then we judge of the conduct of God by the idea that we are obliged to form of his nature, we shall be convinced of his perfect holiness.

2. We may be convinced of the holiness of God by the testimony that God himself has given of his attributes. The testimony that God has given of himself is the most credible testimony that we can obtain. And how does he represent himself in the Holy Scriptures? He describes himself every where as a holy Being, and as a pattern of holiness to us. He describes himself surrounded with happy spirits, who perpetually cry, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord of hosts."

3. God will appear supremely holy to you if ye judge by his works. Behold the works of nature, they proclaim the perfect holiness of God. Consult that work of nature, your own heart: that heart, all corrupt as it is, yet

retains some faint traces of the holiness of God, who created it; so that in spite of its natural depravity, it still does homage to virtue: it resembles a palace, which, having been at first built with magnificence and art, has been miserably plundered and destroyed, but which yet retains, amidst all its ruins, some vestiges of its ancient grandeur. Behold society, that work of Providence publishes the supreme holiness of God. God has so formed society that it is happy or miserable in the same proportion as it practises, or neglects virtue. Above all, behold the work of religion. What say the precepts, the precedents, the penalties of religion? More especially, what says the grand mystery of religion, that mystery which is the scope, the substance, the end of all the other mysteries of religion, I mean the mystery of the cross? Does it not declare that God is supremely holy?

We have seen then in what respects holiness belongs to God, and by pursuing the same principles, we may discover in what respects it belongs to men. Consider the circumstances in which men are placed, and what relation they bear to other beings: consider what harmony there ought to be between the conduct of men and their relations: and ye will form a just notion of the holiness that men are commanded to practise. There is the relation of a subject to his prince, and the subject's submission is the harmony of that relation: in this respect it is the holiness of a man to submit to his prince. There is the relation of a child to his parent, and there is a harmony between the conduct and the relation of the child when he loves and obeys his parent: Love and obedience to the parent constitute the holiness of the child.

The principal relation of man is that which he bears to God. Man stands in the relation of a creature to God, who is his Creator; and the conduct of a creature is in harmony with his relation when the will of his Creator is the rule of his actions: the revealed will of God then must regulate the will of man. Order requires us to submit ourselves to him of whom we have received all that we enjoy: all our enjoyments come from God; from him we derive "life, motion, and existence," Acts xvii. 28. It is impossible then to resist his will without violating the laws of order. Our future prospects, as well as our present enjoyments, proceed from God: our own interest demands then, that we should submit to his will, in order to a participation of future favours, which are the objects of our present hopes.

We have seen then in what respects holiness belongs to God, and in what respects it belongs to men. But although holiness does not belong, in the same sense, and in every respect, to beings so different as God and man, yet the holiness of God ought to be both a reason and a rule for the holiness of man. "Ye shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy." This is our third part, and with this we shall conclude the discourse.

III. The holiness of God, we say, is both a rule and a reason for the holiness of man. The words of the text include both these ideas, and will bear either sense. They may

be rendered, "Be ye holy as I am holy:" and, according to this translation, the holiness of God is a rule or a model of ours. Or, they may be rendered, "Ye shall be holy, because I am holy:" and, according to this, the holiness of God is a reason or a motive of our holiness. It is not necessary now to inquire which of these two interpretations is the best. Let us unite both. Let us make the holiness of God the pattern of our holiness: and let us also make it the motive of ours.

1. Let us make the holiness of God the model of ours. "The holiness of God is complete in its parts." He has all virtues, or rather he has one virtue that includes all others: that is, the love of order. He is equally just in his laws, true in his language, his promises are faithful, and his thoughts are right. Let this holiness be our pattern, "Be ye holy as God is holy." Let us not confine ourselves to one single virtue. Let us incorporate them all into our system. Let us have an assortment of Christian graces. Let us be, if I may express myself so, complete Christians. Let us "add to our faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity," 2 Pet. i. 5—7.

2. The holiness of God is *infinite in itself*. Nothing can confine its activity. Let this be our model, as far as a finite creature can imitate an infinite Being. Let us not rest in a narrow sphere of virtue, but let us carry every virtue to its most eminent degree of attainment. Let us every day make some new progress. Let us reckon all that we have done nothing, while there remains anything more to do. Let each of us say with St. Paul, "I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark," Phil. iii. 13.

3. The holiness of God is *pure in its motives*. He fears nothing, he hopes for nothing; yet he is holy. He knows, he loves, he pursues holiness. This is the whole system of his morality. Let this be our pattern. We do not mean to exclude the grand motives of hope and fear, which religion has sanctified, and which have such a mighty influence over beings capable of happiness or misery. But yet, let not our inclinations to virtue necessarily depend on a display of the horrors of hell, or the happiness of heaven. Disinterestedness of virtue is the character of true magnanimity, and Christian heroism. Let us esteem it a pleasure to obey the laws of order. Let us account it a pleasure to be generous, beneficent, and communicative. Let us "lend," agreeably to the maxim of Jesus Christ, "hoping for nothing again," Luke vi. 35; and, in imitation of his example, let us "lay down our lives for the brethren," 1 John iii. 16.

4. The holiness of God is *uniform in its action*. No appearance deceives him, no temptation shakes him, nothing dazzles or diverts him. Let this be our example. Let us not be every day changing our religion and morality. Let not our ideas depend on the mo-

tion of our animal spirits, the circulation of our blood, or the irregular course of the humours of our bodies. Let us not be Christians at church only, on our solemn festivals alone, or at the approach of death. Let our conduct be uniform and firm, and let us say, with the prophet, even in our greatest trials, "Yet God is good to Israel," Ps. lxxiii. 1. However it be, I will endeavour to be as humble on the pinnacle of grandeur, as if Providence had placed me in the lowest and meanest post. I will be as moderate, when all the objects of my wishes are within my reach, as if I could not afford to procure them. I will be as ready to acquiesce in the supreme will of God, if he conduct me through various adversities, and through "the valley of the shadow of death," as if he led me through prosperities, and filled me with delights. Thus the holiness of God must be the model of ours: "Be ye holy as I am holy."

But the holiness of God must also be the reason or motive of ours; and we must be holy because God is holy: "Ye shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy."

We groan under the disorders of our nature, we lament the loss of that blessed but short state of innocence, in which the first man was created, and which we wish to recover: "We must be holy then, for the Lord our God is holy." The beauty and blessedness of man in his primitive state consisted in his immediate creation by the hand of God, and in the bearing of his Creator's image, which was impressed, in a most lively manner, upon his mind. Sin has defaced that image, and our happiness consists in its restoration: that is, in our being "renewed after the image of him who created us," Col. iii. 10.

We wish to enjoy the favour of God: we must be holy then, "because the Lord our God is holy." They are "our iniquities that have separated between us and our God;" Isa. lix. 2. And it is holiness that must conciliate a communion which our sins have interrupted.

We tremble to see all nature at war with us, and wish to be reconciled to all the exterior objects that conspire to torment us; we must be holy then, "because the Lord our God is holy." Sin is a hateful object to a holy God. Sin has armed every creature against man. Sin has thrown all nature into confusion. Sin, by disconcerting the mind, has destroyed the body. It is sin that has brought death into the world, and "sin is the sting of death."

We wish to be reconciled to ourselves, and to possess that inward peace and tranquillity, without which no exterior objects can make us happy: we must be holy then, "because the Lord our God is holy." We have remarked, in this discourse, that God, who is an independent Being, loves virtue for its own sake, independent of the rewards that accompany and follow it. Nevertheless, it is very certain that the felicity of God is inseparable from his holiness. God is the *happy God*, because he is the *holy God*. God, in the contemplation of his own excellencies, has an inexhaustible source of felicity. Were it possible for God not to be supremely holy, it

would be possible for God not to be supremely happy. Yes, God, all glorious and supreme as he is, would be miserable, if he were subject, like unholy spirits, to the turbulent commotions of envy or hatred, treachery or deceit. From such passions would arise odious vapours, which would gather into thick clouds, and, by obscuring his glory, impair his felicity. Even heaven would afford but imperfect pleasure, if those infernal furies could there kindle their unhallowed flames. The same reasoning holds good on earth; for, it implies a contradiction, to affirm that we can be happy, while the operations of our minds clash with one another: and it is equally absurd, to suppose that the almighty God can terminate the fatal war, the tragical field of which is the human heart, without the re-establishment of the dominion of holiness.

We desire to experience the most close and tender communion with God, next Lord's day, in receiving the holy sacrament: Let us be holy then, "because the Lord our God is holy." This august ceremony may be considered in several points of view: and one of them deserves a peculiar attention. The table of the Lord's Supper has been compared, by some, to that which was formerly set, by the command of God, in the holy place: I mean, the table of "show-bread," or "bread of the presence," Ex. xxv. 30. God commanded Moses to set twelve loaves upon the table, to change them every sabbath, and to give those that were taken away to the priests, who were to eat them in "the holy place," Lev. xxiv. 6, &c. What was the end of these ceremonial institutions? The tabernacle at first was considered as the tent, and the temple afterward as the palace of the Deity, who dwelt among the Israelites. In the palace of God, it was natural to expect a table for the use of him and his attendants. This was one of the most glorious privileges that the Israelites enjoyed, and one of the most august symbols of the presence of God among them. God and all the people of Israel, in the persons of their ministers, were accounted to eat the same bread. The heathens, stricken with the beauty of these ideas, incorporated them into their theology. They adopted the thought, and set in their temples tables consecrated to their gods. The prophet Isaiah reproaches the Jews with forsaking the Lord, forgetting his holy mountain and preparing a table for the host of heaven, Isa. lxxv. 2. And Ezekiel reckons among the virtues of a just man, that he had "not eaten upon the mountains," Ez. xviii. 6. It was upon tables of this kind that idolaters sometimes ate the remainder of those victims which they had sacrificed to their gods. This they called *eating with gods*; and Homer introduces Alcinous saying, "The gods visit us, when we sacrifice hecatombs, and sit down with us at the same table."

This is one of the most beautiful notions, under which we can consider the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. There we eat with God. God sits down with us at the same table, and, so causes us to experience the meaning of this promise, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open

the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me," Rev. iii. 20. But what do such close connexions with a *holy* God require of us? They require us to be holy. They cry to us, as the voice cried to Moses from the midst of the burning bush, "Draw not nigh hither; put off thy shoes from off thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground," Ex. iii. 5.

God is supremely holy: God supremely loves order. Order requires you to leave vengeance to God, to pardon your bitterest and most professed enemies; and, what is more difficult still, order requires you to pardon your most subtle and secret foes. Would ye approach the table of a *holy* God gnawn with a spirit of animosity, hatred, or vengeance?

God is supremely holy: God supremely loves order. Order requires you to dedicate a part of those blessings to charity, with which Providence has intrusted you; to retrench the superfluities of your tables, in order to enable you to assist the starving and dying poor. Would ye approach the table of a *holy* God with hearts hardened with indifference to that poor man whom God has commanded you to love as yourselves?

God is supremely holy: God supremely loves order. Order requires you to be affected with the tokens of divine love. All are displayed at the Lord's table. There the bloody history of your Redeemer's sufferings is again exhibited to view. There the blood, that Christ the victim shed for your crimes, flows afresh. There God recounts all the mysteries of the cross. Would ye approach that table cold and languishing? Would ye approach that table without returning to Jesus Christ love for love, and tenderness for tenderness? Would ye approach that table void of every sentiment and emotion, which the venerable symbols of the love of God must needs produce in every honest heart? Ah! my brethren, were ye to approach the table of Jesus Christ without these dispositions, ye would come, not like St. John, or St. Peter, but like Judas. This would not be to receive an earnest of salvation, but to "eat and drink your own damnation," 1 Cor. xi. 29. This would not be to receive the body of Jesus Christ: this would be to surrender yourselves to Satan.

I can hardly allow myself to entertain such melancholy thoughts. Come to the table of Jesus Christ, and enter into a closer communion with a *holy* God. Come and devote yourselves entirely to the service of a *holy* God. Come and arrange the operations of your minds by the perfections of a *holy* God. Come and diminish the grief that ye feel, because, in spite of all your endeavours to be "holy as God is holy," ye are so far inferior to his glorious example. But, at the same time, come and receive fresh assurances, that ye are formed for a more perfect period of holiness. Come and receive the promises of God, who will assure you, that ye shall one day "see him as he is, and be like him," 1 John iii. 2. May God grant us this blessing! To him be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

## SERMON VII.

## THE COMPASSION OF GOD.

PSALM ciii. 13.

*Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.*

AMONG many frivolous excuses, which mankind have invented to exculpate their barrenness under a gospel-ministry, there is one that deserves respect. Why, say they, do ye address men as if they were destitute of the sentiments of humanity? Why do ye treat Christians like slaves? Why do ye perpetually urge, in your preaching, motives of wrath, vengeance, "the worm that never dies, the fire that is never quenched?" Isa. lxvi. 24. Motives of this kind fill the heart with rebellion instead of conciliating it by love. Mankind have a fund of sensibility and tenderness. Let the tender motives that our legislator has diffused throughout our Bibles, be pressed upon us; and then every sermon would produce some conversions, and your complaints of Christians would cease with the causes that produce them.

I call this excuse frivolous: for how little must we know of human nature, to suppose men so very sensible to the attractives of religion! Where is the minister of the gospel, who has not displayed the charms of religion a thousand, and a thousand times, and displayed them in vain? Some souls must be terrified, some sinners must be "saved by fear, and pulled out of the fire," Jude 23. There are some hearts that are sensible to only one object in religion, that is, *hell*; and, if any way remain to prevent their actual destruction hereafter, it is to overwhelm their souls with the present fear of it: "knowing therefore the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men."

Yet, however frivolous this pretext may appear, there is a something in it that merits respect. I am pleased to see those men, who have not been ashamed to say, that the Lord's yoke is intolerable, driven to abjure so odious a system: I love to hear them acknowledge, that religion is supported by motives fitted to ingenuous minds; and that the God from whom it proceeds, has discovered so much benevolence and love in the gift, that it is impossible not to be affected with it, if we be capable of feeling.

I cannot tell, my brethren, whether among these Christians, whom the holiness of this day has assembled in this sacred place, there be many, who have availed themselves of the frivolous pretence just now mentioned; and who have sometimes wickedly determined to despise eternal torments, under an extravagant pretence that the ministers of the gospel too often preach, and too dismally describe them. But, without requiring your answer to so mortifying a question, without endeavouring to make you contradict yourselves, we invite you to behold those attractives to-day, to which ye boast of being so very sensible. Come and see the supreme Legislator,

to whom we would devote your services; behold him, not as an avenging God, not as a consuming God, not "shaking the earth, and overturning the mountains" in his anger, Job ix. 4, 5: not "thundering in the heavens, shooting out lightnings, or giving his voice in hailstones and coals of fire," Ps. xviii. 13, 14; but putting on such tender emotions for you as ye feel for your children. In this light the prophet places him in the text, and in this light we are going to place him in this discourse.

O ye marble hearts! so often insensible to the terrors of our ministry; may God compel you to-day to feel its attracting promises! O ye marble hearts! against which the edge of the sword of the Almighty's avenging justice has been so often blunted; the Lord grant that ye may be this day dissolved by the energy of his love! Amen.

"Like as a father pitieth his children, so doth the Lord pity them that fear him." Before we attempt to explain the text, we must premise one remark, which is generally granted, when it is proposed in a vague manner, and almost as generally denied in its consequences; that is, that the most complete notion which we can form of a divine attribute, is to suppose it in perfect harmony with every other divine attribute.

The most lovely idea that we can form of the Deity, and which, at the same time, is the most solid ground of our faith in his word, and of our confidence in the performance of his promises, is that which represents him as a uniform Being, whose attributes harmonize, and who is always consistent with himself. There is no greater character of imperfection in any intelligent being than the want of this harmony: when one of his attributes opposes another of his attributes; when the same attribute opposes itself; when his wisdom is not supported by his power; or when his power is not directed by his wisdom.

This character of imperfection, essential to all creatures, is the ground of those prohibitions that we meet with in the Holy Scriptures, in regard to the objects of our trust.

"Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth, in that very day his thoughts perish," Psalm cxlvi. 3, 4. "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm," Jer. xvii. 5. Why? Because it is not safe to confide in man, unless he have such a harmony of attributes, as we have just now described; and because no man has such a harmony. His power may assist you, but, unless he have wisdom to direct his power, the very means that he would use to make you happy, would make you miserable. Even his power would not harmonize with itself in regard to you, if it were sufficient to supply your wants to-day, but not to-morrow. That man, that prince, that mortal, to whom thou givest the superb titles of Potentate, Monarch, Arbitrator of peace, and Arbitrator of war; that mortal, who is alive to-day, will die to-morrow; the breath that animates him will evaporate, he will "return to his earth," and all his kind regards for thee will vanish with him.



But the perfections of God are in perfect harmony. This truth shall guide us through this discourse, and shall arrange its parts: and this is the likeliest way that we can think of, to preserve the dignity of our subject, to avoid its numerous difficulties, to preclude such fatal inferences as our weak and wicked passions have been too well accustomed to draw from the subject, and to verify the prophet's proposition in its noblest meaning, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so doth the Lord pity them that fear him."

Would ye form a just notion of the *goodness* of God, (for the original term that our translators have rendered *pity*, is equivocal, and is used in this vague sense in the Holy Scriptures.) Would ye form a just notion of the goodness of God? Then, conceive a perfection that is always in harmony with,

- I. The spirituality of his essence.
- II. The inconceivableness of his nature.
- III. The holiness of his designs.
- IV. The independence of his principles.
- V. The immutability of his will.
- VI. The efficacy of his power. But, above all,
- VII. With the veracity of his word.

I. The goodness of God must agree with the *spirituality of his essence*. Compassion, among men, is that mechanical emotion which is produced in them by the sight of distressed objects. I allow that the wisdom of the Creator is very much displayed in uniting us together in such a manner. Ideas of fitness seldom make much impression on the bulk of mankind; it was necessary, therefore, to make sensibility supply the want of reflection, and, by a counter-blow, with which the miseries of a neighbour strike our feelings, to produce a disposition in us to relieve him. Nature produces but few monsters who regale themselves on the sufferings of the wretched. Here or there has been a Phalaris, who has delighted his ears with the shrieks of a fellow-creature burning in a brazen bull: and some, whose minds were filled with ideas of a religion more barbarous and inhuman than that of the Bacchanalians, have been pleased with tormenting those victims which they sacrificed, not to God the Father of mankind, but to him who is their murderer: but none, except people of these kinds, have been able to eradicate those emotions of pity with which a wise and compassionate God has formed them.

But this sensibility degenerates into folly, when it is not supported by ideas of order, and when mechanical emotions prevail over the rational dictates of the mind. It is a weakness, it is not a love worthy of an intelligent being, that inclines a tender mother to pull back the arm of him who is about to perform a violent, but a salutary operation on the child whom she loves. It is a weakness, it is not a love worthy of an intelligent being, that inclines a magistrate to pardon a criminal, whose preservation will be an injury to society, and the sparing of whose life will occasion a thousand tragical deaths.

This kind of weakness, that confounds a mechanical sensation with a rational and intelligent love, is the source of many of our misapprehensions about the manner in which God loves us, and in which we imagine he

ought to love us. We cannot conceive the consistency of God's love, in making us wise in a school of adversity, in exposing us to the vicissitudes and misfortunes of life, and in frequently abandoning his children to pains and regrets. It seems strange to us, that he should not be affected at hearing the groans of the damned, whose torments can only be assuaged by uttering blasphemies against him. Renounce these puerile ideas, and entertain more just notions of the Supreme Being. He has no body; he has no organs that can be shaken by the violence done to the organs of a malefactor; he has no fibres that can be stretched to form a unison with the fibres of your bodies, and which must be agitated by their motions. Love, in God, is in an intelligence, who sees what is, and who loves what may justly be accounted lovely; who judges by the nature of things, and not by sensations, of which he is gloriously incapable: his love is in perfect harmony with the *spirituality of his essence*.

II. Our ideas of the goodness of God must agree with our notions of the *inconceivableness of his nature*. I oppose this reflection to the difficulties that have always been urged against the goodness of God. There are two sorts of these objections; one tends to limit the goodness of God, the other to carry it beyond its just bounds.

If God be supremely good, say some, how is it conceivable that he should suffer sin to enter the world, and with sin, all the evils that necessarily follow it? This is one difficulty which tends to carry the goodness of God beyond its just extent.

Is it conceivable, say others, that the great God, that God, who, according to the prophet, "weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance," Isa. xl. 12; that God, who "measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with a span," ver. 22; that God, who "sitteth upon the earth, and considereth the inhabitants thereof as grasshoppers:" is it conceivable, that he should have such a love for those mean insects as the gospel represents; a love that inclined him to give his own Son, and to expose him to the most ignominious of all punishments, to save them? This is an objection of the second class, which tends to limit the goodness of God.

One answer may serve to obviate both these kinds of objections. The love of God is in perfect harmony with the inconceivableness of his nature. All his perfections are inconceivable, we can only follow them to a certain point, beyond which it is impossible to discover their effects. "Canst thou by searching find out God?" Job xi. 7.

Canst thou by searching find out his eternity? Explain an eternal duration: teach us to comprehend an extent of existence so great, that when we have added age to age, one million of years to another million of years, if I may venture to speak so, when we have heaped ages upon ages, millions of ages upon millions of ages, we have not added one day, one hour, one instant to the duration of God, with whom "a thousand years are as one day, and one day as a thousand years."

Canst thou by searching find out his knowledge? Explain to us the wisdom of an Intelligence, who comprehended plans of all possible worlds; who compared them altogether; who chose the best, not only in preference to the bad, but to the less good; who knew all that could result from the various modifications of matter, not only of the matter which composes our earth, but of the immense matter that composes all bodies, which are either in motion or at rest in the immensity of space, which lie beyond the reach of our senses, or the stretch of our imaginations, and of which, therefore, we can form no idea. Explain to us the wisdom of a God, who knew all that could result from the various modifications of spirits, not only of those human spirits which have subsisted hitherto, or of those which will subsist hereafter in this world, but of the thousands, of the "ten thousand times ten thousands that stand before him," Dan. vii. 10.

Canst thou by searching find out his power? Explain to us that self-efficient power, which commands a thing to be, and it is; which commands it not to be, and it ceases to exist.

The extent of God's mercy is no less impossible to find out than the extent of his other attributes. We are as incapable of determining concerning this, as concerning any of his other perfections, that it must needs extend hither, but not thither: that it ought to have prevented sin, but not to have given Jesus Christ to die for the salvation of sinners. Our notion of the goodness of God should agree with the inconceivableness of his nature, and, provided we have good proofs of what we believe, we ought not to stagger at the objections which an insufficient, or rather an insolent reason, has the audacity to oppose to it.

III. Our notion of the goodness of God should agree with *the holiness of his designs*. I mean, that it would imply a contradiction to suppose that a Being who is supremely holy, should have a close communion of love with unholly creatures, considered as unholly and unconverted. By this principle we exclude the dreadful consequences, that weakness and wickedness have been used to infer from the doctrine under our consideration. We oppose this principle to the execrable reasoning of those libertines, who say, (and, alas! how many people, who adopt this way of reasoning, mix with the saints, and pretend to be saints themselves!) "Let us continue in sin that grace may abound," Rom. vi. 1. With the same principle the prophet guards the text, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so doth the Lord pity;" whom? Them, who establish their crimes on the mercy of God? God forbid! "So doth the Lord pity them that fear him." This truth is so conformable to right reason, so often repeated in the Holy Scriptures, and so frequently enforced in this pulpit, that none but those who wilfully deceive themselves can mistake the matter; and for these reasons we dismiss this article.

IV. The love of God is in perfect harmony with *the independence of his principles*. Interest is the spring that moves, and very often the defect that destroys human friendships. It must be allowed, however, that though

principles of interest may appear low and mean, yet they often deserve pity more than blame. It would be extremely difficult for a debtor, if he were oppressed by a merciless creditor, to love any person more than him, who should be both able and willing to free him from the oppressor's iron rod. It would be strange if a starving man were not to have a more vehement love for him who should relieve his necessities, than for any one else. While our necessities continue as pressing as they are in this valley of tears, principles of interest will occupy the most of our thoughts, and will direct the best of our friendships. Disinterested love seems to be incompatible with the state of indigent creatures.

But God forbid that we should entertain similar notions of the Deity! God is supremely happy. His love to his creatures is supremely disinterested. Indeed, what interest can he have in loving us? Were this world, which has existed but a little while, to cease to exist; were all the beings upon earth, material and immaterial, to return to their nonentity; were God to remain alone, he would enjoy infinite happiness; in possessing himself he would possess perfect felicity. "Every beast of the forest is his, and the cattle upon a thousand hills," Ps. l. 10; sacrificial flesh affords no nourishment to him; clouds of fragrant incense communicate no odours to him; he is not entertained with the harmony of the music that is performed in his honour; for "our goodness extendeth not to him," Ps. xvi. 2. The praises of the seraphim can no more augment the splendour of his glory, than the blasphemies of the damned can diminish it.

V. The love of God to his creatures agrees with *the immutability of his will*. There is but little reality, and less permanency, in human love. The names of steadiness, constancy, and equanimity, an indelible image, an everlasting impression, a perpetual idea, and endless attachment, an eternal friendship, all these are only names, only empty, unmeaning sounds, when they are applied to those sentiments which the most faithful friends entertain for each other.

I am not describing now those light and inconstant people only, who are as ready to break as to form connexions: I am describing people of another, and a better, disposition of mind. We are ignorant of ourselves when we imagine ourselves capable of a permanent attachment, and, when we think that we shall always love, because we are assured that we love at present, we are the first to deceive ourselves. This man, who only at certain times discovers sentiments of tenderness, is not a hypocrite. That woman was very sincere, when weeping over a dying husband, and in some sense more agonizing than he, she just gathered strength enough to close the eyes of her departing all, and protested that she should never enjoy another moment, except that in which the great Disposer of all events should appoint her to follow her beloved partner to the grave: the woman expressed what she then felt, and what she thought she should always feel: but, however, time brought forward new objects, and other scenes have calmed the violence of her passions, and have placed her in

a state of tranquillity and submission to the will of God, which all the maxims of religion had not the power of producing.

People are not always to be blamed for the slightness of their friendships. Our levity constitutes, in some sort, our felicity, and our perfections apologize for our inconstancy.—Life would be one continued agony if our friendships were always in the same degree of activity. *Rachel* would be infinitely miserable, if she were always thinking about “her children, and would not be comforted because they are not,” *Matt.* ii. 18. I only mean to observe, that a character of levity is essential to the friendships of finite human minds.

God alone is capable, (O thou adorable Being, who only canst have such noble sentiments, enable us to express them!) God only, my dear brethren, is capable of a love, real, solid, and permanent, free from diversion and without interruption. What delineations, what representations, what purposes, revolved in the infinite mind, before that appointed period, in which he had determined to express himself in exterior works, and to give existence to a multitude of creatures? Yet throughout all these countless ages, through all these unfathomable abysses of eternity (I know no literal terms to express eternity) yet through all eternity he thought of us, my dear brethren; then he formed the plan of our salvation; then he appointed the victim that procured it; then he laid up for us the felicity and glory that we hope for ever to enjoy! What care and application are required to inspect, to order, and arrange the numberless beings of the whole earth? The whole earth, did I say? The whole earth is only an inconsiderable point: but what care and application are required to inspect, to order and arrange the worlds which we discover revolving over our heads with other worlds, that we have a right to suppose in the immensity of space? Yet this application does not prevent his attention to thee, believer; thy health he guards, thy family he guides, thy fortune and thy salvation he governs, as if each were the only object of his care, and as if thou wert alone in the universe! What an immensity of happiness must fill the intelligence of God, who is himself the source of felicity; of a God, who is surrounded with angels, archangels, and happy spirits, serving him day and night, continually attending round his throne, and waiting to fly at a signal of his will; of a God, who directs and disposes all; of a God, who, existing with the Word and the Holy Spirit, enjoys in that union inconceivable and ineffable delights; and yet the enjoyment of his own happiness does not at all divert his attention from the happiness of his creatures! If a Saul persecute his church, he is persecuted with it, *Acts* ix. 4; and when profane hands touch his children, they “touch the apple of his eye,” *Zech.* ii. 8. “In all her affliction he is afflicted,” *Isa.* lxiii. 9; “lo! he is with us always, even unto the end of the world,” *Matt.* xxviii. 20.

VI. The goodness of God must harmonize with the efficiency of his will. The great defect of human friendships is their inefficacy. The unavailing emotions that men may feel for each other, their ineffectual wishes for each

other's happiness, we denominate friendship. But suppose a union of every heart in thy favour; suppose, though without a precedent, thyself the object of the love of all mankind, what benefit couldst thou derive from all this love in some circumstances of thy life? What relief from real evils? Ah! my friends, ye are eager to assist me in my dying agonies: Alas! my family, ye are distressed to death to see me die; ye love me, and I know the tears that bathe you, flow from your hearts; yes, ye love me, but I must die!

None but the infinite God, my dear brethren, none but the adorable God hath an efficient love. “If God be for us, who can be against us?” *Rom.* viii. 31. Let the elements be let loose against my person and my life, let mankind, who differ about every thing else, agree to torment me, let there be a general conspiracy of nature and society against my happiness, what does it signify to me? If God love me, I shall be happy: with God to love and to testify is one and the same act of his self-efficient will.

VII. But finally, the goodness of God must agree with his veracity. I mean that although the many Scripture-images of the goodness of God are imperfect, and must not be literally understood, they must, however, have a real sense and meaning. Moreover, I affirm, that the grandeur of the original is not at all diminished, but on the contrary, that our ideas of it are very much enlarged, by purifying and retrenching the images that represent it; and this we are obliged to do on account of the eminence of the divine perfections. And here, my brethren, I own I am involved in the most agreeable difficulty that can be imagined; and my mind is absorbed in an innumerable multitude of objects, each of which verifies the proposition in the text. I am obliged to pass by a world of proofs and demonstrations. Yes, I pass by the firmament with all its stars, the earth with all its productions, the treasures of the sea and the influences of the air, the symmetry of the body, the charms of society, and many other objects, which in the most elegant and pathetic manner, preach the Creator's goodness to us. Those grand objects which have excited the astonishment of philosophers, and filled the inspired writers with wonder and praise, scarcely merit a moment's attention today. I stop at the principal idea of the prophet. We have before observed, that the term which is rendered *pity* in the text, is a vague word, and is often put in Scripture for the goodness of God in general; however, we must acknowledge, that it most properly signifies the disposition of a good parent, who is inclined to show mercy to his son, when he is become sensible of his follies, and endeavours by new effusions of love to re-establish the communion that his disobedience had interrupted: this is certainly the principal idea of the prophet.

Now who can doubt, my brethren, whether God possesses the reality of this image in the most noble, the most rich, and the most eminent sense? Wouldst thou be convinced, sinner, of the truth of the declaration of the text? Wouldst thou know the extent of the mercy of God to poor sinful men? Consider then, 1. The victim that he has substituted in

their stead. 2. The patience which he exercises towards them. 3. The crimes that he pardons. 4. The familiar friendship to which he invites them. And 5. The rewards that he bestows on them. Ah! ye tender fathers, ye mothers who seem to be all love for your children, ye whose eyes, whose hearts, whose perpetual cares and affections are concentrated in them, yield, yield to the love of God for his children, and acknowledge that God only knows how to love!

Let us remark, 1. The sacrifice that God has substituted in the sinner's stead. One of the liveliest and most emphatical expressions of the love of God, in my opinion, is that in the gospel of St. John. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son," ch. iii. 16. Weigh these words, my brethren, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." Metaphysical ideas begin to grow into disrepute, and I am not surprised at it. Mankind have such imperfect notions of substances, they know so little of the nature of spirits, particularly, they are so entirely at a loss in reasoning on the Infinite Spirit, that we need not be astonished if people retire from a speculative track in which the indiscretion of some has made great mistakes.

Behold a sure system of metaphysics. Convinced of the imperfection of all my knowledge, but particularly of my discoveries of the being and perfections of God, I consult the sacred oracles, which God has published, in order to obtain right notions of him. I immediately perceive that God, in speaking of himself, has proportioned his language to the weakness of men, to whom he has addressed his word. In this view, I meet with no difficulty in explaining those passages in which God says, that he has hands or feet, eyes or heart, that he goes or comes, ascends or descends, that he is in some cases pleased, and in others provoked.

Yet I think, it would be a strange abuse of this notion of Scripture, not to understand some constant ideas literally; ideas which the Scriptures give us of God, and on which the system of Christianity partly rests.

I perceive, and I think very clearly, that the Scriptures constantly speak of a being, a person, or if I may speak so, a portion of the divine essence, which is called the Father, and another that is called the Son.

I think I perceive, with equal evidence in the same book, that between these two persons, the Father and the Son, there is the closest and most intimate union that can be imagined. What love must there be between these two persons, who have the same perfections and the same ideas, the same purposes and the same plans? What love must subsist between two persons, whose union is not interrupted by any calamity without, by any passion within, or, to speak more fully still, by any imagination?

With equal clearness I perceive, that the man Jesus, who was born at Bethlehem, and was laid in a manger, was in the closest union with the Word, that is, with the Son of God; and that in virtue of this union the man Jesus is more beloved of God than all the other creatures of the universe.

No less clearly do I perceive in Scripture, that the man Jesus, who is as closely united to the Eternal Word, as the word is to God, was delivered for me, a vile creature, to the most ignominious treatment, to sufferings the most painful, and the most shameful, that were ever inflicted on the meanest and basest of mankind.

And when I inquire the cause of this great mystery, when I ask, Why did the Almighty God bestow so rich a present on me? Especially when I apply to revelation for an explication of this mystery, which reason cannot fully explain, I can find no other cause than the *compassion* of God.

Let the schools take their way, let reason lose itself in speculations, yea, let faith find it difficult to submit to a doctrine, which has always appeared with an awful solemnity to those who have thought and meditated on it; for my part, I abide by this clear and astonishing, but at the same time, this kind and comfortable proposition, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." When people show us Jesus Christ in the garden, sweating *great drops* of blood; when they speak of his trial before Caiaphas and Pilate, in which he was interrogated, insulted, and scourged; when they present him to our view upon mount Calvary, nailed to a cross, and bowing beneath the blows of heaven and earth; when they require the reason of these formidable and surprising phenomena, we will answer, It is because God loved mankind; it is because "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son."

2. The patience that God exercises towards sinners, is our second remark. Here, my brethren, I wish that as many of you as are interested in this article would allow me to omit particulars, and would recollect the histories of your own lives.

My life, says one, is consumed in perpetual indolence. I am a stranger to the practice of private devotion, and to speak the truth, I consider it only as a fancy. I attend public worship, only because I would conform to example and custom. I hear the sermons of the ministers of the gospel as amusive discourses, that treat of subjects in which I have no interest. I take no part in the prayers that are addressed to God in behalf of the sick or the poor, the church or the state.

I, says a second, ever since I have been in the world, have cherished one of the most shameful and criminal passions; sometimes I have been shocked at its turpitude, and sometimes I have resolved to free myself from it: in some of my sicknesses, which I thought would have ended in death, I determined on a sincere conversion: sometimes a sermon, or a pious book, has brought me to self-examination, which has ended in a promise of reformation: sometimes the sight of the Lord's Supper, an institution properly adapted to display *the sinfulness of sin*, has exhibited my sin in all its heinousness, and has bound me by oath to sacrifice my unworthy passion to God. But my corruption has been superior to all, and yet God has borne with me to this day.

A third must say, As for me I have lived thirty or forty years in a country where the

public profession of religion is prohibited, and I have passed all the time without a membership to any church, without ordinances, without public worship, and without the hope of a pastor to comfort me in my dying illness; I have seduced my family by my example; I have consented to the settlement of my children, and have suffered them to contract marriages without the blessing of heaven; my lukewarmness has caused first their indifference, and last their apostacy, and will perhaps cause . . . and yet God has borne with me to this day.

Why has he borne with me? It is not a conviction at sin, for he hates and detests it. It is not ignorance, for he penetrates the inmost recesses of my soul, nor has a single act, no, not a single act of my rebellion, eluded the search of his all-piercing eye. It is not a want of power to punish a criminal, for he holds the thunders in his mighty hands, at his command hell opens, and the fallen angels wait only for his permission to seize their prey. Why then do I yet subsist? Why do I see the light of this day? Why are the doors of this church once more open to me? It is because he commiserates poor sinners. It is because he *pities* me "as a father pitieth his children."

3. Let us remark the crimes which God pardons. There is no sin excepted, no, not one, in the list of those which God has promised to forgive to true penitents. He pardons not only the sins of those whom he has not called into his visible church, who, not having been indulged with this kind of benefits, have not had it in their power to carry ingratitude to its height: but he pardons also crimes committed under such dispensations as seem to render sin least pardonable. He pardons sins committed under the dispensation of the law, as he forgives those which are committed under the dispensation of nature; and those that are committed under the dispensation of the gospel, as those which are committed under the law. He forgives, not only such sins as have been committed through ignorance, infirmity, and inadvertency, but such also as have been committed deliberately and obstinately. He not only forgives the sins of a day, a week, or a month, but he forgives also the sins of a great number of years, those which have been formed into an inveterate habit, and have grown old with the sinner. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool," Isa. i. 18.

But what am I saying? It is not enough to say that God forgives sins, he unites himself to those who have committed them by the most tender and affectionate ties.

4. Our next article therefore regards the familiar friendship to which God invites us. What intimate, close, and affectionate relation canst thou imagine, which God is not willing to form with thee in religion? Art thou affected with the vigilance of a shepherd, who watches over, and sacrifices all his care, and even his life for his flock? This relation God will have with thee: "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters," Psal. xxiii. 1, 2. Art thou

opens his heart to his friend, and communicates to him his most secret thoughts, dividing with him all his pleasures and all his pains? God will have this relation with thee: "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him," Ps. xxv. 14. "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" Gen. xviii. 17. "I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you," John xv. 15. Art thou touched with the tenderness of a mother, whose highest earthly happiness is to suckle the son of her womb? God will have this relation with thee: "can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee," Isa. xlix. 15.

Hasst thou some good reasons for disgust with human connexions? Are thy views so liberal and delicate as to afford thee a conviction that there is no such thing as real friendship among men? And that what are called connexions, friendships, affections, unions, tendernesses, are generally no other than interchanges of deceit disguised under agreeable names? Are thy feelings so refined that thou sighest after connexions formed on a nobler plan? God will have such connexion with thee. Yes, there is, in the plan of religion, a union formed between God and us, on the plan of that which subsists between the three persons in the godhead, the object of our worship: that is, as far as a similar union between God and us can subsist without contradiction. God grants this to the intercession of his Son, in virtue of that perfect obedience which he rendered to his Father on the cross. This Jesus Christ requested for us, on the eve of that day, in which, by his ever memorable sacrifice, he reconciled heaven and earth: "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine," John xvii. 9. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word: that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us," ver. 20, 21. Do not inquire the possibility of this union, how we can be one with God and with Jesus Christ, as Jesus Christ and God are one. Our hearts, as defective in the power of feeling as our minds in that of reasoning, have no faculties, at present, for the knowledge of such things as can be known only by feeling. But the time will come when both sense and intelligence will be expanded, and then we shall know, by a happy experience, what it is to be one with God and with Jesus Christ.

This leads us to our fifth and last article, That is, the felicity that God reserves for his children in another world. A reunion of all the felicities of this present world would not be sufficient to express the love of God to us. Nature is too indigent: our faculties are too indigent: society is too indigent: religion itself is too indigent.

Nature is too indigent: it might indeed afford us a temperate air, an earth enamelled with flowers, trees laden with fruits, and climates rich with delights; but all its present beauties are inadequate to the love of God, and

there must be another world, another economy, "new heavens and a new earth," Isa. lxx. 17.

Our faculties are too indigent; they might indeed admit abundant pleasures, for we are capable of knowing, and God could gratify our desire of knowledge. We are capable of agreeable sensations, and God is able to give us objects proportional to our sensations; and so of the rest. But all these gratifications would be too little to express the love of God to us. Our faculties must be renewed, and in some sense, new cast; for "this corruptible body must put on incorruption; this natural body must become a spiritual body," 1 Cor. xv. 44. 53; so that by means of more delicate organs, we may enjoy more exquisite pleasures. Our souls must be united to glorified bodies, by laws different from those which now unite us to matter, in order to capacitate us for more extensive knowledge.

Society is too indigent, although society might become an ocean of pleasure to us. There are men whose friendships are full of charms; their conversations are edifying, and their acquaintance delightful; and God is able to place us among such amiable characters in this world: but society has nothing great enough to express the love of God to us. We must be introduced to the society of glorified saints; and to thousands of angels and happy spirits, who are capable of more magnanimity and delicacy than all that we can imagine here.

Religion itself is too indigent, although it might open to us a source of delight. What pleasure has religion afforded us on these happy days of our lives, in which, having fled from the crowd, and suspended our love to the world, we meditated on the grand truths which God has revealed to us in his word; when we ascended to God by fervent prayer; or renewed at the Lord's table our communion with him! How often have holy men been enraptured in these exercises! How often have they exclaimed during these foretastes, Our souls are "satisfied as with marrow and fatness," Psal. lxxiii. 5. "O how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee," xxxi. 19. We are "abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house: we drink of the river of thy pleasures," Psal. xxxvi. 8. Yet even religion can afford nothing here below that can sufficiently express the love of God to us. We must be admitted into that state in which there is neither *temple* nor *sun*, because God supplies the place of both, Rev. xxi. 22, 23. We are to behold God, not surrounded with such a handful of people as this, but with "thousand thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand," Dan. vii. 10, who stand continually before him. We must see God, not in the displays of his grace in our churches, but in all the magnificence of his glory in heaven. We are to prostrate ourselves before him, not at the Lord's table, where he is made known to us in the symbols of bread and wine: (august symbols indeed, but too gross to exhibit the grandeur of God) but we are to behold him upon the throne of glory, worshipped by all the happy host of heaven. What cause produces those noble effects? From what source do those "rivers of pleasure flow?" Psalm xxxiv. 8. It is love which "lays up all this goodness for

us," Psal. xxxi. 19. "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love," Hos. xi. 4.

Let us meditate on the love of God, who, being supremely happy himself, communicates perfect happiness to us. Supreme happiness does not make God forget us; shall the miserable comforts of this life make us forget him? Our attachments to this life are so strong, the acquaintances that we have contracted in this world so many, and the relations that we bear so tender; we are, in a word, so habituated to live, that we need not wonder if it cost us a good deal to be willing to die. But this attachment to life, which, when it proceeds only to a certain degree, is a sinless infirmity, becomes one of the most criminal dispositions when it exceeds its just limits. It is not right that the objects of divine love should lose sight of their chief good, in a world where, after their best endeavours, there will be too many obstacles between them and God. It is not right that rational creatures, who have heard of the pure, extensive, and munificent love of God to them, should be destitute of the most ardent desires of a closer union to him than any that can be attained in this life. One single moment's delay should give us pain, and if we wish to live, it should be only to prepare to die. We ought to desire life only to mortify sin, to practise and to perfect virtue, to avail ourselves of opportunities of knowing ourselves better, and of obtaining stronger assurances of our salvation. No, I can never persuade myself that a man, who is wise in the truths of which we have been discoursing, a man, in whom the *love of God* has been "shed abroad by the Holy Ghost given unto him," Rom. v. 5; a man, who thinks himself an object of the love of the Great Supreme, and who knows that the Great Supreme will not render him perfectly happy in this life, but in the next, can afford much time for the amusements of this. I can never persuade myself that a man, who has such elevated notions, and such magnificent prospects, can make a very serious affair of having a great name in this world, of lodging in a palace, or of descending from an illustrious ancestry. These little passions, if we consider them in themselves, may seem almost indifferent, and I grant if ye will, that they are not always attended with very bad consequences, that, in some cases, they injure nobody, and in many, cause no trouble in society: but, if we consider the principle from which they proceed, they will appear very mortifying to us. We shall find that the zeal and fervour, the impatient breathings of some, "to depart, and to be with Christ," Phil. i. 23; the aspiring of a soul after the chief good; the prayer, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly," Rev. xxii. 20; the eager wish, "When shall I come and appear before God," Psal. xlii. 2. We shall find that these dispositions, which some of us treat as enthusiasm, and which others of us refer to saints of the first order, to whose perfections we have not the presumption to aspire; we shall find, I say, that these dispositions are more essential to Christianity than we may have hitherto imagined.

May God make us truly sensible of that noble and tender love which God has for us! May God kindle our love at the fire of his own!

May God enable us to know religion by such pleasures as they experience who make love to God the foundation of all virtue! These are our petitions to God for you: to these may each of us say Amen!

## SERMON VIII.

### THE INCOMPREHENSIBILITY OF THE MERCY OF GOD.

ISAIAH IV. 8, 9.

*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

Lo, "these are parts of his ways, but how little a portion is heard of him!" Job xxvi. 14. This is one of the most sententious sayings of Job, and it expresses, in a very lively and emphatical manner, the works of God. Such language would produce but very little effect indeed in the mouth of a careless, unthinking man: but Job, who uttered it, had a mind filled with the noblest ideas of the perfections of God. He had studied them in his prosperity, in order to enable him to render homage to God, from whom alone his prosperity came. His heart was conversant with them under his distressing adversities, and of them he had learnt to bow to the hand of Him who was no less the author of adversity than of prosperity, of darkness than of day. All this appears by the fine description which the holy man gives immediately before: "God," says he, "stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing. He bindeth up his waters in his thick clouds; and the cloud is not rent under them. He hath compassed the waters with bounds. The pillars of heaven tremble, and are astonished at his reproof. He divideth the sea with his power, and by his understanding he smiteth through the proud. By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens." But are these the only production of the Creator? Have these emanations wholly exhausted his power? No, replies Job, "These are only parts of his ways, and how little a portion is heard of him!"

My brethren, what this holy man said of the wonders of nature, we, with much more reason, say to you of the wonders of grace. Collect all that pagan philosophers have taught of the goodness of the Supreme Being. To the opinions of philosophers join the declarations of the prophets. To the declarations of the prophets, and to the opinions of philosophers, add the discoveries of the evangelists and apostles. Compose one body of doctrine of all that various authors have written on this comfortable subject. To the whole join your own experience; your ideas to their ideas, your meditations to their meditations, and then believe that ye are only floating on the surface of the goodness of God, that his love has dimensions, a "breadth, and length, and depth, and height," Eph. iii. 18; which the human mind can never attain: and, upon the brink of this ocean, say, "Lo, these are only parts of

his ways, and how little a portion is heard of him!"

This incomprehensibility of the goodness of God, (and what attention, what sensibility, what gratitude, have we not a right to expect of you?) this inconceivableness of the goodness of God we intend to discuss to-day. The prophet, or rather God himself, says to us by the prophet, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

Three things are necessary to explain the text.

I. The meaning must be restrained.

II. The object must be determined.

III. The proofs must be produced. And this is the whole plan of my discourse.

I. The words of my text must be restrained. Strictly speaking, it cannot be said, that "God's thoughts are not our thoughts," and that his "ways are not our ways:" on the contrary, it is certain, that in many respects, God's "ways are our ways, and his thoughts are our thoughts." I mean, that there are many cases, in which we may assure ourselves that God thinks so and so, and will observe such or such a conduct. The doctrine of the incomprehensibility of God is one of those doctrines which we ought to defend with the greatest zeal, because it has a powerful influence in religion and morality: but it would become a subversion of both, were it to be carried beyond its just bounds. Libertines have made fewer proselytes by denying the existence of God than by abusing the doctrine of his inconceivableness. It makes but little impression on a rational man, to be told, that matter is eternal; that it arranged itself in its present order; that chance spread the firmament, formed the heavenly orbs, fixed the earth on its basis, and wrought all the wonders in the material world. It makes but little impression on a rational man, to be informed that the intelligent world is to be attributed to the same cause to which libertines attribute the material world: that chance formed spirit as well as matter; gave it the power, not only of reflecting on its own essence, but also of going out of itself, of transporting itself into the past ages of eternity, of rising into the heavens by its meditation, of pervading the earth, and investigating its darkest recesses. All these extravagant propositions refute themselves, and hardly find one partisan in such an enlightened age as this, in which we have the happiness to live.

There are other means more likely to subvert the faith. To give grand ideas of the Supreme Being; to plunge, if I may be allowed to say so, the little mind of man into the ocean of the divine perfections; to contrast the supreme grandeur of the Creator with the insignificance of the creature; to persuade mankind that the Great Supreme is too lofty to concern himself with us, that our conduct is entirely indifferent to him; that it signifies nothing to him whether we be just or unjust, humane or cruel, happy or miserable: to say in these senses, that God's ways are not our ways, that his thoughts are not our thoughts, these are the arms that infidelity has sometimes employed with success,

and against the attacks of which we would guard you. For these reasons, I said, that the meaning of the text must be restrained, or that it would totally subvert religion and morality.

We have seldom met with a proposition more extravagant than that of a certain bishop,\* who, having spent his life in defending the gospel, endeavoured at his death to subvert it. This man, in a book entitled, *The imperfection of the Human Mind*, and which is itself an example of the utmost degree of the extravagance of the human mind, maintains this proposition, and makes it the ground of all his skepticism: that before we affirm any thing of a subject we must perfectly understand it. From hence he concludes, that we can affirm nothing of any subject, because we do not perfectly understand any. And from hence it naturally follows, that of the Supreme Being we have the least pretence to affirm any thing, because we have a less perfect knowledge of him than of any other subject. What absurd reasoning! It is needless to refute it here, and it shall suffice at present to observe in general, the ignorance of one part of a subject does not hinder the knowing of other parts of it, nor ought it to hinder our affirmation of what we do know. I do not perfectly understand the nature of light; however I do know that it differs from darkness, and that it is the medium by which objects become visible to me. And the same may be affirmed of other subjects.

In like manner, the exercise of my reasoning powers, produces in me some incontestable notions of God; and, from these notions, immediately follow some sure consequences, which become the immovable basis of my faith in his word, of my submission to his will, and of my confidence in his promises. These notions, and these consequences, compose the body of natural religion. There is a self-existent Being. The existence of all creatures is derived from the self-existent Being, and he is the only source of all their perfections. That Being, who is the source of the perfections of all other beings, is more powerful than the most powerful monarchs, because the most powerful monarchs derive only a finite power from him. He is wiser than the most consummate politicians, because the most consummate politicians derive only a finite wisdom from him. His knowledge exceeds that of the most transcendent geniuses, because the most transcendent geniuses and the most knowing philosophers derive only a finite knowledge from him. And the same may be said of others. There are then some incontestable notions, which reason gives us of God.

From these notions follow some sure and necessary consequences. If all creatures derive their being and preservation from him, I owe to him all that I am, and all that I have, he is the sole object of my desires and hopes,

\* Peter Daniel Huet, bishop of Avranches, a countryman of our author's. He was a man of uncommon learning, and, in justice to Christianity, as well as to his lordship, it ought to be remembered, that he wrote his *demonstratio evangelica*, in the vigour of his life; but his *traite philosophique de la foiblesse de l'esprit humaine*, of which Mons. Saurin complains, was written more than forty years after, when he was ninety years of age, and was superannuated. Father Castell, the Jesuit, denies that it was written by Huet at all.

and I am necessarily engaged to be grateful for his favours, and entirely submissive to his will. If creature-perfections be only emanations from him, the source of all perfections, I ought to have nobler sentiments of his perfections, than of those of creatures, how elevated soever the latter may be. I ought to fear him more than I ought to fear the mightiest king, because the power of the mightiest king is only an emanation of his. I ought to commit myself to his direction, and to trust more to his wisdom than to that of the wisest politician, because the prudence of the wisest politician is only an emanation of his: and so of the rest. Let it be granted, that God is, in many respects, quite incomprehensible, that we can attain only a small degree of knowledge of this infinite object, or, to use the words of our text, that "his thoughts are not our thoughts, nor his ways our ways;" yet it will not follow, that the notions, which reason gives us of him, are less just, or, that the consequences, which immediately follow these notions, are less sure; or, that all the objections, which libertines and skeptics pretend to derive from the doctrine of the incomprehensibility of God, against natural religion, do not evaporate and disappear.

If reason affords some adequate notions of God, if some necessary consequences follow these notions, for a much stronger reason, we may derive some adequate notions of God and some sure consequences from revelation. It is a very extravagant and sophistical way of reasoning to allege the darkness of revelation upon this subject, in order to obscure the light that it does afford us. These words, "my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways," do not mean, then, that we can know nothing of the divine essence; that we cannot certainly discover in what cases he will approve of our conduct, and in what cases he will condemn it: they only mean, that infinite minds cannot form complete ideas of God, know the whole sphere of his attributes, or certainly foresee all the effects that they can produce. Thus we have endeavoured to restrain the words of the text.

II. We are to determine their object. The prophet's expressions would have been true, had they been applied to all the attributes of God: however, they are applied here only to one of them, that is, to his goodness. The connexion of the text with the preceding verses proves this. "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon," ver. 6, 7. The text immediately follows: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord." It is clear, I think, that the last words, "my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," directly relate to the preceding clause, "the Lord will have mercy upon him, and our God will abundantly pardon." Wherein do the thoughts of God differ from ours? In this sense they differ: in God there are treasures of mercy, the depth of which no finite mind can fathom. In him goodness is as inconceivable as all his other at-



tributes. In God, a sinner, who seems to have carried his sin to its utmost extravagance, and to have exhausted all the treasures of divine grace, shall still find, if he *return unto the Lord*, and cast himself at the foot of him, who *abundantly pardoneth*, a goodness, a compassion, a love, that he could not have imagined to find.

When we speak of the goodness of God, we mean, not only that perfection which inclines him to communicate natural benefits to all creatures, and which has occasioned the inspired writers to say, that "All creatures wait upon him, that he may give them their meat in due season," Ps. civ. 27; that he "left not himself without witness in doing good," Acts xiv. 17. But we mean, in a more especial manner, the grace of the gospel, of which the prophet speaks in the beginning of the chapter; "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money come ye buy and eat; yea, come buy wine and milk without money, and without price. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live: and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Behold I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander of the people." ver. 1—4. Who is this *leader* whom God gave to be a *witness to the people*, that is, to manifest his attributes to the Gentiles? What is this *everlasting covenant*? What are these *sure mercies of David*? Two sorts of authors deserve to be heard on this article, though on different accounts; the first for their ignorance and prejudice; the last for their knowledge and impartiality. The first are the Jews, who in spite of their obstinate blindness, cannot help owing that these words promise the advent of the Messiah. Rabbi David Kimchi gives this exposition of the words: "The sure mercies of David, that is the Messiah, whom Ezekiel calls David. They shall dwell in the land that I have given them, they, and their children, and their children's children, for ever; and my servant David shall be their prince for ever," Ezek. xxxvii. 25; I purposely pass by many similar passages of other Jewish Rabbins. The other authors whom we ought to hear for their impartial knowledge, are the inspired writers, and particularly St. Paul, whose comment on this passage, which he gave at Antioch in Pisidia, determines its meaning. There the apostle having attested the truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, affirms that the prophets had foretold that event; and among other passages, which he alleged in proof of what he had advanced, quotes this, "I will give you the sure mercies of David," Acts xiii. 34. From all which it follows, that the object of our text is the goodness of God, and in an especial manner, the love that he has manifested unto us in the gospel: and this is what we undertook to prove.

Such views of the grandeurs of God are sublime and delightful. The divine perfections are the most sublime objects of meditation. It is glorious to surmount the little circle of objects that surround us, to revolve in a contemplation of God, in whose infinite perfections intelligent beings will for ever find matter sufficient to employ all their intelligence. Behold the inspired

writers, they were fond of losing their capacities in this lovely prospect. Sometimes they stood on the borders of the eternity of God, and viewing that boundless ocean, exclaimed, "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world; even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God. A thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night," Ps. xc. 2. 4. Sometimes they meditated on his power, and contemplating the number and variety of its works, exclaimed, "O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens. When we consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers; the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" Ps. viii. 1. 3, 4. Sometimes their attention was fixed on the immensity of God, and contemplating it, they exclaimed, "Whither shall we go from thy spirit? or whither shall we flee from thy presence? If we ascend up into heaven, thou art there, if we make our bed in hell, behold thou art there; if we take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead us, and thy right hand shall hold us," Ps. cxxxix. 7—10. But, however agreeable these objects of meditation may be, there is something mortifying and distressing in them. The more we discover the grandeur of the Supreme Being, the greater distance we perceive between ourselves and him. We perceive him indeed: but it is as an inhabitant of "light which no man can approach unto," 1 Tim. iv. 16; and from all our efforts to know him we derive this reflection of the prophet, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me: it is high; I cannot attain unto it," Ps. cxxxix. 6.

But the meditation of the goodness of God is as full of consolation as it is of sublimity. This ocean of the Deity is an ocean of love. These dimensions that surpass your knowledge, are dimensions of love. These distances, a part only of which are visible to you, are depths of mercy, and those words which God has addressed to you, "my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," are equal to these: As far as heaven is above the earth; or more fully, as far as ye finite creatures are inferior to me the infinite God, so far are your ideas of my compassion and love to you inferior to my pity and esteem for you: Try: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts;" let not the multitude or the enormity of his crimes terrify him into a despair of obtaining the pardon of them: "Let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Having thus determined the object and restrained the meaning of the text, we shall proceed to adduce the proofs.

III. The prophet addresses himself to two sorts of people; first, to the heathens, who knew no more of the goodness of God than what they had discovered by the glimmering

light of nature: next, to some Jews, or to some Christians, who, indeed, knew it by the light of revelation, but who had not so high a notion of it as to believe it sufficient to pardon all their sins. To both he says on the part of God; "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways." "My thoughts are not your thoughts," ye Gentile philosophers. Ye know my goodness only by your speculations on the nature of the Supreme Being; but all that ye discover in this way, is nothing in comparison of what the Messiah will teach you in the gospel. "My thoughts are not your thoughts," ye timorous consciences, ye gloomy and melancholy minds. Behold, I yet open to you treasures of mercy, which ye thought ye had exhausted: "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways: For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

First, The prophet addresses heathens, who had no other knowledge of God than a few speculations on the nature of the First Being; and who were never able to discover three mysteries of divine love.

1. The mean by which God conciliated his justice with his love.

2. His patience with those who abuse this mean

3. His intimate union with those who fall in with the design of his patience.

1. The first mystery of love, which the wisest pagan philosophers could never discover, is the mean that God has chosen to conciliate his justice with his love.

Let us carefully avoid the forming of mean notions of God; let us not imagine that the attributes of God clash: No, God is perfectly consistent with himself, and his attributes mutually support each other. When we say that the love of God resisted his justice, we mean that, according to our way of thinking, there were some inconveniences in determining the fate of mankind after the entrance of sin. In effect, what must become of this race of rebels? Shall God execute that sentence on them, which he has pronounced against sin? But chains of darkness, a lake burning with fire and brimstone, weeping and wailing through an endless eternity, excite the compassion of a merciful God: shall he then allow these unworthy creatures to live under his protection? Shall so many idle words, so many criminal thoughts, so many iniquitous actions, so much blasphemy, so many extortions, the shedding of so much innocent blood, shall all these go unpunished? But were these allowed, his love of order and his veracity would be blemished. These are difficulties which all the universe could not solve. This is the book of which St. John speaks in his revelation, the book "sealed with seven seals; I wept much," says St. John, "because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book: but worthy is the Lamb to take the book, and to open the seals," Rev. v. 4. 9.

From the depth of divine mercy proceeds a plan for the solution of all these difficulties. The Son of God clothes himself with mortal flesh. He says, from his infancy, "In sacri-

fices for sin thou hast no pleasure!" Heb. x. 6. No, neither "burnt offerings nor thousands of rams; neither altars overflowing with blood, nor ten thousands of rivers of oil; neither the first-born for the transgression, nor all the fruit of the body for the sin of the soul," Micah vi. 6, 7; no, none of these is an offering worthy of being presented to thy justice: "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God," Heb. x. 7. Lo, I come to do that will which requires the punishment of sin and the salvation of the sinner. Lo, I come to be led "as a lamb to the slaughter," and to be "dumb as a sheep before her shearers." Lo, I am coming to suffer the very men for whose salvation I come, to treat me as a malefactor; yea, moreover, I am coming to suffer the hidings of that adorable face, which has always hitherto afforded me a "fulness of joy," Ps. xvi. 11. I am coming to suffer a suspension of that love, which is all my delight, and to cry under excessive sorrows, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Matt. xxvii. 46. We must necessarily sink under the weight of this subject, my brethren, and we must be content to see only "parts of the ways" of love. We must determine only to take a slight survey of "the breadth and length, and depth and height, of the love of God;" we must own "that it passeth knowledge," Eph. iii. 18, 19, and that these are things which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man," 1 Cor. ii. 9. We must confess that if we were not able to give this general answer to the objections that are made against the mysteries of religion, that is, that the attributes of God are infinite, and that it does not belong to such finite minds as ours to limit the infinite God, we should be overwhelmed with the difficulties to which the marvels of redemption are liable to be exposed. Let us rejoice in the prospect of that happy period, in which our faculties will be expanded, and in which we shall make a more rapid progress in the study of the love of God. In the present period of infirmities let us be content with the solution in our text; "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

2. But in what manner have these miserable sinners (and this will explain the second mystery of love, which reason could never have discovered,) in what manner have these miserable sinners, whom the justice of God condemns to eternal torments, received the declaration of their pardon? With what eyes have they considered the miracle of an incarnate God? How have they regarded that altar, on which such a noble victim was sacrificed for their salvation? Have their eyes been fountains of tears, to lament the crimes that brought down such a deluge of punishments upon the head of the Redeemer of mankind? Have they received the Redeemer with such tenderness and gratitude as the wonders of his love required? No: The unbelieving synagogue, the Jews, or, to pass the Jews, Christians, we, my brethren, who profess to believe the mystery of the cross: we, who every day

say, "We believe in Jesus Christ, who was born of the virgin Mary, who was crucified, dead, and buried;" we can hear of those great mysteries with indifference; we can persist in the very sins that brought our Redeemer to the cross; we can refuse to give up a few inches of earth, a small sum of money, the playing of an idle game, or the gratifying of an absurd passion, to him who sacrificed for us his person and his life; we can "do despite unto the Spirit of grace, and count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing," Heb. x. 9. God is witness of all these things; God holds the thunders in his mighty hands; wars, and plagues, and earthquakes, wait only for the first signal of his will to avenge those numerous indignities: yet God, who beholds those indignities, bears with them. This man, says the love of God, is precipitated by the heat and vigour of youth, perhaps he may reflect when he arrives at the tranquillity of mature age; he shall be spared then till he arrives at maturity: or, perhaps he may recollect himself in the coolness of old age, he shall be spared then till the grave coolness of old age comes. That man has been a rebel in his health, perhaps he may submit when he is sick, he shall be spared till sickness comes; and he shall be sought, exhorted, conjured; I will say to him, "O that thou hadst hearkened unto me!" Ps. lxxxi. 13. "Be thou instructed, lest my soul depart from thee!" Jer. vi. 8. "O thou who kildest the prophets, and stoned them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thee, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldest not!" Matt. xxiii. 37. And it is the great God, who speaks in this manner to his ungrateful creature, who is insensible to such tender language!

3. The third mystery of love which the wisest philosophers could never have discovered, is the union that God forms with man in religion. What tender relation canst thou imagine, which God has not determined to form with thee in religion? Art thou sensible to the vigilance of a shepherd? "The Lord is thy shepherd, thou shalt not want," Ps. xxiii. 1. Art thou sensible to the confidence of a friend? "I call thee not a servant but a friend," John xv. 15. Art thou sensible to the tenderness of a parent? "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon thee, that thou shouldest be called a son of God!" 1 John iii. 1. I should allege many other images of the love of God to believers, if I could flatter myself, that the imaginations of my hearers would be as pure as those of the sacred authors who have described them.

Art thou disgusted with human connexions? Are thine ideas of friendship so refined that they render thee superior to human unions, and make thee wish for a friendship formed on a nobler plan? God has determined that thou shalt be united to him as Jesus Christ and he are united: a union at present inconceivable, but which we shall happily experience in the enlarged sphere of an immortal life, John xvii. 20, 21. Let us acknowledge then, that all the penetration of the wisest philosophers, could never have discovered the extent of the love of God in the dis-

persation of the gospel. "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

Secondly, Let us address the text to the gloomy mind of a melancholy person, who, having failed in the courage necessary to resist temptations, fails again in that which is necessary to bear the thought of having fallen into them. But, before we oppose or describe this weakness, let us grant that there is something in it which deserves respect. The greatest part of those who treat it as an extravagance, seem to me far more extravagant than those who fall into it. Yes, the utmost excess of grief that can be occasioned by the remembrance of sin, seems to me incomparably less blameable than the excessive tranquillity of some other people's minds. Who (think you,) is most extravagant, he who is too much affected with the enormity of his sins, or he who is not affected enough? Is it he who, notwithstanding his sorrows and regrets, dares not venture to believe himself an object of divine compassion; or he who, having no contrition, nor shedding any tears of repentance, presumes on that compassion? Is it he, whom the bare probability of being punished for his sins, of being eternally laden with "chains of darkness," of being an eternal prey to "the worm that never dieth," 2 Pet. ii. 4; and of becoming fuel for that "fire which shall never be quenched," Mark ix. 44, 45; deprives of his rest, of a relish for the sweets of society, and of all inclination to enjoy the most insinuating pleasures; or, is it he who, in spite of so many reasons to fear his dangerous state, eats, drinks, diverts himself, runs from company to company, from circle to circle, and employs the moments, that are given him to avoid his miseries, in inventing the most effectual means of forgetting them? I repeat it again, a melancholy, that is occasioned by the remembrance of sin, has something respectable in it, and the greatest part of those who treat it altogether as an absurdity, are more absurd than those who fall into it.

I intend, however, in this part of my discourse, to oppose this melancholy gloom. And thanks be to those divine mercies, the grandeurs of which I am this day commending for furnishing me with so many means of opposing this disposition, independently of the words of my text. What a multitude of reflections present themselves beside those which arise from the subject in hand!

What madness possesses thy melancholy mind? The Holy Spirit assures thee, that "though thy sins be as scarlet," he will make them "as white as snow;" that "though the be as red as crimson," he will make them "a white as wool," Isa. i. 19; and dost thou think that thy sins are too aggravated to be pardoned in this manner?

The Holy Spirit gives thee a long list of the most execrable names in nature; a list of idolaters, murderers, extortioners, adulterers, persecutors, highway robbers, and blasphemers, who obtained mercy when they desired and sought it: and art thou obstinately be-

on excluding thyself from the number of those sinners, to whom mercy is promised; and, because thou dost not believe it attainable, dost thou obstinately refuse to ask for it?

The Holy Spirit has lifted up "an ensign for the nations," Isa. xi. 12; or, to speak without a figure, the Holy Ghost has lifted up a cross, and on that cross a Redeemer, who is "able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him," Heb. vii. 25; and who himself says to all sinners, "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, I will give you rest, and ye shall find rest unto your souls," Matt. xi. 28, 29. And dost thou flee from this cross, and rather choose to sink under the weight of thy sins than to disburden them on a Redeemer, who is willing to bear them?

But passing all these, let us return to the text. "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." This is sufficient to refute, this is enough to subvert, and to destroy, the whole system of a despairing mind. The perfections of God are infinite: By what rule then dost thou pretend to "limit the Holy One of Israel," Ps. lxxviii. 41.—"Canst thou by searching find out God?" Job xi. 7. Canst thou find out the eternity of him, with whom "a thousand years are as one day, and one day as a thousand years," 2 Pet. iii. 8. Canst thou find out the extent of his wisdom; a wisdom that first invented, then created; that governs now, and will for ever govern, both the material and intelligent worlds? Behold, his understanding is infinite," Ps. cxlvii. 5. Canst thou find out the power of him who "weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance," Isa. xl. 12; who "taketh up the isles as a very little thing," ver. 15.

The mercy of God is no less inconceivable than the rest of his attributes. The nature of the thing proves it; reason declares it; revelation places it in the clearest light; experience confirms it; and of his mercy God says in the text, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

Your thoughts have formed a gloomy system, and ye think that God can pardon a first, or a second, or perhaps a third, sin; but ye cannot believe that he can forgive the hundredth, or even the fortieth offence: but God's thoughts are, that he can *abundantly pardon*; that he can forgive the hundredth offence, yea, the thousandth and the ten thousandth, as well as the first and the second, if ye be sincerely willing to renounce them, and seriously endeavour to reform them.

Ye think, agreeably to your gloomy system, that God does indeed pardon some crimes, but that there are some which he will not pardon; that he sometimes pardons hatred, but that he will never forgive murder; that he sometimes pardons sins of infirmity, but that he will never forgive sins of obstinacy; that he pardons idle words, but that he will never forgive

blasphemies: but God's thoughts are that he will *abundantly pardon*; that he will pardon murder as well as hatred; and sins of obstinacy as well as sins of infirmity; provided ye be sincerely willing to renounce them, and seriously endeavour to reform them.

Ye think, consistently with your melancholy system, that God may perhaps pardon the sins of a few days, or of a few months, or of a few years; but that he cannot forgive the sins of ten, or twenty years, or of a whole life: but God thinks that he can *abundantly pardon*; that he can forgive the sins of ten years, or of twenty, or of a whole life, as well as the sins of one day, or of one month, or of one year; if ye be sincerely willing to renounce them, and seriously endeavour to reform them.

Your thoughts are that God pardons the sins of those whom he has not called into church-fellowship, nor distinguished by particular favours: but the thoughts of God are that he will *abundantly pardon*; that he will forgive sins committed under the Mosaic dispensation as well as those that have been committed under the dispensation of nature; those that have been committed under the gospel as well as those that have been committed under the law, or before the law; if ye be sincerely willing to renounce, and seriously endeavour to reform them. It is not I, it is the prophet, it is God himself, by the prophet, who attests these truths: "Seek ye the Lord, while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." For "my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

If ye sincerely *forsake*, and seriously *reform* them. Have ye not been surprised at the frequent repetition of this clause? This clause, however, is the ground of all the promises, that we make to you on God's part.

The chief design of the prophet is to produce obedience to God, and in this we would wish to unite this whole assembly. Deprive the text of this clause, and the rest of the words are not only false and unwarrantable, but contradictory to themselves, and injurious to that God, whose mercy we have been publishing. We have no consolation for a melancholy man, who is resolved to persist in his sins. We have no remedy against despair, when the despairing man refuses to renounce those crimes, the remembrance of which causes all his distress and despair.

Ye slanderers, ye false accusers, ye pests of society, "God will abundantly pardon you." Yea, though ye have been wickedly industrious to poison the purest words, the most harmless actions, the holiest intentions, yet ye ought not to despair of the mercy of God; "for his thoughts are not as your thoughts, nor his ways as your ways." He will forgive all your sins, if ye sincerely forsake, and seriously reform them; if ye do justice to the innocence that ye have attacked, and repair the reputation that ye have damaged.

Ye unjust, ye oppressors, ye extortioners, ye who, as well as your ancestors, have lived on the substance of the wretched, and who are about to transmit an accursed patrimony to your posterity, *God will abundantly pardon you*: yea, though ye have made a sale of justice, negotiated the blood of the miserable, betrayed the state, and sold your country, yet ye ought not to despair of the mercy of God; for "his thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are his ways your ways." All these sins he will forgive, if ye endeavour seriously to amend them; if ye lay aside those equipages, and retrench those sumptuous festivals, which are the fruits of your own, and of your parents' oppressions and extortions.

Ye sick, ye dying people, who cannot think of your momentary life, without thinking of those sins, which ye have been perpetually committing, and in the multitude and magnitude of which your thoughts are lost, "God will abundantly pardon you." Though no other time remains to conciliate your souls to God than the last days of a dying illness, the slight remains of a departing life, yet ye ought not to despair of the mercy of God, for "his thoughts are not as your thoughts, neither are his ways as your ways." He will forgive all your sins, if ye sincerely forsake, and seriously reform them; if ye be animated not only with the fear of death and hell, but with a sincere desire of "returning unto the Lord;" if ye do not make your pastor an accomplice in your sins: if ye do not forbid him the mentioning of some of your sins; if ye do not prevent the removal of that veil, which yet hides a great part of your turpitude from you; in a word, if ye willingly fall in with all the ways of repentance and reparation, that may be opened to you.

I conclude with the clause, that I have so often repeated, and which I repeat again, (and we be to him who forgets it! we be to him who, by his perseverance in sin, renders his compliance impossible!) if ye sincerely forsake, and seriously endeavour to reform and repair them. I give you a subject to meditate for the conclusion of this discourse (a very terrible and alarming conclusion for those who have the madness to "turn the grace of God into lasciviousness,") Jude 4; this subject, which I leave with you to meditate, is, what degree of punishment in hell will be inflicted upon such men as despise the mercy that we have been describing? God grant that ye may never be able to answer this by your own experience!

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## SERMON IX.

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### THE SEVERITY OF GOD.

HEBREWS xii. 29.

*For our God is a consuming fire.*

It is a very deplorable thing, that your preachers can never expatiate on the goodness of God, without having just grounds to fear that ye infer dangerous consequences from their doctrine. That goodness, of which God has made such tender declarations; that goodness,

of which he has given us such astonishing proofs; that goodness, which seems so proper to make us love him above all things; that goodness, through our abuse of it, contributes the most to rivet our infidelity, and to increase our misery. We freely acknowledge, therefore, that with fear and trembling we endeavoured last Lord's day to display its greatness, and, though all our portraits were infinitely beneath the original, though we esteemed it then our happiness, and our glory, not to be able to reach our subject, yet we have been afraid of having said too much. When, to prevent the fatal effects of despair, we assured you, that, though ye had trafficked with the blood of the oppressed, or betrayed the state, or sold your country, yet ye might derive from the ocean of divine mercy a pardon for all these crimes, provided ye were enabled sincerely to repent, and thoroughly to reform them; when we said these things, we revolved in our minds these discouraging thoughts: perhaps some of our hearers may poison our doctrine: perhaps some monster, of which nature produces an example in every age, actually says to himself; I may then, without despairing of my salvation, traffic with the blood of the oppressed, betray the state, sell my country, and, having spent my life in these wicked practices, turn to God on my death-bed. Ye will allow, we hope, that the bare probability of our having occasioned so dangerous a wound, ought to engage us to attempt to heal it, by contrasting to-day the goodness of God with his severity.

The text that we have chosen, is the language of St. Paul, "Our God is a consuming fire;" and, it is worthy of observation, that we have scrupulously imitated the apostle's example in making this subject immediately succeed that which we explained last Lord's day. The gospel of last Lord's day was a passage in Isaiah, "God will abundantly pardon, for his thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are our ways his ways: for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are his ways higher than our ways, and his thoughts than our thoughts," Isa. lv. 7. The gospel of this day is, "Our God is a consuming fire." St. Paul has made a similar arrangement, and him we have imitated. In the verses which precede our text he has described, in a very magnificent manner, the goodness of God in the dispensation of the gospel. He has exalted the condition of a Christian, not only above that of the heathens, who knew the mercy of God only by natural reason, but even above that of the Jews, who knew it by revelation, but from whom it was partly hidden under veils of severity and rigour. "Ye are not come," said he, "unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words, which voice they that heard, entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more. But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of

Abel," ver. 18, &c. But what consequences has the apostle drawn from all these truths? Are they consequences of security and indifference, such as some Christians draw from them; such as some of you, it may be, drew from the prophet's doctrine last Lord's day? No; they are consequences of vigilance and fear: "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh: for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven: for our God is a consuming fire," ver. 25.

"Our God is a consuming fire." These words are metaphorical; they include even a double metaphor. God is here represented under the emblem of fire, agreeably to what the Psalmist says, "Shall thy wrath burn like fire?" Ps. lxxxix. 46. There is no difficulty in this first metaphor. But the second, which represents the conduct of God towards impenitent sinners, as *wrath, vengeance, anger*, is very difficult, and requires a particular explication. In order to which we will attempt three things.

I. We will endeavour to harmonize our text with other parallel passages, and to give you distinct ideas of that which is called in God *wrath, anger, vengeance*, and which occasioned our apostle to say, "God is a consuming fire."

II. We will prove that this attribute agrees to God in the sense that we shall have given.

III. We will endeavour to reconcile the doctrine that we preach to-day, with that which we preached last Lord's day; the justice of God with his goodness; and by this mean to engage you to love and adore God as much when he threatens as when he promises, as much when he presents his justice as when he displays his mercy. This is the whole plan of this discourse.

I. We will endeavour to give you distinct notions of that which the Scripture calls the *wrath, the anger, the vengeance*, of God.

Recollect a remark which we have often made, that is, that when the Scripture speaks of the perfections and operations of God, it borrows images from the affections and actions of men. Things that cannot be known to us by themselves can be understood only by analogy, as it is called, that is, by the resemblance which they bear to other things, with which we are better acquainted. Divine things are of this kind.

From this remark follows a precaution, which is necessary for the avoiding of error whenever we meet with an emblem of this kind descriptive of God in the Holy Scriptures; that is, that we must carefully lay aside every part of the emblem, that agrees only to men from whom it is borrowed, and apply only that part to the Deity which is compatible with the eminence of his perfections.

Sometimes the part that ought to be laid aside is so obvious that it is impossible to mistake it. For example: when the Scripture attributes to God hands, or feet, sorrow, or tears, or jealousy, it is very easy, methinks, to separate from emblems of this sort all that can only agree with the natures of frail, or with the conditions of sinful men.

But sometimes it is not quite so easy. The

difficulty may proceed from several causes, of all which I shall mention but one at present, and to that I entreat your attention. Some men have false notions of grandeur, and none are more likely to entertain such notions than those divines, who have breathed only the air of the study, and trodden only on the dust of the schools. Such divines having never sweetened their manners by a social intercourse with rational people in the world, have often contracted in that way of life a sour morose disposition, and their tempers have tinged their ideas of grandeur and glory. I am greatly inclined to believe that some ideas, which several schoolmen have formed of the liberty and independence of God, have arisen from this disposition. Divines, who have sweetened their manners by associating with rational people in the world, would have attributed to God a noble and magnanimous use of his liberty and independence. They would have said, God is free and independent, then he will always do justly and equitably: then he will require of mankind only that which bears a proportion to the talents that he has given them; then misery will be the consequence of nothing but vice, and felicity will always follow virtue. If the Scriptures sometimes represent God by emblems, which seem opposite to these notions, sensible men would have considered that one part of them ought to have been cautiously separated from the other, because it was incompatible with the eminence of the perfections of God. But these scholastic divines have attributed to God such a conduct as their own savage tempers would have observed, had they been vested with divine power. To each of them the prophet's reproach may be very properly applied, "These things hast thou done, and thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself," Ps. l. 21. They said, God is free, therefore he may appoint men, who have done neither good nor evil, to eternal flames. God is free, therefore he may create men on purpose that they may sin, and that he may display his wrath in their punishment.

II. Here let us stop, and let us keep to the subject in hand, by observing that those emblems of wrath and vengeance, under which God is represented to us, have one part that cannot be attributed to him, because it is not compatible with the eminence of his perfections, and another, that must be applied to him because it is:—

1. It is a consequence of the frailty, or of the depravity of men, that their *anger* inclines them to hate those whom they ought to love, and in whose happiness they ought to interest themselves, as far as they can without violating the laws of equity. Such a hatred cannot be attributed to God; he loves all his intelligent creatures, and when we are told that "the Lord hateth a proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood," Prov. vi. 17; when he is represented as refusing some real blessings to mankind, as "hardening their hearts, as sending them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie," Exod. iv. 21; 2 Thess. ii. 11; all these descriptions mean that he dislikes sin, and all those who commit it; that it

is not always consistent with the eminence of his perfections to work miracles for their conversion: and that it is not fit to reform by a physical power, which would destroy the nature of vice and virtue, men who refuse to be reformed by a moral power, which is suited to intelligent beings.

2. It is a consequence of human frailty or depravity that men's *wrath* makes them taste a barbarous pleasure in tormenting those who are the objects of it, and in feasting, as it were, on their miseries. This is incompatible with the eminence of the perfections of God. When he says to impenitent sinners, "I will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh," Prov. i. 26; when he says, "Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries," Isa. i. 24; when Moses says to the Jews, "It shall come to pass, that as the Lord rejoiced over you to do you good, so the Lord will rejoice over you to destroy you, and to bring you to nought," Deut. xxviii. 63. All the meaning of passages of this kind is, that the wisdom of God approves the judgments that his justice inflicts; that the punishments of sinners cannot affect his happiness; and that when he has not been glorified in their conversion, he will be glorified in their destruction.

3. It is a consequence of the frailty or of the depravity of men, that their *anger* disorders their bodies, and impairs their minds. See the eyes sparkle, the mouth foams, the animal spirits are in a flame; these obscure the faculties of the mind, and prevent the weighing of those reasons that plead for the guilty offender; anger prejudices him, and in spite of many powerful pleas in his favour, his ruin is resolved. All these are incompatible with the eminence of the perfections of God. "God is a spirit," John iv. 24; he is not subject to revolutions of sense; reasons of punishing a sinner never divert his attention from motives of pardoning the man, or of moderating his pain. When, therefore, God is represented as "shaking the earth, and moving the foundations of the hills, because he is wroth;" when we read, "there went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth," Ps. xviii. 7, 8; when he who is called the *Word of God*, is described as treading "the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God," Rev. xix. 13, 15, we understand no more than that God knows how to proportion the punishment to the sin, and that he will inflict the most rigorous penalties on the most atrocious crimes.

4. It is a consequence of the frailty and depravity of men, that their *anger* makes them usurp a right which belongs to God. An individual, who avenges himself, assumes the place of that God who has said, "Vengeance is mine," Rom. xii. 19; at least he assumes the place of the magistrate, to whom God has committed the sword for the preventing of those disorders, which would subvert society, if each were judge in his own cause. This is incompatible with the eminence of the divine perfections. God uses his own right when he punishes sin, agreeably to the doctrine of St. Paul, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine;

I will repay, saith the Lord." What is this *wrath*, to which we are required to *give place*? It is the anger of God. "Avenge not yourselves, but give place unto wrath;" that is, be not hasty in revenging injuries; your self-love may magnify them, and the punishment which ye inflict may exceed the offence; leave vengeance to God, who knows how to weigh the injuries that ye have received in an impartial scale, and to inflict such punishments on the guilty as their crimes deserve.

5. It is a consequence of the frailty and depravity of men, that time does not abate their resentment, and that the only reason which prevents the rendering of evil for evil, is a want of opportunity; as soon as an opportunity offers they eagerly embrace it. This is incompatible with the eminence of the perfections of God; he has at all times the means of punishing the guilty. When we are told, therefore, that he "sets our iniquities before him, our secret sins in the light of his countenance," Ps. xc. 8; when, having reprieved the Israelites at the request of Moses, he told him, "in the day when I visit, I will visit their sin upon them," Exod. xxxii. 34; we only understand, that time never removes an idea from his mind; and that if a sinner do not improve the time, which is granted to him for his repentance, he will be punished when that period expires.

6. In fine, it is a consequence of the frailty and depravity of men, that their *anger* puts them upon considering and punishing a pardonable frailty as an atrocious crime. This is incompatible with the eminence of the divine perfections. If we imagine that God acts so, in any cases, it is because we have false notions of sins, and think that a pardonable frailty which is an atrocious crime. Sometimes an action that appears tolerable to us, is an atrocious crime, on account of the motive from which it proceeds. Such was that of Hezekiah; he showed his treasures to the Babylonian ambassadors, and although this may seem very pardonable, yet it was an atrocious crime, which appears by the following passage: "Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him: for his heart was lifted up; therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem," 2 Chron. xxxii. 25. An action that may appear to us very tolerable, is sometimes a heinous crime, on account of the singularity of the favour which preceded it. Such was the conduct of Lot's wife; she looked back towards Sodom, which although it may seem very pardonable was yet a heinous crime, because she disobeyed the express command of her benefactor, who had just delivered her from the destruction of Sodom; and therefore she was instantly petrified. An action that may seem very tolerable to us, is sometimes a very atrocious crime, on account of the little temptation which the offender had to commit it. Such was the action of that man who "gathered sticks upon the sabbath day," Numb. xv. 32; and although this may seem very tolerable to us yet it was a heinous offence, because it was very easy to abstain from it, and therefore he was stoned. An action that may seem very pardonable to us, may be a heinous crime, on account of the

dignity of the offender. Such was that of Nadab and Abihu; they offered strange fire to the Lord, and although it may appear very pardonable to us yet it was an atrocious crime, for Nadab and Abihu were ministers of holy things, and they ought to have given examples of exact and scrupulous obedience, accordingly they were consumed with fire from heaven, Lev. x. 1, 2.

Thus we have gone through our first article, and have endeavoured to give you distinct ideas of that which the Scripture calls in God, "wrath, anger, consuming fire."

Moreover, in explaining the meaning of the proposition in the text, we have collected several passages, and alleged examples, which prove the truth under our consideration. The explication of this proposition, "our God is a consuming fire," proves its truth in the sense in which we have explained it. We leave the enlargement of this article to your meditation, and proceed to the next.

III. We are to conciliate what the Scripture says of the goodness of God with what it says of his anger or vengeance; the gospel of last Lord's day, with the gospel of this day: and, as the two subjects never appear more irreconcilable than when having used all our endeavours to terrify people who defer their conversion till a dying-illness, we actually take pains to comfort those who have deferred it till that time; we will endeavour to harmonize the goodness and justice of God in that particular point of view.

First, Let us endeavour, in a general view, to reconcile the goodness of God with his justice, by laying down a few principles.

1. To speak properly, there are not several perfections in God; but there is one single excellence, inclusive of every other, that arises from all his perfections, but of which it is not possible that we can either form any complete ideas, or easily express by any name: in general, it may be called order, or love of order. Order, in regard to finite and dependent beings, is that disposition, which induces them to act agreeably to their relations to other intelligent beings; to the faculties which the Creator has given them; to the talents that they have received; and to the circumstances in which they are placed. Order, in regard to God, who is an infinite and an independent Intelligence, is that disposition, which induces him always to act agreeably to the eminence of his perfections.

2. Although God has only a general excellence, yet it is necessary for us to divide it into several particular excellencies, in order to the obtaining of some knowledge of an object, the immensity of which will not allow us to comprehend it at once. We are obliged to use this method in studying finite objects, whenever their sphere extends beyond the comprehension of a single act of the mind: and, if finite objects can be known only by this method, for a much stronger reason we must be allowed to use the same method of obtaining the knowledge of the great and infinite Being.

3. The general excellence of God being thus divided into parts, each part becomes what we call a perfection, or an attribute of God, as vengeance or justice, and goodness:

but each particular attribute will be still mistaken unless we subdivide it again into other, and still more contracted spheres. Thus, when God sends rain and fruitful seasons, we call the blessing simply *bounty*. When he delivers us out of our afflictions, we call it *compassion*. When he pardons our sins, we call it *mercy*. But as all these particular excellencies proceed from that general attribute which we call *goodness*, so that attribute itself proceeds, as well as his justice, from an excellence more general still, which we have denominated order or love of order.

4. Perfections that proceed from the same perfection, or rather, which are the same perfection applied to different subjects, cannot be contrary to each other. Strictly speaking, God is no more just than good, no more good than just. His goodness is restrained by his justice, his justice by his goodness. He delights as much in the exercise of his justice, when order requires it, as in the exercise of his goodness, when order requires him to exercise it: or, to express the same thing more plainly, that which is goodness, when it is applied to one case, would cease to be goodness, were it applied to a different case, because, in the latter, goodness would not be restrained by justice: or, to express myself more plainly still, because order, which allows the exercise of goodness in the first case, does not allow the exercise of it in the last, so that what would be fit, or agreeable to order, in the first case, would be unfit or disorderly in the last.

To conclude. God is as amiable and adorable when he exercises his justice, as when he exercises his goodness. That which makes me adore God, believe his word, hope in his promises, and love him above all things, is the eminence of his perfections. Were not God possessed of such an eminence of his perfections, he would not be a proper object of adoration. I should be in danger of being deceived were I to believe his word, or to trust his promise; and I should be guilty of idolatry, were I to love him with that supreme affection, which is due to none but the Supreme Being. But, the goodness and justice of God being equal emanations of the eminence of his perfections, and of his love of order, I ought equally to adore and love him when he rewards, and when he punishes; when he exercises his justice and when he exercises his goodness: because, in either case, he alike displays that general excellence, that love of order, which is the ground of my love and obedience. I ought to adore and love him, as much when he drowns the world, as when he promises to drown it no more; when he unlocks the gates of hell, as when he opens the doors of heaven; when he says to the impenitent, "Depart, ye cursed, to the devil and his angels," Matt. xxv. 41, as when he says to his elect, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world," Matt. xxv. 34.

The justice and the goodness of God, then, are in perfect harmony; the gospel of last Lord's day, and the gospel of this day, entirely agree; the prophet and the apostle preach the same doctrine, and the two texts rightly understood, "God is a consuming fire: The Lord will



abundantly pardon:" both these texts, I say, present the same object to us, the eminence of the divine perfections, God's love of order. This is what we proposed to prove.

Let us now apply this general harmony of the goodness and severity of God, to the removing of a seeming inconsistency in the conduct of your preachers and casuists, who first use every effort to allay and terrify your minds with the idea of a death-bed repentance, and afterwards take equal pains to comfort you, when ye have deferred your repentance to that time, and when your case appears desperate.

Why do we not despair of a man who delays his conversion till the approach of death? Why did we tell you last Lord's day, that God pardons not only the sins of months and years, but of a whole life? Because that order which constitutes the eminence of the divine perfections, does not allow that a sincere conversion, a conversion that reforms the sin, and renews the sinner should be rejected by God. Now we cannot absolutely deny the possibility of a sincere death-bed conversion for the following reasons:—

1. Because it is not absolutely impossible that a violent fit of sickness, or an apprehension of death, should make deeper impressions on the mind, than either sermons, or exhortations, or books of devotion, could ever produce. This reflection is the more solid, because the phrase, an *unconverted* man, is extremely equivocal. We call him an *unconverted* man, who profanely rushes into all sorts of sins, and who never made, one sacrifice to order; and we also, with great reason, call him an *unconverted* man, who has renounced all sins except one. Now the idea of death may finish, in the souls of people of the latter sort, a work which they had indeed neglected, but which, however, was actually begun.

2. Because we are neither so fully acquainted with other people's hearts, nor indeed with our own, as to determine whether sin have so entirely depraved all the faculties of the soul, that it is past remedy; or, whether it have arrived at that precise degree of corruption, to which the eminence of the divine perfections does not allow a display of that efficacy, which is promised to those who desire the grace of conversion.

3. Because we find, in the holy Scriptures, that some have obtained mercy, after they had committed the very crimes, the remembrance of which, we have said, ought not to drive any to despair. We meet with at least one example, which affords a probability (I do not say a demonstration,) that the eminence of the divine perfections does not always require, that a man, who has spent his life in robberies, should be excluded from the mercy of God. We find there a thief who was condemned to be crucified, and who said to the companion of his iniquities and miseries, "we receive the due rewards of our deeds," Luke xxiii. 41; but who, notwithstanding all the misery of his case, applied to Jesus Christ, and, from his adorable mouth, received this comfortable promise, "Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise," Luke xxiii. 43.

4. Because we still see people, who, having lived thirty, yea, fifty years in sin, have been converted in a time of sickness, and who, being restored to health, give full proof of the reality of their conversion. Such examples, I own, are rare, and almost unheard of, yet we could, perhaps, mention two or three, out of twenty thousand sick people, whom we have visited, or of whom we have heard, in the course of our ministry. Now the examples of two or three, who have been converted on a sick-bed, out of twenty thousand who have died without conversion, are sufficient to prevent our saying to one dying man, who should have put off his repentance to the last hour, that it is impossible for him to be converted.

5. Because God works miracles in religion as well as in nature, and because no man has a sufficient knowledge of the nature of God's perfections to enable him to affirm that a miracle cannot, or ought not to be wrought in behalf of such a sinner.

6. Because we cannot find, that your pastors have any authority from their Bibles to say to a penitent sinner, at any time, there is no more hope for thee; thou hast exhausted the mercy of God; thou art gotten to that period, in which we have no other morality to preach than this, "he that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still," Rev. xxii. 11. On the contrary, all the directions in the holy Scriptures, that relate to the exercise of our ministry, engage us to pray for a sinner, as long as he has a spark of life; to endeavour to convince him as long as he is capable of reasoning; and, till he is past feeling the force of motives to conversion, to do every thing, that is in our power, to convert him. But does not all this conduct suppose that which we have been endeavouring to prove? That is, that to what degree soever a sinner have carried his sin, how long soever he may have lived in it, there will always be a sufficiency of pardon, where there is a certainty of conversion; agreeably to the gospel that we preached to you on the last Lord's day, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him: and to our God for he will abundantly pardon." For my thoughts of grace and mercy must not be measured by the ideas of the finest reasoning powers; much less by those of a gloomy desponding mind. "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord: For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." This was the gospel of last Lord's day.

The gospel of this day is, "our God is a consuming fire." But these two gospels entirely agree, and our endeavours to comfort you, after ye have deferred your conversion to a death-bed, are not inconsistent with our endeavours to terrify and alarm you, when we perceive that ye obstinately determine to defer your repentance to that time. Moreover, the same reasons which prevail with us to comfort

you in that sad period, prevail with us to give you a salutary alarm before the fatal moment comes.

It is true, *God's thoughts are not our thoughts*; and it is possible that the approach of death may make deeper impressions on you, than either sermons or pious books have made; but yet "our God is a consuming fire." What a time is a dying illness for the receiving of such impressions! I omit those sudden and unexpected deaths, of which we have so many yearly, or rather daily, examples. I omit the sudden deaths of those, who, while we were conversing and transacting business with them, were seized with violent pains, turned pale, and died, and were instantly stretched on a bier. I pass those, who went to bed healthy and well, who quietly fell asleep, and whom we have found in the morning dead and cold. All these melancholy examples we omit, for one would imagine, considering your conduct, and hearing your conversation, that each of you had received a revelation to assure him of an exemption from sudden death. But what a time is a dying illness for renovation and conversion! Would not one suppose, that those, who hope to be converted then, have always lived among immortals, and have neither heard of death, nor seen a person die? Ah! What obstacles! What a world of obstacles oppose such extravagant hopes, and justify the efforts of those who endeavour to destroy them!—Here is business that must be settled; a will which must be made; a number of articles that must be discussed; there are friends, who must be embraced; relations, that must be dissolved; children, who must be torn away; the soul must be written, and rent, and riven asunder with sighs and adieus. Here, arise frightful ideas of death, which have never entered the mind but amidst numberless hurries of necessary business, or countless objects of deceitful pleasures; ideas of a death, that has been always considered at a distance, though so many voices have announced its approach; but the approach of which now astonishes, benumbs, and renders motionless. There, the illness increases, pains multiply, agonies convulse, the whole soul, full of intolerable sensations, loses the power of seeing and hearing, thinking and reflecting. Here are medicines more intolerable than the malady, operations more violent than the agonies which they are designed to allay. There, conscience, for the first time, enlightened, awakened, and alarmed, rolls in tides of remorse; the terrible remembrance of a life spent in sin; an army of irrefragable witnesses, from all parts arising, prove the guilt, and denounce a sentence of death on the departing soul. See now, whether this first reflection, which authorizes our endeavours to comfort and invigorate your souls, when ye have deferred your conversion to your last hour, be inconsistent with those which we use to terrify and alarm you, when ye obstinately put off your repentance to that time.

It is true, "God's thoughts are not our thoughts," and we have neither a sufficient knowledge of other people's hearts, nor of our own, to affirm with certainty when their faculties are entirely contaminated: but yet, "our

God is a consuming fire." We know men, to whom the truth is become unintelligible, in consequence of the disguise in which they have taken the pains to clothe it; and who have accustomed themselves to palliate vice, till they are become incapable of perceiving its turpitude.

"God's thoughts are not our thoughts," it is true; and we have seen some examples of people, who have proved, since their recovery that they were truly converted in sickness, and on whose account we presume that others may possibly be converted by the same means: but yet "our God is a consuming fire." How rare are these examples! Does this require proof? Must we demonstrate it? Ye are our proofs: ye, yourselves, are our demonstrations. Who of you, (I speak of those who are of mature age) Who of you has not been sick, and thought himself in danger of death? Who has not made resolutions in that distressing hour, and promised God to reform? The law of these exercises forbids certain details, and prohibits the naming of my hearers: but I appeal to your consciences, and, if your consciences be asleep, I appeal to the immortal God. How many of you have deposited your resolutions with us, and have solemnly engaged to renounce the world with all its sinful maxims? How many of you have imposed upon us by appearances of conversion, and have imposed upon yourselves too? How many of you should we have alleged as new examples of death-bed conversions if God had not granted you a recovery? Are ye converted indeed? Have ye renounced the world and its maxims? Ah! were we to judge by the conduct of those who have recovered, of the state of those who are dead . . . . My brethren, I dare not examine the matter, but I leave it to your meditation.

It is true, "God's thoughts are not our thoughts;" and God works miracles in religion as well as in nature: but yet, "our God is a consuming fire." Who can assure himself, that having abused common grace, he shall obtain extraordinary assistances?

It is true, "God's thoughts are not our thoughts;" and there is nothing in the holy Scriptures, which empowers us to shut the gates of heaven against a dying penitent; we have no authority to tell you, that there is no more hope for you, but that ye are lost without remedy: But yet, "our God is a consuming fire." There are hundreds of passages in our Bibles, which authorize us—what am I saying? there are hundreds of passages that command us, under the penalty of suffering all the punishments that belong to the crime, not to conceal any thing from the criminal: there are hundreds of passages which empower and enjoin us to warn you; you, who are fifty years of age; you who are sixty; you who are fourscore: that still to put off the work of your conversion, is a madness, an excess of inflexibility and indolence, which all the flames of hell can never expiate.

To conclude. This is an article, of which we, your pastors, hope to give a good account to God, however unworthy we are of his approbation. How often have we represented the danger of your procrastinations? Ye walls

of this church! were ye capable of giving evidence, we would take you to witness. But we appeal to you, ye sermons, that have been preached in this assembly! ye shall be recollected in that great day, in which each of our hearers shall give an account of the use that he has made of you. Ye consciences, that have heard our directions! ye shall bear witness. Ye gainsayers! ye yourselves shall bear witness, ye who, by reversing those ideas which the gospel gives us of the mercy of God, have so often pretended to obscure those which we have endeavoured to give of his justice and vengeance: "We are pure from your blood, we have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God," Acts xx. 26, 27. When we stand at his tribunal, and, under a sense of the weakness with which our ministry was accompanied, say to him, "Enter not into judgment with thy servants, O Lord!" Ps. cxliii. 2. Each of us will venture to add, with a view to the importunity that had been used to prevail with you to improve your precious moments, "I have preached righteousness in the great congregation; lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest. Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O Lord," Ps. xl. 9. 11. "I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain; yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God," Isa. xlix. 4.

O! may God animate us with more noble motives! God grant, not that the eternal misery of our hearers may be the apology of our ministry, Phil. iv. 1; but that ye may be our "joy and crown in the day of Christ!" Amen. chap. 1. 10.

## SERMON X.

### THE PATIENCE OF GOD WITH WICKED NATIONS.

GENESIS XV. 16.

*The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.*

It is a shocking disposition of mind, which Solomon describes in that well-known passage in Ecclesiastes: "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily; therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil," chap. viii. 11. It seems, at first sight, as if the Wise Man had rather exceeded in his portrait of the human heart; or that, if there were any originals, they could only be a few monsters, from whose souls were eradicated all the seeds of religion and piety, as well as every degree of reason and humanity. God is patient towards all who offend him; then, let us offend him without remorse, let us try the utmost extent of his patience. God lifts over our heads a mighty hand, armed with lightnings and thunderbolts, but this hand is usually suspended awhile before it strikes; then let us dare it while it delays, and till it move to crush us to pieces, let us not respect it. What a disposition! What a shocking disposition of mind, is this, my brethren!

But let us rend the veils with which we conceal ourselves from ourselves; let us penetrate

those secret recesses of our consciences, into which we never enter but when we are forced; let us go to the bottom of a heart naturally "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," and we shall find that this disposition of mind which at first sight inspires us with horror, is the disposition; of whom? Of the greatest part of this assembly, my brethren. Could we persist in sin without the patience of God? dare we live in that shameful security, with which the ministers of the living God so justly reproach us, if God had authorized them to cry in our streets, "Yet forty days, yet forty days?" Jonah iii. Had we seen Ananias and Sapphira fall at St. Peter's feet, as soon as they "kept back part of the price of their possession," Acts v. i. 2; in a word, could we have the madness to add sin to sin, if we were really convinced, that God entertained the formidable design of bearing with us no longer, but of precipitating us into the gulfs of hell on the very first act of rebellion? Why then do we rebel every day? It is for the reason alleged by the Wise Man: it is because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily: "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily; therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil."

I intend to-day, my brethren, to endeavour to dissipate the dark clouds, with which your security obscures the designs of a patient God, who has been patient towards you, "long-suffering towards all," 2 Pet. iii. 9; and who is exercising his patience towards you this day. But who can tell how much longer he intends to bear with you? Let us enter into the matter. I design to consider our text principally with a view to "the riches of the forbearance, and long-suffering of God," Rom. ii. 4; for it treats of a mystery of justice which interests all mankind. God bears with the most wicked nations a long while; and, having borne a long while with the rebellion of ancestors, bears also a long while with that of their descendants; but, at length, collecting the rebellion of both into one point of vengeance, he punishes a people who have abused his patience, and proportions his punishment to the length of time which had been granted to avert them.

All these solemn truths are included in the sententious words of the text: "the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." I hasten to explain them in order to employ the most of the precious moments of attention, with which ye deign to favour me, in deriving such practical instructions from them as they afford. Promote our design, my dear brethren. Let not the forbearance, which the love of God now affords you, "set your hearts fully to do evil." And thou, O almighty and long-suffering God! whose treasures of forbearance perhaps this nation may have already exhausted! O thou just avenger of sin! who perhaps mayest be about to punish our crimes, now ripe for vengeance, O suspend its execution till we make some profound reflections on the objects before us! O let the ardent prayers of our Abrahams, and of our Lots, prevail with thee to lengthen the forbearance which thou hast already exercised towards this church, these provinces, and every sinner in this assembly! Amen.

"The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." These words were addressed to Abraham by God himself. He had just before given him a victory over five kings, and had promised him blessings more glorious than all those which he had received before. He had said to him, "Fear not, I am thy shield, and thine exceeding great reward," Gen. xv. 1, 2, 4, 5, 13. But the patriarch thought that these great promises could not be accomplished, because he had no posterity, and was far advanced in age. God relieves him from this fear, by promising him not only a son, but a posterity, which should equal the stars of heaven in number, and should possess a country as extensive as their wants: but at the same time he told him, that, before the accomplishment of these promises, his seed should be either strangers in the land of Canaan, the conquest of which should be reserved for them, or subject to the Egyptians for the space of four hundred years: that, at the expiration of that period, they should quit their slavery, laden with the spoils of Egypt: that, "in the fourth generation," they should return into the land of Canaan, where Abraham dwelt, when the Lord addressed these words to him; that then they should conquer the country, and should be the ministers of God's vengeance on the Canaanites, whose abominations even now deserved severe punishments, but which God would at present defer, because the wretched people had not yet filled up the measure of their crimes.

This is a general view of our text in connexion with the context. "Know of a surety, that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them, and they shall afflict them four hundred years. And also that nation whom they shall serve, will I judge; and afterward shall they come out with great substance. And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again; for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full."

If ye would understand these words more particularly, attend to a few remarks, which we shall only mention in brief, because a discussion of them would divert our attention too far from the principal design of this discourse.\*

We include in the "four hundred years," mentioned in the context, the time that the Israelites dwelt in Canaan from the birth of Isaac, and the time which they dwelt in Egypt from the promotion of Joseph. Indeed, strictly speaking, these two periods contain *four hundred and five years*. But every body knows that authors, both sacred and profane, to avoid factions, sometimes add and sometimes diminish, in their calculations. In the twelfth chapter of Exodus, ver. 40, Moses says, "The children of Israel dwelt in Egypt four hundred and thirty years;" but it is beyond a doubt, that he uses a concise way of speaking in this passage, and that the Seventy had reason for paraphrasing the words thus: "The sojourning of the children of Israel, in the land of Canaan, and in the land of Egypt was four hundred and thirty years." If the reasonableness of this paraphrase be allowed, there will still remain a difference of

thirty years between the time fixed in Genesis by the Lord for the conquest of Canaan, and the time mentioned by Moses in Exodus, but it is easy to reconcile this seeming difference, for the calculation in Genesis begins at the birth of Isaac, but the other commences at Abraham's arrival in Canaan. The reckoning is exact, for Abraham dwelt twenty-five years in Canaan before Isaac was born, and there were four hundred and five years from the birth of Isaac to the departure out of Egypt. This is the meaning of the passage quoted from Exodus, and, as it perfectly agrees with our context, we shall conclude that this first article is sufficiently explained.

Our second regards the meaning of the word *generation*, which is mentioned in the context. This term is equivocal: sometimes it signifies the whole age of each person in a succession; and in this sense the evangelist says, that "from Abraham to David are fourteen generations," Matt. i. 17. Sometimes it is put for the whole duration of a living multitude; and in this sense Jesus Christ uses it, when he says that *this generation*, that is, all his cotemporaries, *shall not pass away*, till his prophecies concerning them were fulfilled. Sometimes it signifies a period of ten years; and in this sense it is used in the book of Baruch, ch. vi. 2; the captivity in Babylon which continued we know, seventy years, is there said to remain *seven generations*.

We understand the word now in the first sense, and we mean that from the arrival of the Israelites in Egypt, to the time of their migration, there were four successions: the first was the *generation of Kohath*, the son of Levi: the second of *Amram*, the son of Kohath; the third was that of *Moses and Aaron*; and the fourth was that of *the children of Moses and Aaron*, Ex. vi. 16. 18. 20, &c.

Our third observation relates to the word *Amorites* in our text. "The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." The word *Amorites* has two significations in Scripture; a particular and a general meaning. It has a particular meaning, when it denotes the descendants of Hamor, the fourth son of Canaan, who first inhabited a mountainous country westward of the Dead Sea, and afterward spread themselves eastward of that sea, between the rivers Jabbok, and Arnon, having dispossessed the Amorites and Moabites. Sihon and Og, two of their kings, were defeated by Moses, Gen. x. 16; and Josh. xii. 23.

But the word *Amorites* is sometimes used in a more general sense, and denotes all the inhabitants of Canaan. To cite many proofs would divert our attention too far from our principal design, let it suffice therefore to observe, that we take the word in our text in this general meaning.

But what crimes does the Spirit of God include in the word *iniquity*? "The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." Here, my brethren, a detail would be horrid, for so great were the excesses of these people, that we should in some sense partake of their crimes, by attempting to give an exact list of them. So excessive was the idolatry of the Canaanites, that they rendered the honours of supreme adoration not only to the most mean, but even

\* This whole subject is treated at large in Mons. Saurin's xvth Dissertation on the Bible. Tom. Prem.

to the most impure and infamous creatures. Their inhumanity was so excessive that they sacrificed their own children to their gods. And so monstrous was their subversion, not only of the laws of nature but even of the common irregularities of human nature, that a vice, which must not be named, was openly practised; and, in short, so scandalous was the depravation of religion and good manners, that Moses, after he had given the Israelites laws against the most gross idolatry, against incest, against bestiality, against that other crime, which our dismal circumstances oblige us to mention, in spite of so many reasons for avoiding it; Moses, I say, after having forbidden all these excesses to the Israelites, positively declares that the Canaanites were guilty of them all; that the earth was weary of such execrable monsters; and that for these crimes, God had sent the Israelites to destroy them. "Defile not yourselves," says he in the book of Leviticus, xviii. 24, 25, (after an enumeration of the most shameful vices that can be imagined,) "Defile not yourselves in any of these things, for in all these, the nations are defiled which I cast out before you. Therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants," ver. 30. And again in the twelfth chapter of Deuteronomy, "Take heed to thyself, that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee, and that thou inquire not . . . saying, How did these nations . . . even so will I do likewise." Such were the iniquities that God forbore to punish for many ages, and at last punished with a severity, in appearance, contrary to his equity; but there is nothing astonishing in it to those who consult the forementioned maxim, that is, that it is equitable in God to proportion the punishments of guilty nations to the time granted for their repentance.

We observe lastly, that though God in his infinite mercy had determined to bear *four hundred years* longer with nations, unworthy of his patience, there was one sin excepted from this general goodness, there was one of their iniquities that drew down the most formidable preternatural punishments upon those who committed it, and forced divine justice to anticipate by a swift vengeance a punishment, which, in other cases, was deferred for four whole ages. St. Paul paints this iniquity in the most odious colours in the first of Romans, and it was constantly punished with death by the Jews. Read with a holy fear the nineteenth chapter of Genesis. The inhabitants of the cities of the plain were possessed with a more than brutal madness. Two angels in human forms are sent to deliver Lot from the judgments which are about to destroy them. The amiable borrowed forms of these intelligences strike the eyes of the inhabitants of Sodom, and excite their abominable propensities to sin. A crowd of people, young and old, instantly surround the house of Lot, in order to seize the celestial messengers, and to offer violence to them, and though they are stricken blind they persist in feeling for doors which they cannot see. Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboim, being inhabited by none but people of this abominable kind, are all given up

to the vengeance due to their crimes. "The Lord raineth fire and brimstone from the Lord," Gen. xix. 24. The brimstone enkindled penetrates so far into the veins of bitumen, and other inflammable bodies of which the ground is full, that it forms a lake, denominated in Scripture the *Dead Sea*; and, to use the words of an apocryphal writer, "the waste land that smoketh, and plants bearing fruit that never come to ripeness, are even to this day a testimony of the wickedness of the five cities." Wis. x. 7. In vain had Lot "vexed his righteous soul from day to day;" 2 Pet. ii. 8. In vain had Abraham availed himself of all the interest that piety gave him in the compassion of a merciful God; in vain had the abundance of his fervent benevolence said, "Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but dust and ashes: Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city; peradventure forty; peradventure twenty; peradventure ten," Gen. xviii. 27, 23, &c. The decree of divine vengeance must be executed. "Be wise now therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth," Ps. ii. 10. God grant that ye may never know any thing more of these terrible executions than what ye learn from the history just now related!

I return to my subject, except to that part of it last mentioned, the sin of the cities of the plain. The iniquities of the Canaanites were suffered for more than four hundred years; so long would God defer the destruction of the Amorites by Israel, because till then their iniquity would not have attained its height. And why would he defer the destruction of these miserable people till their iniquities should have attained their height? This, as we said in the beginning, is the subject upon which we are going to fix your attention. God exercises his patience long towards the most wicked people; having borne with the rebellion of ancestors, he bears with the rebellion of their posterity, and whole ages pass without visible punishment; but, at length, collecting the rebellions of parents and children into one point of vengeance, he poureth out his indignation on whole nations that have abused his patience; and, as I advanced before, and think it necessary to repeat again, he proportioneth his vindictive visitations to the length of time that had been granted to avert them. "I will judge that nation whom thy descendants shall serve, but it shall be in the fourth generation, because the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full."

The remaining time with which ye condescend yet to favour me, I shall employ in considering,

I. The nature of this economy.

II. The goodness and justice which characterize it.

III. The terrors that accompany it.

IV. The relation which it bears to our own dismal circumstances.

Let us consider, I. The nature of this economy. Recollect an observation that has been made by most of those who have laid down rules to assist us in reasoning justly. That is, that we are sometimes to consider a nation in a moral light, as a person, consisting of a body, a soul, and a duration of life. All the people

who compose this nation are considered as one body: the maxims which direct its conduct in peace or in war, in commerce or in religion, constitute what we call the spirit, or soul of this body. The ages of its continuance are considered as the duration of its life. This parallel might be easily enlarged.

Upon this principle, we attribute to those who compose a nation now, what, properly speaking, agrees only with those who formerly composed it. Thus we say that the same nation was delivered from bondage in Egypt in the reign of Pharaoh, which was delivered from slavery in Babylon in the reign of Cyrus. In the same sense, Jesus Christ tells the Jews of his time, "Moses gave you not that bread from heaven," John vi. 32; not that the same persons who had been delivered from Egypt were delivered from Babylon; nor that the Jews to whom Moses had given manna in the desert were the same to whom Jesus Christ gave bread from heaven; but because the Jews who lived under the reign of Cyrus, and those who lived in the time of Pharaoh, those who lived in the time of Moses, and those who lived in the time of Jesus Christ, were considered as different parts of that moral body, called the Jewish nation.

On this principle (and this has a direct view to our subject) we attribute to this whole body, not only those physical, but even those moral actions, which belong only to one part of it. We ascribe the praise, or the blame of an action to a nation, though those who performed it have been dead many ages. We say that the Romans, who had courage to oppose even the shadow of tyranny under their consuls, had the meanness to adore tyrants under their emperors. And what is still more remarkable, we consider that part of a nation which continues, responsible for the crimes of that which subsists no more.

A passage in the gospel of St. Luke will clearly illustrate our meaning. "Wo unto you: for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them; and ye say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Truly ye bear witness, that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres. Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute: that the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; from the blood of Abel, unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation," Luke xi. 47; Matt. xxiii. 30.

We will not inquire now what Zacharias is here spoken of. Interpreters are not agreed. Some say it is the same person who is spoken of in the second book of Chronicles, who was extraordinarily raised up to stem that torrent of corruption with which the Jews were carried away after the death of the high priest Jehoiada, 2 Chron. xxiv. 20, 21. He succeeded his father Jehoiada in his zeal, and fell a victim for it, for he was stoned to death in the

porch of the temple, by those whom he endeavoured to reform. Others say that it is a Zacharias, mentioned by the historian Josephus,\* whose virtue rendered him formidable to those madmen, who are known by the name of *zealots*; they charged him unjustly with the most shocking crimes, and put him to death as if he had actually committed them. A third opinion is, that it is he whom we call one of the lesser prophets. But not to detain you on this subject, which perhaps may not be easily determined, we may observe in our Saviour's words, the manner of considering a nation as a moral person, who is responsible at one time for crimes committed at another, who has been borne with, but has abused that forbearance, and, at length, is punished both for committing the crimes, and for abusing the forbearance that had been granted. "Verily I say unto you, upon you shall come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel, unto the blood of Zacharias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar."

The Amorites in my text must be considered, in like manner, as a moral person, whose life God had resolved, when he spoke to Abraham, to prolong four hundred years; who, during that four hundred years, would abuse his patience; and at last would be punished for all the crimes which should be committed in that long period. "And that nation whom they shall serve will I judge: but in the fourth generation they shall come hither again; for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." This is the nature of this economy of Providence. We shall see, in a second article, the perfections of God which shine in it; and, in particular, that goodness, and that justice, which eminently characterize all his actions.

II. It is extremely easy to distinguish the goodness of this economy, and, as we are under a necessity of abridging our subject, we may safely leave this article to your own meditation. To exercise patience four hundred years towards a people who worshipped the most infamous creatures; a people who sacrificed human victims; a people abandoned to the most enormous crimes; to defer the extinction of such a people for four hundred years, could only proceed from the goodness of that God, who "is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance," 2 Pet. iii. 9.

It is more difficult to discover the justice of God in this economy. What! the Jews, who lived in the time of Jesus Christ, could they be justly punished for murders committed so many ages before their birth? What! Could they be responsible for the blood of the prophets, in which their hands had never been imbrued? What! Could God demand an account of all this blood of them? How! The Canaanites of Joshua's time, ought they to be punished for all the abominations of four hundred years? What! Ought we to terrify you to-day, not only with your own sins, but with all those that have been committed in your provinces from the moment of their first settlement?

\* Bell. Jud. iv. 19.

I answer, If that part of a nation which subsists in one period has no union of time with that which subsisted in another period, it may have a union of another kind, it may have even four different unions, any one of which is sufficient to justify Providence: there is a union of *interest*; a union of *approbation*; a union of *emulation*; and (if ye will allow the expression) a union of *accumulation*. A union of *interest*, if it avail itself of the crimes of its predecessors; a union of *approbation*, if it applaud the shameful causes of its prosperity; a union of *emulation*, if it follow such examples as ought to be detested; a union of *accumulation*, if, instead of making amends for these faults, it rewards the depravity of those who commit them. In all these cases, God inviolably maintains the laws of his justice; when he unites in one point of vengeance the crimes which a nation is committing now, with those which were committed many ages before, and pours out those judgments on the part that remains, which that had deserved who had lived many ages ago. Yes, if men peaceably enjoy the usurpations of their ancestors, they are usurpers, as their predecessors were, and the justice of God may make these responsible for the usurpations of those. Thus it was with the Jews, who lived in the time of Jesus Christ: thus it was with the Amorites who lived four hundred years after those of whom God spake to Abraham: and thus we must expect it to be with us, for we also shall deserve the punishments due to our ancestors, if we have any one of the unions with them which has been mentioned. Your meditation will supply what is wanting to this article.

It sometimes falls out in this economy, that the innocent suffer while the guilty escape: but neither this, nor any other inconvenience that may attend this economy, is to be compared with the advantages of it. The obligation of a citizen to submit to the decision of an ignorant, or a corrupt judge, is an inconvenience in society: however, this inconvenience ought not to free other men from submitting to decisions at law; because the benefits that society derive from a judicial mode of decision, will exceed, beyond all comparison, the evils that may attend the perversion of justice in a very few cases. Society would be in continual confusion, were the members of it allowed sometimes to resist the decisions of their lawful judges. Private disputes would never end; public quarrels would be eternal; and administration of justice would be futile and useless.

Beside, Providence has numberless ways of remedying the inconveniences of this just economy, and of indemnifying all those innocent persons who may be involved in punishments due to the guilty. If, when God sends fruitful seasons to a nation to reward their good use of the fruits of the earth, an individual destitute of virtue, reap the benefit of those who are virtuous, an infinitely wise Providence can find ways to poison all his pleasures, and to prevent his enjoyment of the prosperity of the just. If an innocent person be involved in a national calamity, an infinitely wise Providence knows how to indemnify him for all that he may sacrifice to that jus-

tice, which requires that a notoriously wicked nation should become a notorious example of God's abhorrence of wickedness.

Having established these principles, let us apply them to the words of Jesus Christ, which were just now quoted, and to the text.

The Jewish nation, considered in the just light of a moral person, was guilty of an innumerable multitude of the most atrocious crimes. It had not only not profited by the earnest exhortations of those extraordinary men, whom heaven had raised up to rectify its mistakes, and to reform its morals; but it had risen up against them as enemies of society, who came to trouble the peace of mankind. When they had the courage faithfully to reprove the excesses of its princes, they were accused of opposing the regal authority itself; when they ventured to attack errors, that were in credit with the ministers of religion, they were taxed with resisting religion itself; and, under these pretences they were frequently put to death. Witness the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah, the apostle St. James, and Jesus Christ himself.

God had often exhorted that nation to repent, and had urged the most tender and the most terrible motives to repentance: one while he loaded it with benefits, another while he threatened it with punishments. Sometimes he supported the authority of his messages by national judgments; sermons were legible by lightning, and thunder procured attention; doctrines were reiterated by pestilence and famine, and exhortations were re-echoed by banishment and war. All these means had been ineffectual; if they had produced any alteration, it had been only an apparent or a momentary change which had vanished with the violent means that produced it. The Jewish nation were always the same; always a stiff-necked nation; always inimical to truth, and infatuated with falsehood; always averse to reproof, and athirst for the blood of its prophets. What the Jews were in the times of the prophets, that they were in the times of Jesus Christ, and his apostles; they were full as barbarous to Jesus Christ as to Zacharias the son of Barachiah.

A time must come in which divine justice ought to prevent the fatal consequences of a longer forbearance; a time in which the whole world must be convinced that God's toleration of sinners is no approbation of sin; a time when general vengeance must justify Providence, by rendering to all the due reward of their deeds. Such a time was at hand when Jesus Christ spoke to the Jews; and, foreseeing the miseries that would overwhelm Judea, he told them that God would require an account, not only of the blood of all the prophets which they had spilt, but of all the murders that had been committed on the earth from the death of Abel to the slaughter of Zacharias.

Thus it was with the Amorites: and thus it will be with your provinces, if ye avail yourselves of the crimes of your predecessors, if ye extenuate the guilt; if ye imitate the practice, if ye fill up the measure of their iniquities; then divine justice, collecting into one point of vengeance all the crimes of the nation, will inflict punishments proportional to the time

that was granted to avert them. Thus we have sufficiently proved the justice of this economy.

III. Let us remark the terrors that accompany this dispensation. But where can we find expressions sufficiently sad, or images sufficiently shocking and gloomy to describe those terrible times? The soul of Moses dissolved in considering them; "by thy wrath we are troubled; thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance," Ps. xc. 7, 8. Every thing that assuages the anger of the Judge of the world is useless here. The exercise of prayer, that exercise which sinners have sometimes used with success to the suspending of the anger of God, to the holding of his avenging arm, and to the disarming him of his vindictive rod, that exercise has lost all its efficacy and power; God "covereth himself with a cloud that prayer cannot pass through," Lam. iii. 44. The intercession of venerable men, who have sometimes stood in the breach, and turned away his wrath, cannot be admitted now; "though Moses and Samuel stood before God, yet his mind could not be toward this people," Jer. xv. 1. Those sanctuaries which have been consecrated to divine worship, and which have so often afforded refuges in times of danger, have lost their noble privilege, and are themselves involved in the direful calamity; "The Lord casteth off his altar, abhorreth his sanctuary, giveth up into the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces, and they make a noise in the house of the Lord as in the day of a solemn feast," Lam. ii. 8. The cries of children which have sometimes melted down the hearts of the most inflexible enemies, those cries cannot now excite the mercy of God, the innocent creatures themselves fall victims to his displeasure; "the sucklings swoon in the streets of the city, they say to their mothers, Where is corn and wine? The hands of pitiful women seethe their own children, they are their meat in the destruction of the daughter of my people," Lam. ii. 12; iv. 10. The treasures of grace, which have been so often opened to sinners, and from which they have derived converting power, in order to free them from the executions of justice, these treasures are now quite exhausted; God says, I will command the clouds that they rain no rain upon my vineyard: Go, make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and convert, and be healed," Isa. v. 6; vi. 9, 10. O God! thou consuming fire! O God, "to whom vengeance belongeth, how fearful a thing is it to fall into thy hands!" Deut. iv. 14; Ps. xciv. 1. How dreadful are thy footsteps, when, in the cool fierceness of thine indignation, thou comest to fall upon a sinner! "The blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, shall be required of this generation; from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zacharias; verily I say unto you, it shall be required of this generation."

IV. To conclude. We have proved that there is a fatal period, in which God will unite the sins of a nation in one point of vengeance,

and will proportion the punishments, which he used to exterminate them, to the length of time that he had granted for preventing them. And from this principle, which will be the ground of our exhortations in the close of this discourse, I infer, that as there is a particular repentance imposed on every member of society, so there is a national repentance, which regards all who compose a nation. The repentance of an individual does not consist in merely asking pardon for his sins, and in endeavouring to correct the bad habits that he had formed; but it requires also, that the sinner should go back to his first years, remember, as far as he can, the sins that defiled his youth, lament every period of his existence, which, having been signalized by some divine favour, was also signalized by some marks of ingratitude; it requires him to say, under a sorrowful sense of having offended a kind and tender God, "I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. O Lord, remember not the sins of my youth. Wilt thou break a leaf driven to and fro? Wilt thou pursue the dry stubble? Thou makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth!" Ps. li. 5; Job xiii. 25, 26. In like manner, the repentance of a nation does not consist in a bare attention to present disorders, and to the luxury that now cries to the Judge of the world for vengeance; but it requires us to go back to the times of our ancestors, and to examine whether we be now enjoying the wages of their unrighteousness, and whether, while we flatter ourselves with the opinion, that we have not committed their vices, we be not now relishing productions of them. Without this we shall be responsible for the very vices which they committed, though time had almost blotted out the remembrance of them; and the justice of God threatened to involve us in the same punishments: "The blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, shall be required of this generation: from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zacharias: verily I say unto you, it shall be required of this generation."

Dreadful thought! my brethren. A thought that may very justly disturb that shameful security, into which our nation is sunk. I tremble, when I think of some disorders which my eyes have seen during the course of my ministry among you. I do not mean the sins of individuals, which would fill a long and a very mortifying list: I mean public sins, committed in the face of the sun; maxims, received in a manner, by church and state, and which loudly cry to heaven for vengeance against this republic. In these degenerate times, I have seen immorality and infidelity authorized by a connivance at scandalous books, which are intended to destroy the distinctions of vice and virtue, and to make the difference between just and unjust appear a mere chimera. In these degenerate days, I have seen the oppressed church cry in vain for succour for her children, while the reformation of the church was sacrificed to the policy of the state. In this degenerate age, I have seen solemn days insolently profaned by those, whom worldly decency alone ought to have engaged to observe them. In these days of depravity, I have seen hatred and discord lodge among us, and labour in the un-



toward work of reciprocal ruin. In these wretched times, I have seen the spirit of intolerance unchained with all its rage, and the very men who incessantly exclaim against the persecutions that have affected themselves, turn persecutors of others; so that, at the close of a religious exercise, men, who ought to have remembered what they had heard, and to have applied it to themselves, have been known to exercise their ingenuity in finding heresy in the sermon, in communicating the same wicked industry to their families, and to their children, and, under pretence of religion, in preventing all the good effects that religious discourses might have produced. In this degenerate age—

But this shameful list is already too long. Does this nation repent of its past sins? Does it lament the crimes of its ancestors? Alas! far from repenting of our past sins, far from lamenting the crimes of our ancestors, does not the least attention perceive new and more shocking excesses? The wretched age in which providence has placed us, does it not seem to have taken that for its model, against which God displayed his vengeance, as we have been describing in this discourse? Were Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboim, destroyed by fire from heaven for sins unknown to us? And God knows, God only knows, what dreadful discoveries the formidable but pious vigilance of our magistrates may still make. O God, "Behold now I have taken upon me to speak unto thee, although I am but dust and ashes. Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Peradventure there be fifty righteous among us? peradventure forty? peradventure thirty? peradventure twenty? peradventure ten?" Gen. xviii. 25, &c.

My brethren, God yet bears with you, but how long he will bear with you, who can tell? And do not deceive yourselves, his forbearance must produce, in the end, either your conversion or your destruction. The Lord grant it may produce your conversion, and "so iniquity shall not be your ruin," Ezek. xviii. 30. Amen.

## SERMON XI.

### THE LONG-SUFFERING OF GOD WITH INDIVIDUALS.

ECCLESIASTES viii. 11, 12.

*Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. For the sinner doth evil a hundred times, and God prolongeth his days.\**

THE Wise Man points out, in the words of the text, one general cause of the impenitence of mankind. The disposition to which he attributes it, I own, seems shocking and almost incredible; but if we examine our "deceitful and desperately wicked hearts," Jer. xvii. 9; we shall find, that this disposition, which, at first sight, seems so shocking, is one of those, with which we are too well acquainted. "The

heart of the sons of men is fully set to do evil." Why? "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily."

This shameful, but too common, inclination, we will endeavour to expose, and to show you that the long-suffering, which the mercy of God grants to sinners, may be abused either in the disposition of a devil, or in that of a beast, or in that of a philosopher, or in that of a man.

He who devotes his health, his prosperity, and his youth, to offend God, and, while his punishment is deferred, to invent new ways of blaspheming him; he, who follows such a shameful course of life, abuses the patience of God in the disposition of a *devil*.

He, who enervates and impairs his reason, either by excessive debauchery, or by worldly dissipations, by an effeminate luxury, or by an inactive stupidity, and pays no regard to the great end for which God permits him to live in this world, abuses the patience of God in the disposition of a *beast*.

He who from the long-suffering of God infers consequences against his providence, and against his hatred of sin, is in the disposition, of which my text speaks, as a *philosopher*.

He, who concludes because the patience of God has continued to this day that it will always continue, and makes such a hope a motive to persist in sin, without repentance or remorse, abuses the patience of God in the disposition of a *man*. As I shall point out these principles to you, I shall show you the injustice and extravagance of them.

I. To devote health, prosperity, and youth, to offend God, and to invent new ways of blaspheming him, while the punishment of him who leads such a shameful life is deferred, is to abuse the long-suffering of God like a *devil*.

The majesty of this place, the holiness of my ministry, and the delicacy of my hearers, forbid precision on this article; for there would be a shocking impropriety in exhibiting a well-drawn portrait of such a man. But, if it is criminal to relate such excesses, what must it be to commit them? It is but too certain, however, that nature sometimes produces such infernal creatures, who, with the bodies of men, have the sentiments of devils. Thanks be to God, the characters which belong to this article, must be taken from other countries, though not from ancient history.

I speak of those abominable men, to whom living and moving would be intolerable, were they to pass one day without insulting the Author of their life and motion. The grand design of all their actions is to break down every boundary, that either modesty, probity, or even a corrupt and irregular conscience has set to licentiousness. They bitterly lament the paucity of the ways of violating their Creator's laws, and they employ all the power of their wit, the play of their fancy, and the fire of their youth, to supply the want. Like that impious king, of whom the Scripture speaks, Dan. v. 2, they carouse with the sacred vessels, and then they profanely abuse in their festivity: them did I say? The most solemn truths, and the most venerable mysteries of religion, they take into their polluted mouths, and display their infidelity and impurity in ridiculing them. They hurry away a life, which

\* We have followed the reading of the *French Bible* in this passage.

is become insipid to them, because they have exhausted all resources of blasphemy against God, and they hasten to hell, to learn others of the infernal spirits, their patterns and their protectors.

Let us throw a veil, my brethren, over these abominations, and let us turn away our eyes from objects so shameful to human nature. But how comes it to pass, that rational creatures, having ideas of right and wrong, arrive at such a subversion of reason, and such a degree of corruption, as to be pleased with a course of life, which carries its pains and punishments with it?

Sometimes this phenomenon must be attributed to a vicious education. We seldom pay a sufficient regard to the influence that education has over the whole life. We often entertain false, and oftener still inadequate notions of what is called a *good education*. We have given, it is generally thought, a good education to a youth, when we have taught him an art, or trained him up in a science; when we have instructed him how to arrange a few dry words in his head, or a few crude notions in his fancy; and we are highly satisfied when we have intrusted the cultivation of his tender heart to a man of probity. We forget that the venom of sin impregnates the air that he breathes, and communicates itself to him by all that he sees, and by all that he hears. If we would give young people a good education, we must forbid them all acquaintance with those who do not delight in decency and piety: we must never suffer them to hear debauchery and impiety spoken of without detestation: we must furnish them with precautions previous to their travels, in which, under pretence of acquainting themselves with the manners of foreigners, they too often adopt nothing but their vices: we must banish from our universities those shocking irregularities, and annihilate those dangerous privileges, which make the means of education the very causes of corruption and ruin.

Sometimes these excesses are owing to the connivance, or the countenance of princes. We have never more reason to predict the destruction of a state, than when the reins of government are committed to men of a certain character. It will require ages to heal the wounds of one impious reign. An irreligious reign emboldens vice, and multiplies infamous places for the commission of it. In an irreligious reign scandalous books are published; and it becomes fashionable to question whether there be a God in heaven, or any real difference between virtue and vice on earth. In the space of an irreligious reign offices are held by unworthy persons, who either abolish, or suffer to languish, the laws that policy had provided against impiety. Histories, more recent than those of Tiberius and Nero, would too fully exemplify our observations, were not the majesty of princes, in some sort, respectable, even after they are no more.

Sometimes these excesses, which offer violence to nature, are caused by a gratification of those which are agreeable to the corruption of nature. Ordinary sins become insipid by habit, and sinners are forced, having arrived at some periods of corruption, to endeavour to

satisfy their execrable propensities by the commission of those crimes, which once made them shudder with horror.

To all these reasons add the judgment of divine Providence; for "God giveth those up to uncleanness," Rom. i. 24, who have made no use of the means of instruction and piety which he had afforded them.

I repeat my thanksgivings to God, the protector of these states, that among our youth (though, alas! so far from that piety which persons, dedicated to God by baptism, ought to possess), we have none of this character. Indeed, had we such a monster among us, we should neither oppose him by private advice nor by public preaching: but we should think that the arm of the secular magistrate was a likelier mean of repulsing him than the decision of a casuist. Let none be offended at this. Our ministry is a ministry of compassion, I grant; and we are sent by a master who willeth not the death of a sinner; but, if we thought that compassion obliged us on any occasions to implore your clemency, my Lords, for some malefactors, whom your wise laws, and the safety of society, condemn to die, we would rather intercede for assassins, and highway robbers; yea, for those miserable wretches, whose execrable avarice tempts them to import infected commodities, which expose our own and our children's lives to the plague; for these we would rather intercede, than for those, whose dreadful examples are capable of infecting the minds of our children with infernal maxims, and of rendering these provinces like Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboim, first by involving them in the guilt, and then in the fiery punishment of those detestable cities.

Where the sword of the magistrate does not punish, that of divine vengeance will: but, as it would be difficult for imagination to conceive the greatness of the punishments that await such sinners, it is needless to adduce the reasons of them. Our first notions of God are vindictive to such, and as soon as we are convinced that there is a just God, the day appears in which, falling upon these unworthy men, he will address them in this thundering language: "depart, depart," into the source of your pleasures; "depart into everlasting fire" with all your associates; do for ever and ever what ye have been doing in your life time; having exhausted my patience, experience the power of my anger; and as ye have had the dispositions of devils, suffer for ever the punishments "prepared for the devil and his angels," Matt xxv. 41.

II. A man may be in the disposition, of which the Wise Man speaks in the text, through stupidity and indolence, and this second state confounds the man with the *beast*. There is nothing hyperbolic in this proposition. What makes the difference between a man and a beast? These are the distinguishing characters of each. The one is confined to a short duration, and to a narrow circle of present objects; the other has received of his Creator the power of going beyond time, and of penetrating by his meditation into remote futurity, yea, even into an endless eternity. The one is actuated only by sensual appetites; the other has the

faculty of rectifying his senses by the ideas of his mind. The one is carried away by the heat of his temperament; the other has the power of cooling temperament with reflection. The one knows no argument nor motive but sensation; the other has the power of making motives of sensation yield to the more noble and permanent motives of interest. To imitate the first kind of the creatures is to live like a beast; to follow the second is to live like a man.

Let us apply this general truth to the particular subject in hand, and let us justify what we have advanced, that there is nothing hyperbolical in this proposition. If there be a subject that merits the attention of an intelligent soul, it is the long-suffering of God; and if there be a case, in which an intelligent creature ought to use the faculty that his Creator has given him, of going beyond the circle of present objects, of rectifying the actions of his senses by the ideas of his mind, and of correcting his temperament by reflection, it is certainly the case of that sinner with whom God has borne so long.

Miserable man! ought he to say to himself, I have committed, not only those sins, which ordinarily belong to the frailty and depravity of mankind, but those also which are a shame to human nature, and which suppose that he who is guilty of them has carried his corruption to the highest pitch! O miserable man! I have committed not only one of the sins, which the Scripture says, deprive those who commit them of "inheriting the kingdom of God," 1 Cor. vi. 10, but I have lived many years in the practice of such sins; in the impurity of effeminacy and adultery, in the possession of unjust gain, in the gloomy revolutions of implacable hatred! Miserable man! I have abused, not only the ordinary means of conversion, but also those extraordinary means, which God grants only to a few, and which he seems to have displayed on purpose to show how far a God of love can carry his love! Miserable man! I was not only engaged as a man and a professor of Christianity to give an example of piety, but I was also engaged to do it as a minister, as a magistrate, as a parent; yet, in spite of all my unworthiness, God has borne with me, and has preserved me in this world, not only while prosperity was universal, but while calamities were almost general; while the sword was glutting itself with blood, while the destroying angel was exterminating on every side, as if he intended to make the whole world one vast grave! All this time God has been showering his blessings upon me! upon me the chief of sinners! me his declared enemy! blessings that he promised to bestow as privileges on his favourites only! "I dwell in the secret place of the Most High, I abode under the shadow of the Almighty!" Ps. xci. 1.

I ask, my brethren, whether if there be a state in which an intelligent creature ought to meditate and reflect, it be not the state of a sinner? If I prove then, that there are men in this state, who neither think nor reflect, because they confine their attention to the circle of present objects, abandon themselves wholly to sensuality, and give themselves up entirely to their constitutional vices; shall I not have proved that there are men, who like beasts are indif-

ferent to "the riches of the forbearance and long-suffering of God?" Rom. ii. 4. But where shall we find such people? Shall we search for them in fabulous history, or look for them in ancient chronicles? Shall we quote the relations of those travellers, who seem to aim less at instructing us by publishing true accounts, than at astonishing us by reporting uncommon events? Alas! alas, my dear brethren, I fear I have been too confident, and had not sufficiently proportioned my strength to my courage, when I engaged at the beginning of this discourse to confront certain portraits with the countenances of some of my hearers. . . .

But, no, the truth ought not to suffer through the frailty of him whose office it is to publish it.

Tell us, then, what distinguishes the man from the beast, in that worshipper of Mammon, who having spent his life in amassing and hoarding up wealth, in taxing the widow, the orphan, and the ward, to satiate his avarice; having defrauded the state, deceived his correspondents, and betrayed his tenderest friends; having accumulated heaps upon heaps, and having only a few days respite, which providence has granted him for the repentance of his sins, and the restitution of his iniquitous gains; employs these last moments in offering incense to his idol, spends his last breath in enlarging his income, in lessening his expenses, and in endeavouring to gratify that insatiable desire of getting, which gnaws and devours him.

Tell us what distinguishes the man from the beast, in that old debauchee, who thinks of nothing but voluptuousness; who to sensuality sacrifices his time, his fortune, his reputation, his health, his soul, his salvation, along with all his pretensions to immortality; and who would willingly comprehend the whole of man in this definition, a being capable of wallowing in voluptuousness?

Tell us what distinguishes the man from the beast, in that man, who not being able to bear the remorse of his own conscience, nor the ideas of the vanity of this world, to which he is wholly devoted; drowns his reason in wine, gives himself up to all the excesses of drunkenness, exposes himself to the danger of committing some bloody murder, or of perishing in some tragical death, of which we have too many melancholy examples; not only unfit himself for repenting now, but even renders himself incapable of repenting at all! What is a penitent's reconciliation to God? It includes, at least, reflection and thought, the laying down of principles and the deducing of consequences: but people of this kind, through their excessive intoxication, generally incapacitate themselves for inferring a consequence, or admitting a principle, and even for reflecting and thinking; as experience, experience superior to all our reasoning, has many a time shown.

But it is necessary to reason in order to discover the injustice of this disposition? Do ye really think that God created you capable of reflection that ye should never reflect? Do ye indeed believe that God gave you so many fine faculties that ye should make no use of these faculties? In a word, can ye seriously think that God made you men in order to enable you to live like beasts?

III. I said, in the third place, that the disposition of which the Wise Man speaks in the text, sometimes proceeds from a principle of grave folly. So I call the principle of some philosophers, who imagine that they find in the delay of the punishment of sinners, an invincible argument against the existence of God, at least against the infinity of his perfections.

We do not mean, by a philosopher, that superficial trifler, who not having the least notion of right reasoning, takes the liberty sometimes of pretending to reason, and with an air of superiority, which might impose on us, were we to be imposed on by a tone, says, "The learned maintained such an opinion: but I affirm the opposite opinion. Casuists advance such a maxim: but I lay down a very different maxim. Pastors hold such a system; but, for my part, I hold altogether another system." And who is he who talks in this decisive tone, and who alone pretends to contradict all our ministers, and all our learned men; the whole church, and the whole school? It is sometimes a man, whose whole science consists in the casting up of a sum. It is sometimes a man, who has spent all his life in exercises, that have not the least relation to the subject which he so arrogantly decides; and who thinks, if I may be allowed to say so, that arguments are to be commanded as he commands a regiment of soldiers. In a word, they are men, for the most part, who know neither what a system nor a maxim is. Let not such people imagine that they are addressed as philosophers; for we cannot address them without repeating what has been said in the preceding article, which is their proper place.

We mean, when we speak of men who despise the long-suffering of God as *philosophers*, people who have taken as much pains to arrive at infidelity, as they ought to have taken to obtain the knowledge of the truth: who have studied as much to palliate error, as they ought to have studied to expose it: who have gone through as long a course of reading and meditation to deprave their hearts as they ought to have undertaken to preserve them from depravity. Among the sophisms which they have adopted, that which they have derived from the delay of the punishment of sinners, has appeared the most tenable, and they have occupied it as their fort. Sophisms of this kind are not new, they have been repeated in all ages, and in every age there have been such as *Celius* (this is the name of an ancient atheist,) of whom a heathen poet says, *Celius says that there are no gods, and that heaven is an uninhabited place*; and these are the chief reasons that he assigns; he continued happy, and he had the prospect of continuing so, while he denied the existence of a God.

As the persons, to whom we address this article, profess to reason, let us reason with them. And ye, my brethren, endeavour to attend a few moments to our arguments. One brief cause of our erroneous notions of the perfections of God, is the considering of them separately, and not in their admirable assortment and beautiful harmony. When we meditate on the goodness of God, we consider his goodness alone, and not in harmony with his justice. When we meditate on his justice, we consider

it in an abstract view, and without any relation to his goodness. And in the same manner we consider his wisdom, his power, and his other attributes.

This restriction of meditation (I think I may venture to call it so) is a source of sophistry. If we consider supreme justice in this manner, it will seem as if it ought to exterminate every sinner: and on the contrary, if we consider supreme goodness in this manner, it will seem as if it ought to spare every sinner; to succour all the afflicted; to prevent every degree of distress; and to gratify every wish of every creature capable of wishing. We might observe the same of power, and of wisdom, and of every other perfection of God. But what shocking consequences would follow such views of the divine attributes! As we should never be able to prove such a justice, or such a goodness as we have imagined, we should be obliged to infer, that God is not a Being supremely good; that he is not a Being supremely just; and the same may be said of his other perfections.

Persons who entertain such notions, not only sink the Supreme Being below the dignity of his own nature, but even below that of mankind. Were we to allow the reasoning of these people, we should increase their difficulties by removing them, for the argument would end in downright atheism. Were we to allow the force of their objections, I say, we should increase their difficulties, and instead of obtaining a solution of the difficulty which attends our notions of a divine attribute, we should obtain a proof that there is no God: for, could we prove that there is a Being supremely good, in their abstract sense of goodness, we should thereby prove that there is no being supremely just; because supreme goodness, considered in their abstract manner, destroys supreme justice. The same may be said of all the other perfections of God, one perfection of the divine nature would destroy another; and to prove that God possessed one would be to prove that of the other his nature was quite destitute.

Now, if there be a subject, my brethren, in which people err by considering the perfections of God in a detached and abstract manner, it is this of which we are speaking; it is when people raise objections against the attributes of God from his forbearance with sinners. God seems to act contrary to some of his perfections in his forbearance. Why? Because the perfection, to which his conduct seems incongruous, is considered as if it were alone, and not as if it were in relation to another perfection: because, as I have already said, the divine attributes are considered abstractly, and not in their beautiful assortment and admirable harmony.

I confine myself to this principle to refute the objections which some, who are improperly called philosophers, derive from the delay of the punishment of sinners, to oppose to the perfections of God. I do not, however, confine myself to this for want of other solid answers: for example, I might prove that the notion, which they form of those perfections, to which the delay of divine vengeance seems repugnant, is a false notion.

What are those perfections of God? They are, ye answer, *truth*, which is interested in executing the threatenings that are denounced

against sinners: *wisdom*, which is interested in supplying means of re-establishing order: and particularly *justice*, which is interested in the punishing of the guilty.

I reply, that your idea of truth is opposite to truth; your idea of wisdom is opposite to wisdom: your idea of justice is opposite to justice.

Yes, the notion that ye entertain of *truth*, is opposite to truth, and ye resemble those *scoffers*, of whom the apostle speaks, who said, "Where is the promise of his coming?" What Jesus Christ had said of St. John, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" had occasioned a rumour concerning the near approach of the dissolution of the world: but there was no appearance of the dissolution of the world: thence the *scoffers*, of whom St. Peter speaks, concluded that God had not fulfilled his promise, and on this false supposition they said, "Where is the promise of his coming?" Apply this reflection to yourselves. The delay of the punishment of sinners, ye say, is opposite to the truth of God: on the contrary, God has declared that he would not punish every sinner as soon as he had committed an act of sin. "The sinner doth evil a hundred times, and God prolongeth his days."

The delay of the punishment of sinners, ye say, is opposite to the *wisdom* of God: on the contrary, it is this delay which provides for the execution of that wise plan, which God has made for mankind, of placing them for some time in a state of probation in this world, and of regulating their future reward or punishment according to their use or abuse of such a dispensation.

The delay of the punishment of sinners, ye say, is repugnant to the *justice* of God. Quite the contrary. What do ye call justice in God? What! Such an impetuous emotion as that which animates you against those who affront you, and whom ye consider as enemies? An implacable madness, which enrages you to such a degree, that a sight of all the miseries into which ye are going to involve them is not able to curb? Is this what ye call justice?

But I suppress all these reflections, and return to my principle, (and this is not the first time that we have been obliged to proportion the length of a discourse, not to the nature of the subject, but to the impatience of our hearers.) I return to my principle; the delay of the punishment of sinners will not seem incompatible with the justice of God, unless ye consider that perfection detached from another perfection, by which God in the most eminent manner displays his glory, I mean his mercy. An explication of the last clause of our text, "the sinner doth evil a hundred times, and God prolongeth his days," will place the matter in a clear light: for the long-suffering of God with sinners flows from his mercy. St. Peter confirms this when he tells us, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance," 2 Pet. iii. 9.

It is with the same view that Jesus Christ calls the whole time, during which God delayed the destruction of Jerusalem, "the time of the visitation of that miserable city," Luke xix. 44. And for the same reason St. Paul calls

the whole time, which God puts between the commission of sin and the destruction of sinners, "riches of forbearance, and long-suffering, that lead to repentance," Rom. ii. 4. And who could flatter himself with the hope of escaping "devouring fire, and everlasting burnings," Isa. xxxiii. 14, were God to execute immediately his sentence against evil works, and to make punishment instantly follow the practice of sin?

What would have become of David if divine mercy had not prolonged his days after he had fallen into the crimes of adultery and murder; or if justice had called him to give an account of his conduct while his heart, burning with a criminal passion, was wishing only to gratify it; while he was sacrificing the honour of a wife, the life of a husband, along with his own body, which should have been a temple of the Holy Ghost, to the criminal passion that inflamed his soul? It was the long-suffering, the patience of God, that gave him time to recover himself, to get rid of his infatuation, to see the horror of his sin, and to say under a sense of it, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness: according unto the multitude of thy mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest," Ps. li. 1—4.

What would have become of Manasseh, if God had called him to give an account of his administration while he was making the house of God the theatre of his dissoluteness and idolatry; while he was planting groves, rearing up altars for the host of heaven, making his sons pass through the fire, doing more wickedly than the Amorites, making Judah to sin with his dunghill gods, as the holy Scripture calls them? It was the long-suffering of God that bore with him, that engaged him to humble himself, to pray fervently to the God of his fathers, and to become an exemplary convert after he had been an example of infidelity and impurity.

What would have become of St. Peter, if God had called him to give an account of himself, while, frightened and subverted at the sight of the judges and executioners of his Saviour, he was pronouncing those cowardly words, "I know not the man?" It was the long-suffering and patience of God, that gave him an opportunity of seeing the merciful looks of Jesus Christ immediately after his denial of him, of fleeing from a place fatal to his innocence, of going out to weep bitterly, and of saying to Jesus Christ, "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee: Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee," John xxi. 16, 17.

What would have become of St. Paul, if God had required an account of his administration, while he was "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord," Acts ix. 1; while he was ambitious of stifling the new-born church in her cradle, while he was soliciting letters from the high priest to pervert and to punish the disciples of Christ? It was the long-suffering of God, that

gave him an opportunity of saying, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Acts ix. 6. It was the patience of God which gave him an opportunity of making that honest confession, "I was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy," 1 Tim. i. 13.

IV. But why should we go out of this assembly, (and here we enter into the last article, and shall endeavour to prevent your abuse of the patience of God in the dispositions of *men*;) why should we go out of this assembly, to search after proofs of divine mercy in a delay of punishment? What would have become of you, my dear hearers, if vengeance had immediately followed sin? if God had not *prolonged the days of sinners*; if *sentence against evil works* had been executed *speedily*?

What would have become of some of you, if God had required of you an account of your conduct, while ye were sacrificing the rights of widows and orphans to the "honour of the persons of the mighty," Lev. xix. 15; while ye were practising perjury and accepting bribes? It is the long-suffering of God that *prolongs your days*, that ye may make a restitution of your unrighteous gain, plead for the orphan and the widow, and attend in future decisions only to the nature of the cause before you.

What would have become of some of you, if God had called you to give an account of your conduct, while the fear of persecution, or, what is infinitely more criminal still, while the love of ease, prevailed over you to renounce a religion which ye respected in your hearts while ye denied with your mouths? It is the patience of God which has afforded you time to learn the greatness of a sin, the guilt of which a whole life of repentance is not sufficient to expiate: it is the patience of God which has *prolonged your days*, that ye might confess that Jesus whom ye have betrayed, and proud that gospel which ye have denied.

Let us not multiply particular examples, let us comprise this whole assembly in one class. There is not one of our hearers, no, not one, who is in this church to-day, there is not one who has been engaged in the devotional exercises of this day, who would not have been in hell with the devil and his angels, if vengeance had immediately followed sin; if God had exercised no patience towards sinners; if "sentence against evil works" had been "executed speedily." "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed!" Lam. iii. 22. The delay of punishment is a demonstration of his mercy; it does not prove that he is not just, but it does prove that he is good.

I could wish, my brethren, that all those who ought to interest themselves in this article, would render it needless for me to enter into particulars, by recollecting the history of their own lives, and by remembering the circumstances to which I refer. One man ought to say to himself, in my childhood, an upright father, a pious mother, and several worthy tutors did all that lay in their power to form me virtuous. In my youth, a tender and generous friend, who was more concerned for my happiness, and more ambitious of my excelling, than I myself, availed himself of all the power of insinuation that nature had given him, to

inclure my heart to piety and to the fear of God, and to attach me to religion by *bands of love*. On a certain occasion, Providence put into my hands a religious book, the reading of which discovered to me the turpitude of my conduct. At another time, one of those clear, affecting, thundering sermons, that alarm sleepy souls, forced from me a promise of repentance and reformation. One day, I saw the administration of the Lord's supper, which, awakening my attention to the grand sacrifice that divine justice required for the sins of mankind, affected me in a manner so powerful and moving, that I thought myself obliged in gratitude to dedicate my whole life to him, who in the tenderest compassion had given himself for me. Another time an extremely painful illness showed me the absurdity of my course of life; filled me with a keenness of remorse, that seemed an anticipation of hell; put me on beseeching God to grant me a few years more of his patience; and brought me to a solemn adjuration that I would employ the remaining part of my life in repairing the past. All these have been fruitless; all these means have been useless; all these promises have been false; and yet I may have access to a throne of grace. What love! What mercy!

This long-suffering of God with impenitent sinners, will be one of the most terrible subjects that sinners can think of when the avenging moment comes; when the fatal hour arrives in which the voice of divine justice shall summon a miserable wretch to appear, when it shall bind him to a death bed, and suspend him over the abyss of hell.

But to a poor sinner, who is awakening from his sin, who having consumed the greatest part of his life in sin, would repair it by sacrificing the world and all its glory, were such a sacrifice in his power: to a poor sinner, who, having been for some time afraid of an exclusion from the mercy of God, revolves these distressing thoughts in his mind: Perhaps "the days of my visitation" may be at an end; henceforth, perhaps, my sorrows may be superfluous, and my tears inadmissible: to such a sinner, what an object, what a comfortable object, is the treasure of "the forbearance and long-suffering of God that leadeth to repentance." My God, says such a sinner, "I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies!" Gen. xxxii. 10. My God, I am tempted to think that to doubt of my interest in thy favour is the rendering of a proper homage to thy mercy, and my unbelief would arise from my veneration for thy majesty! But let me not think so; I will not doubt of thy mercy, my God, since thou hast condescended to assure me of it in such a tender manner! I will lose myself in that ocean of love which thou, O God, infinitely good! still discovers to me; I will persuade myself that thou dost not despise the sacrifice of a broken and contrite heart; and this persuasion I will oppose to an alarmed conscience, to a fear of hell that anticipates the misery of the state, and to all those formidable executioners of condemned men, whom I behold ready to seize their prey!

My brethren, "the riches of the goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering of God," are yet open to you: they are open, my dear

brethren, to this church, how ungrateful soever we have been to the goodness of God; how much insensibility soever we have shown to the invitations of grace: they are open to the greatest sinners, nor is there one of my hearers who may not be admitted to these inexhaustible treasures of goodness and mercy.

But do ye still "despise the riches of the long-suffering of God?" What! because "a space to repent," Rev. ii. 21; is given, will ye continue in impenitence? Ah! were Jesus Christ in the flesh, were he walking in your streets, were he now in this pulpit preaching to you, would he not preach to you all bathed in sorrows and tears? He would weep over you as he once wept over Jerusalem, and he would say to this province, to this town, to this church, to each person in this assembly, yea, to that wicked hearer, who affects not to be concerned in this sermon, O that "thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!" Luke xix. 42. What am I saying? he would say thus, he does say thus, my dear brethren, and still interests himself in your salvation in the tenderest and most vehement manner. Sitting at the right hand of his Father, he holds back that avenging arm which is ready to fell us to the earth at a stroke; in our behalf he interposes his sufferings and his death, his intercession and his cross; and from the top of that glory to which he is elevated, he looks down and says to this republic, to this church, to all this assembly, and to every sinner in it: O that "thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!"

My brethren, the patience of God, which yet endures, will not always endure. The year which the master of the vineyard grants, at the intercession of the dresser, to try whether a barren fig-tree can be made fruitful, will expire, and then it must be cut down, Luke xiii. 6. Do not deceive yourselves, my brethren; the long-suffering of God must produce in the end either your conversion or your destruction. O may it prevent your destruction by producing your conversion! The Lord grant you this favour! To him, the Father, the Son, and the holy Spirit, be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

## SERMON XII.

### GOD THE ONLY OBJECT OF FEAR.

#### PART I.

##### JEREMIAH x. 7.

*Who would not fear thee, O King of nations?  
For to thee doth it appertain.*

THE prophet aims, in the words of the text, to inspire us with fear, and the best way to understand his meaning is to affix distinct ideas to the term. *To fear God* is an equivocal phrase in all languages; it is generally used in three senses in the holy Scriptures.

1. *Fear* sometimes signifies terror; a disposition, that makes the soul consider itself only as sinful, and God chiefly as a being who hates and avenges sin. There are various degrees

of this fear, and it deserves either praise, or blame, according to the different degree to which it is carried.

A man, whose heart is so void of the knowledge of the perfections of God, that he cannot rise above the little idols which worldlings adore; whose notions are so gross, that he cannot adhere to the purity of religion for purity's sake; whose taste is so vitiated that he has no relish for the delightful union of a faithful soul with its God; such a man deserves to be praised, when he endeavours to restrain his sensuality by the idea of an avenging God. The apostles urged this motive with success, "knowing therefore the terror of the Lord we persuade men," 2 Cor. v. 11. "Of some have compassion," says St. Jude to the ministers of the gospel, "making a difference; and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire," ver. 22, 23. Such a disposition is, without doubt, very imperfect, and were a man to expect salvation in his way, he would be in imminent danger of feeling those miseries of which he is afraid. No casuists, except such as have been educated in an infernal school, will venture to affirm, that *to fear God* in this sense, without loving him, is sufficient for salvation. Nevertheless, this disposition is allowable in the beginning of a work of conversion, it is never altogether useless to a regenerate man, and it is of singular use to him in some violent temptations, with which the enemy of his salvation assaults him. When a tide of depravity threatens, in spite of yourselves, to carry you away, recollect some of the titles of God; the Scripture calls him "the mighty, and the terrible God; the furious Lord; a consuming fire," Neh. ix. 32; Nah. i. 2; Heb. xii. 29. Remember the terrors that your own consciences felt, when they first awoke from the enchantment of sin, and when they beheld, for the first time, vice in its own colours. Meditate on that dreadful abode, in which criminals suffer everlasting pains for momentary pleasures. *The fear of God*, taken in this first sense, is a laudable disposition.

But it ceases to be laudable, it becomes detestable, when it goes so far as to deprive a sinner of a sight of all the gracious remedies which God has reserved for sinners. "I heard thy voice, and I was afraid, and I hid myself," Gen. iii. 10, said the first man, after his fall; but it was "because he was naked;" it was because he had lost the glory of his primitive innocence, and must be obliged to prostrate himself before his God, to seek from his infinite mercy the proper remedies for his maladies; to pray to him, in whose *image* he had been first formed, Gen. i. 26; to "renew him after the image of him that created him," Col. iii. 10; and to ask him for habits, that "the shame of his nakedness might not appear," Rev. iii. 18. Despair should not dwell in the church, hell should be its only abode. It should be left to "the devils to believe and tremble," Jam. ii. 19. Time is an economy of hope, and only those, whom the day of wrath overwhelms with horrible judgments, have reason to cry "to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the wrath of the Lamb," Rev. vi. 16. Too great a degree of fear, then, in this first sense of fear, is a detestable disposition.

Fear is no less odious, when it gives us tragical descriptions of the rights of God, and of his designs on his creatures; when it makes a tyrant of him, whom the text calls "the king of nations," Rev. xix. 16; of him, who is elsewhere described as having on his thigh the stately title of "King of kings;" of him, whose dominion is described as constituting the felicity of his subjects, "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice;" Ps. cxvii. 1. Far be such descriptions of God from us! They represent the Deity as a merciless usurer, who requires an account of talents that we have not received; who requires angelical knowledge of a human intelligence, or philosophical penetration of an uninstructed peasant. Far from us be those systems, which pretend to prove, that God will judge the heathens by the same laws by which he will judge the Jews; and that he will judge those who lived under the law, as if they had lived under the gospel? Away with that fear of God, which is so injurious to his majesty, and so unworthy of that throne, which is founded on equity! What encouragement could I have to endeavour to know what God has been pleased to reveal to mankind, were I prepossessed with an opinion, that, after I had implored, with all the powers of my soul, the help of God to guide me in seeking the truth; after I had laid aside the prejudices that disguise it; after I had suspended, as far as I could, the passions that deprave my understanding; even after I had determined to sacrifice my rest, my fortune, my dignity, my life, to follow it; I might fall into capital errors which would plunge me into everlasting woe? No, no, we "have not so learned Christ," Eph. iv. 20. None but a refractory servant fears God in this manner. It is only the refractory servant who, to exculpate himself for neglecting what was in his power, pretends to have thought that God would require more than was in his power: *Lord*, says he, "I knew thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed," Matt. xxv. 24. *I knew!* And where didst thou learn this? What infernal body of divinity hast thou studied? What demon was thy tutor? Ah! thou art "a wicked servant," and, at the same time, "a slothful servant;" *slothful*, ver. 26, not to form the just and noble resolution of improving the talent that I committed to thee: *wicked*, to invent such an odious reason, and to represent me in such dismal colours. "Thou oughtest to have put my money to the exchangers, and then I should have received mine own with usury," ver. 27. "Thou oughtest to have improved that ray of light, with which I had enlightened thee, and not to have forged an ideal God, who would require that with which he had not intrusted thee. Thou oughtest to have read the books that my providence put into thy hands, and not to have imagined that I would condemn thee for not having read those which were concealed from thee. Thou oughtest to have consulted those ministers, whom I had set in my church, and not to have feared that I would condemn thee for not having sat in conference with angels and seraphims, with whom thou hadst no intercourse. Thou hadst but one talent; thou oughtest to have improved

that one talent, and not to have neglected it lest I should require four of thee. "Thou wicked servant! Thou slothful servant! take the talent from him. Give it unto him who hath ten talents," ver. 28.

These are the different ideas, which we ought to form of that disposition of mind which is called *fear* in this first sense. To fear God in this sense is to have the soul filled with horror at the sight of his judgments.

2. *To fear God* is a phrase still more equivocal, and it is put for that disposition of mind, which inclines us to render to him all the worship that he requires, to submit to all the laws that he imposes, to conceive all the emotions of admiration, devotedness, and love, which the eminence of his perfections demand. This is the usual meaning of the phrase. By this *Jonah* described himself, even while he was acting contrary to it, "I am an Hebrew, and I fear the Lord the God of heaven," *Jonah* i. 9. In this sense the phrase is to be understood when we are told that "the fear of the Lord prolongeth days, is a fountain of life, and preserveth from the snares of death," *Prov.* x. 27; *xiv.* 27. And it is to be taken in the same sense where "the fear of the Lord" is said to be "the beginning of wisdom," *Ps.* cxi. 10. The fear of the Lord in all these passages includes all the duties of religion. The last quoted passage is quite mistaken, when the *fear* that is spoken of is taken for terror: and a conclusion is drawn from false premises when it is inferred from this passage that fear is not sufficient for salvation. This false reasoning, however, may be found in some systems of morality. Terror, say they, may, indeed, make a part of the course of wisdom, but it is only the beginning of it, as it is said, "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom:" but, neither does *fear* signify terror in this passage, nor does the *beginning* mean a priority of time; it means the principal point. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;" that is, the principal point; that without which no man is truly wise, that is, obedience to the laws of religion, agreeably to the saying of the Wise Man, "Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man," *Eccl.* xiv. 13.

It seems needless to remark what idea we ought to form of this fear: for, it is plain, the more a soul is penetrated with it, the nearer it approaches to perfection. It seems equally unnecessary to prove that terror is a very different disposition from this fear: for, on the contrary, the most effectual mean of not fearing God, in the first sense is to fear him in the last. "Fear not," said Moses formerly, "for God is come to prove you, that his fear may be before your faces. Fear not, that ye may fear;" this is only a seeming contradiction. The only way to prevent *fear*, that is, horror, on account of the judgments of God, is to have "his fear before your eyes," that is, such a love, and such a deference for him, as religion requires. Agreeably to this, it is elsewhere said, *perfect love* (and *perfect love*, in this passage, is nothing but the *fear* of which I am speaking,) "perfect love casteth out fear;" that is, a horror on account of God's judgments: for the more love we have for him, the



stronger assurance shall we enjoy, that his judgments have nothing in them dangerous to us.

3. But, beside these two notions of fear, there is a third, which is more nearly allied to our text, a notion that is neither so general as the last, nor so particular as the first. Fear, in this third sense, is a disposition which considers him who is the object of it as alone possessing all that can contribute to our happiness or misery. Distinguish here a particular from a general happiness. Every being around us, by a wise disposal of Providence, has some degree of power to favour, or to hinder, a particular happiness. Every thing that can increase, or abate, the motion of our bodies, may contribute to the advancement, or to the diminution, of the particular happiness of our bodies. Every thing that can elucidate, or obscure the ideas of our minds, may contribute to the particular happiness or misery of our minds. Every thing that can procure to our souls either a sensation of pleasure, or a sensation of pain, may contribute to the particular happiness or misery of our souls. But it is neither a particular happiness, nor a particular misery, that we mean to treat of now: we mean a general happiness. It often happens, that all things being considered, a particular happiness, considered in the whole of our felicity, is a general misery: and, on the contrary, it often happens that all things being considered, a particular misery, in the whole of our felicity, is a general happiness. It was a particular misfortune in the life of a man to be forced to bear the amputation of a mortified arm: but weighing the whole felicity of the life of the man, this particular misfortune became a good, because had he not consented to the amputation of the mortified limb, the mortification would have been fatal to his life, and would have deprived him of all felicity here. It was a particular calamity, that a believer should be called to suffer martyrdom: but in the whole felicity of that believer, martyrdom was a happiness, yea, an inestimable happiness: by suffering the pain of a few moments he has escaped those eternal torments which would have attended his apostacy; the bearing of a "light affliction, which was but for a moment, hath wrought out a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," 2 Cor. iv. 17.

Let us sum up these reflections. To consider a being as capable of rendering us happy or miserable, in the general sense that we have given of the words happiness and misery, is to fear that being, in the third sense which we have given to the term *fear*. This is the sense of the word *fear*, in the text, and in many other passages of the holy Scriptures. Thus Isaiah uses it, "Say ye not a confederacy, to all them to whom this people say a confederacy: neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid. Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread," ch. viii. 12, 13. So again, "Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man that shall be made as grass?" ch. li. 12. And again in these well known words of our Saviour, "fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both

soul and body in hell," Matt. x. 28. *To kill the body* is to cause a particular evil; and to *fear them which kill the body* is to regard the death of the body as a general evil, determining the whole of our felicity. *To fear him which is able to destroy the soul*, is to consider the loss of the soul as the general evil, and *him who is able to destroy the soul* as alone able to determine the whole of our felicity or misery. In this sense we understand the text, and this sense seems most agreeable to the scope of the place.

The prophet was endeavouring to abase false gods in the eyes of his countrymen, while the true God was suffering their worshippers to carry his people into captivity. He was aiming to excite the Jews to worship the God of heaven and earth, and to despise idols even amidst the trophies and the triumphs of idolators. He was trying to convince them fully, that idols could procure neither happiness nor misery to mankind; and that, if their worshippers should inflict any punishments on the captives, they would be only particular evils, permitted by the Providence of God; "Be not dismayed at the signs of heaven because the heathen are dismayed at them. One cutteth a tree out of the forest with the axe to make idols; another decks them with silver and with gold, and fastens them with nails and with hammers that they move not. They are upright as the palm-tree, but speak not. They must needs be borne, because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them, for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good," ver. 2, &c. Remark here the double motive of not fearing them: on the one hand, *they cannot do evil*; on the other, *neither is it in them to do good*. This justifies the idea that we give you of fear, by representing it as that disposition, which considers its object as having our happiness and our misery in its power. Instead of fearing that they should destroy you, announce ye their destruction, and say unto them, in the language of the Babylonians who worship them,\* "the gods that have not made the heavens, and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under the heavens," ver. 11. Having thus shown that heathen gods could not be the object of that fear, which considers a being as able to procure happiness and misery; the prophet represents the God of Israel as alone worthy of such a homage, "He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion. When he uttereth his voice there is a multitude of waters in the heavens, and he causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth: he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures. Molten images are falsehood and vanity. The portion of Jacob is not like them: for he is the former of all things, and Israel is the rod of his inheritance; the Lord of hosts is his name," ver. 12, &c. The prophet, his own mind being filled with these noble ideas, supposes that every other mind is filled with them too; and in an ecstasy exclaims, "Who would not fear thee, O King of nations? for to thee doth it appertain!"

\* These words are in the Chaldee language in the original.

Fear, then, taken in this third sense, is a homage that cannot be paid to a creature without falling into idolatry. To regard a being, as capable of determining the happiness or misery of an immortal soul, is to pay the honours of adoration to him. As it can be said of none but God, "it is my happiness to draw near to him;" so of him alone can it be truly said, "it is my misery to depart from him," Ps. lxxiii. 28. Moreover, this homage belongs to him in a complete and eminent manner. He possesses all without restriction that can contribute to our felicity, or to our misery. Three ideas, under which we are going to consider God, will prove what we have affirmed.

I. God is a being, whose will is self-efficient.

II. God is the only being, who can act immediately on spiritual souls.

III. God is the only being, who can make all creatures concur with his designs. From these three notions of God follows this consequence, "Who would not fear thee, O King of nations?"

I. God is a being, whose will is self-efficient. We call that will self-efficient, which infallibly produces its effect. By this efficiency of will we distinguish God from every other being, either real or possible. No one but God has a self-efficient will. There is no one but God of whom the argument from the will to the act is demonstrative. Of none but God can we reason in this manner: he wills, therefore he does. Every intelligent being has some degree of efficiency in his will: my will has an efficiency on my arm; I will to move my arm, my arm instantly moves. But there is as great a difference between the efficiency of the will of a creature, and the efficiency of the will of the Creator, as there is between a finite and an infinite being. The will of a created intelligence, properly speaking, is not self-efficient, for it has only a borrowed efficiency. When he from whom it is derived, restrains it, this created intelligence will have only a vain, weak, inefficient will. I have to-day a will efficient to move my arm: but if that Being from whom I derive this will, should contract, or relax, the fibres of this arm, my will to move it would become vain, weak, and inefficient. I have a will efficient on the whole mass of this body, to which it has pleased the Creator to unite my immortal soul: but were God to dissolve the bond, by which he has united these two parts of me together, all that I might then will in regard to this body would be vain, weak, and destitute of any effect. When the Intelligence, who united my soul to my body, shall have once pronounced the word "return," Ps. xc. 3; that portion of matter to which my soul was united will be as free from the power of my will as the matter that constitutes the body of the sun, or as that which constitutes bodies, to which neither my senses, nor my imagination, can attain. All this comes to pass, because the efficiency of a creature is a borrowed efficiency, whereas that of the Creator is self-efficient and undervied.

Farther, the efficiency of a creature's will is finite. My will is efficient in regard to the portion of matter to which I am united: but how contracted is my empire! how limited is

my sovereignty? It extends no farther than the mass of my body extends; and the mass of my body is only a few inches broad, and a few cubits high. What if those mortals, who are called kings, monarchs, emperors, could by foreign aid extend the efficiency of their wills to the most distant places; what if they were able to extend it to the extremities of this planet, which we inhabit; how little woe, after all, is it to the extremities of this planet? What if, by the power of sulphur and saltpetre, these men extend the efficiency of their will to a little height in the air; how low, after all, is that height? Were a sovereign to unite every degree of power, that he could procure, to extend his efficiency to the nearest planet, all his efforts would be useless. The efficiency of a creature's will is finite, as well as borrowed: that of the Creator is independent and universal; it extends to the most remote beings, as well as to those that surround us, it extends alike to all actual and to all possible beings. My brethren, are ye stricken with this idea? Do ye perceive its relation to our subject? "Who would not fear thee, O king of nations?"

Our low and grovelling minds, low and grovelling as they are, have yet some notion of the grand and the marvellous; and nothing can impede, nothing can limit, nothing can equal our notion of it; when we give it scope it presently gets beyond every thing that we see, and every thing that exists. Reality is not sufficient, fancy must be indulged; real existences are too indigent, possible beings must be imagined; and we presently quit the real, to range through the ideal world. Hence come poetical fictions and fabulous narrations; and hence marvellous adventures, and romantic enchantments. A man is assuredly an object of great pity when he pleases himself with such fantastic notions. But, the principle that occasioned these fictions, ought to render the mind of man respectable; it is the very principle which we have mentioned. It is because the idea, that the mind of man has of the grand and marvellous, finds nothing to impede, nothing to limit, nothing to equal it. The most able architect cannot fully gratify this idea, although he employs his genius, his materials, and his artists, to erect a superb and regular edifice in a few years. All this is far below the notion which we have of the grand and the marvellous. Our mind imagines an enchanter, who, uniting in an instant all the secrets of art, and all the wonders of nature, by a single word of his mouth, or by a single act of his will, produces a house, a palace, or a city. The most able mechanic cannot fully gratify this idea, although with a marvellous industry he builds a vessel, which, resisting winds and waves, passes from the east to the west, and discovers new worlds, which nature seemed to have forbidden us to approach, by the immense spaces that it has placed between us. Our mind fancies an enchantment, which giving to a body naturally ponderous the levity of air, the activity of fire, the agility of flame, or of ethereal matter, passes the most immeasurable spaces with a rapidity swifter than that of lightning. It is God, it is God alone, my brethren, who is the original of these ideas. God only possesses that which gratifies and

absorbs our idea of the grand and the marvelous. The extravagance of fable does not lie in the imagining of these things; but in the misapplication of them. Must an edifice be formed by a single act of the will? In God we find the reality of this idea. He forms not only a palace, a city, or a kingdom, but a whole world, by a single act of his will; because his will is always efficient, and always produces its effect. "God said, Let there be light, and there was light," Gen. i. 3. "He spake and it was done: he commanded and it stood fast," Ps. xxxiii. 9. Must the immense distances of the world be passed in an instant? In God we find the reality of this idea. What am I saying? we find more than this in God. He does not pass through the spaces that separate the heavens from the earth, he fills them with the immensity of his essence. "Will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven, and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee!" 1 Kings viii. 27. "Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? And where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, saith the Lord," Isa. lxvi. 1, 2.

Were it necessary to prove that this idea is not a freak of our fancy, but that it arises from an original which really exists: I would divide, the better to prove my proposition, my opponents into two classes. The first should consist of those who already admit the existence of a perfect Being: to them I could easily prove that efficiency of will is a perfection, and that we cannot conceive a Being perfect, who does not possess this perfection. It is essential to the perfection of a Being, that we should be able to say of him, "Who hath resisted his will?" Rom. ix. 19. Could any other being resist his will, that being would be free from his dominion; and would subsist not only independently of him, but even in spite of him: and then we could conceive a being more perfect than him, that is, a being from whose dominion nothing could free itself.

In the second class I would place those who deny the existence of a supreme Being; and to them I would prove that the existence of beings who have a derived efficiency of will, proves the existence of a Being whose will is self-efficient. Whence have finite beings derived that limited efficiency, which they possess, if not from a self-efficient Being, who has distributed portions of efficiency among subordinate beings?

But it is less needful to prove that there is a Being who has such a perfection, than it is to prove, that he who possesses it merits, and alone merits, such a fear as we have described: that he deserves, and that he alone deserves, to be considered as having our felicity, and our misery, in his power. "Who would not fear thee, O King of nations? to thee doth it not appertain?" And who would not consider thee as the *only* object of this fear? To whom beside does it appertain? The efficiency of a creature's will proceeds from thee, and as it proceeds from thee alone, by thee alone does it subsist: one act of thy will gave it existence, and one act of thy will can take that existence away! The most formidable creatures are only terrible

through the exercise of a small portion of efficiency derived from thee; thou art the source, the soul, of all! Pronounce the sentence of my misery, and I shall be miserable: pronounce that of my felicity, and I shall be happy: nor shall any thing be able to disconcert a happiness that is maintained by an efficient will, which is superior to all opposition: before which all is nothing, or rather, which is itself all in all, because its efficiency communicates efficiency to all! "Who would not fear thee, O King of nations? Doth not fear appertain to thee alone?"

Perhaps the proving of a self-efficient will may be more than is necessary to the exhibiting of an object of human fear. Must such a grand spring move to destroy such a contemptible creature as man? He is only a vapour, a particle of air is sufficient to dissipate it: he is only a flower, a blast of wind is sufficient to make it fade. This is undeniable in regard to the material and visible man, in which we too often place all our glory. It is not only, then, to the infinite God, it is not only to him whose will is self-efficient, that man owes the homage of fear: it may be said that he owes it, in a sense, to all those creatures, to which Providence has given a presidency over his happiness or his misery. He ought not only to say, "Who would not fear thee, O King of nations? for to thee doth it appertain!" But he ought also to say, Who would not fear thee, O particle of air? Who would not fear thee, O blast of wind? Who would not fear thee, O "crushing of a moth?" Job iv. 15. Because there needs only a particle of air, there needs only a puff of wind, there needs only the "crushing of a moth," to subvert his happiness, and to destroy his life. But ye would entertain very different notions of human happiness and misery, were ye to consider man in a nobler light; and to attend to our second notion of God, as an object of fear.

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## SERMON XII.

### GOD THE ONLY OBJECT OF FEAR.

#### PART II.

##### JEREMIAH x. 7.

*Who would not fear thee, O King of nations?  
For to thee doth it appertain.*

God is the only being who has a supreme dominion over the operations of a spiritual and immortal soul. The discussion of this article would lead us into observations too abstract for this place; and therefore we make it a law to abridge our reflections. We must beg leave to remark, however, that we ought to think so highly of the nature of man as to admit this principle: God alone is able to exercise an absolute dominion over a spiritual and immortal soul. From this principle we conclude, that God alone has the happiness and misery of man in his power. God alone, merits the supreme homage of fear. God alone, not only in opposition to all the imaginary gods of Paganism, but also in opposition to every being

that really exists, is worthy of this part of the adoration of a spiritual and immortal creature. "Who would not fear thee, O King of nations?"

Weigh the emphatical words which we just now quoted, "Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die?" Who art thou, *immaterial spirit*, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man? Who art thou, *immortal spirit*, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die?

Who art thou, *immaterial spirit*, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man? Man has no immediate power over a spirit; he can affect it only by means of body. It is only by the body that a tyrant can cause a little anguish in the soul. It is only by the body as a mean that he can flatter some of the propensities of the soul, and propose himself to it as an object of its hope and fear. But beside that this power is infinitely small while the soul is subject to it; beside that the soul is capable of a thousand pleasures and a thousand pains, during its union to the body, which man cannot excite; beside these advantages, it is beyond a doubt, that this power of a tyrant can endure no longer than the union of the soul to the body does, by the mean of which the tyrant affects it. If a tyrant exercise his power to a certain degree, he loses it. When he has carried to a certain degree that violent motion which he produces in the body, in order to afflict the soul, which is united to it, he breaks the bond that unites the soul to the body, and frees his captive by overloading him with chains. The union being dissolved, the soul is free; it no longer depends on the tyrant, because he communicates with it only by means of body. After the destruction of the organs of the body, the soul is superior to every effort of a despot's rage. Death removes the soul beyond the reach of the most powerful monarch. After death the soul becomes invisible, and a tyrant's eye searches for it in vain: it ceases to be tangible, his chains and his fetters can hold it no more: it is no more divisible, his gibbets and his racks, his pincers and his wheels, can rend it no more: none of his fires can burn it, for it is not combustible; nor can any of his dungeons confine it, for it is immaterial.

Would to God, my brethren, that we were well acquainted with our real grandeur; and, perceiving our own excellence, were above trembling at those contemptible worms of the earth, who fancy that they know how to terrify us, only because they have acquired the audacity of addressing us with indolence and pride. There is no extravagance, there is not even a shadow of extravagance, in what we have advanced on the grandeur of an immaterial spirit. We have not said enough. It is not enough to say that a soul can neither be disordered by chains, nor racks, nor gibbets, nor pincers, nor fires; it defies the united powers of universal nature. Yea, were all the waters that hang in the clouds, and all that roll in the sea, were every drop collected into one prodigious deluge to overwhelm it, it would not be drowned. Were mountains the most huge, were masses the most enormous, were all matter to compose, if I may speak so, one vast ponderous weight to fall on and to crush it, it would not be bruised; yea, it would

not be moved. Were all the cedars of Lebanon, with all the brimstone of Asphaltites, and with every other inflammable matter, kindled in one blaze to consume it, it would not be burnt. Yea, when "the heavens pass away with a great noise, when the constellations of heaven fall, when the elements melt with fervent heat, when the earth, and all the works that are therein, are burnt up," 2 Pet. iii. 10; when all these things are dissolved, thou, human soul! shalt surmount all these vicissitudes, and rise above all their ruins! "Who art thou?" immaterial spirit! "who art thou to be afraid of a man?"

But if the soul, considered in its nature; if the soul, as a spiritual being, be superior to human tyranny; what homage, on this very account, what submission and abasement, or, to confine ourselves to the text, what fear ought we not to exercise towards the Supreme Being? "Who would not fear thee, O King of nations?" God alone has the power of destroying an immaterial soul; God alone has the power of preserving it. God is the only *Father of Spirits*. "Fear not them which kill the body: but fear him which is able to destroy the soul. Yea, I say unto you, fear him," Heb. xii. 9. God alone can act immediately on a spiritual creature. He needs neither the fragrance of flowers, nor the savour of foods, nor any of the mediums of matter, to communicate agreeable sensations to the soul. He needs neither the action of fire, the rigour of racks, nor the galling of chains, to produce sensations of pain. He acts immediately on the soul. It is he, human soul! it is he, who, by leaving thee to revolve in the dark void of thine unenlightened mind, can deliver thee up to all the torments that usually follow ignorance, uncertainty, and doubt. But the same God can expand thine intelligence just when he pleases, and enable it to lay down principles, to infer consequences, to establish conclusions. It is he, who can impart new ideas to thee, teach thee to combine those which thou hast already acquired, enable thee to multiply numbers, show thee how to conceive the infinitely various arrangements of matter, acquaint thee with the essence of thy thought, its different modifications, and its endless operations. It is he, who can grant thee new revelations, develop those which he has already given thee, but which have hitherto lain in obscurity; he can inform thee of his purposes, his councils and decrees, and lay before thee, if I may venture to say so, the whole history of time and eternity: for nothing either has subsisted in time, or will subsist in eternity, but what was preconceived in the councils of his infinite intelligence. It is he, who alone, and for ever, can excite infinite sensations of pleasure or pain within thee. It is he, who can apprehend the soul of a tyrant, amidst the most gay and festive objects, among the most servile flatteries of a court, and, in spite of a course of pleasures, produce such horrors and fears, and exquisite torments, as shall change even a Belshazzar's "countenance, trouble his thoughts, loose the joints of his loins, and smite his knees one against another," Dan. v. 6. And it is he also, who is able to divert a sensation of pain, amidst the greatest torments,

yea, to absorb a strong sensation of pain in a stronger sensation of pleasure. He can make a martyr triumph, all involved in fire and flame, by *shedding abroad* effusions of love in his heart; "the peace of God which passeth all understanding," and which "keeps the senses,"\* Rom. v. 5; Phil. iv. 7; that is, a peace which is superior to the action of the senses, and not to be interrupted by the exercise of them. It is he, who can enable him to celebrate a victory during an apparent defeat: who can overflow, in a sufferer's heart, the pains of martyrdom with the pleasures of paradise, and fill the mouth with shouts of triumph and songs of praise.

Speak, ye martyrs of Jesus Christ, tell us what influence the infinite God has over the soul! Be ye our divines and philosophers. What did ye feel, when, penetrating through a shower of stones, ye cried, "Behold, we see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God?" Acts vii. 56. What did ye feel, when, experiencing all the rage of a cruel Nero, ye exulted, "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God?" Rom. v. 2. But this is not the whole of the believer's joy. The expectation of arriving at great happiness by means of tribulation may naturally produce a patient submission to tribulations. But here is something more. "We rejoice," says St. Paul, "in hope of the glory of God. And not only so," adds he (weigh this expressive sentence, my brethren,) "not only so;" it is not only "the hope of the glory of God" that supports and comforts us; "not only so; but we glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope: and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." What did ye feel, when your executioners, not being able to obtain your voluntary adoration of their idols, endeavoured to obtain it by force; when, refusing to offer that incense which they had put into your hands, ye sang, "Blessed be the Lord, who teacheth our hands to war and our fingers to fight?" Ps. cxliv. 1. What did ye feel, when, wrapping your heads in the few rags that persecution had left you, ye refused to look at the worship of idols, and patiently submitted to be bruised with bastinadoes, condemned to the galleys, and chained to the oars? What did ye feel, when, in that painful situation, ye employed the remainder of your strength to look upward, and to adore the God of heaven and earth? It is God who supports his creature amidst all these torments, and he alone can infinitely diversify and extend his sensibility. None but he can excite in the soul those ineffable pleasures of which we have no ideas, and which we can express by no names: but which will be the objects of our eternal praises, if they be the objects of our present faith and hope. It is God, and only God, who can

communicate happiness in this manner. None of this power is in the hand of man. "Who art thou," spiritual creature, "to be afraid of a man?"

But we add further, "Who art thou," immortal creature, "to be afraid of a man that shall die?" The immortality of the soul elevates it above a mortal power, and renders supreme fear a just homage to none but to that Being whose dominion continues as long as the soul continues to exist. Can we be such novices, I do not say in the school of revelation, but in that of the most superficial reason, as to confound the duration of the soul with the duration of life? Or rather, are we so expert in the art of going from the great to the little, from the little to the less, from the less to the least divisible parts of time, or of matter, as to assign an atom of matter so minute, or an instant of time so inconsiderable, that either of them would express the shortness of a mortal life in comparison of the duration of an immortal soul? The most accurate teachers of logic and metaphysics forbid the use of the terms, *length, duration, period*, in speaking of eternity. We may say a *length, a duration, a period*, of a thousand, or of ten thousand millions of ages: but if we speak accurately and philosophically, we cannot say the *duration of eternity, the length of eternity, the periods of eternity*; because all the terms that are applicable to time, are inadequate to eternity. No, no, ye would attempt difficulties altogether insurmountable, were ye to try to find a quantity so small as to express the shortness of a mortal life in comparison of the duration of an immortal soul. Not only the most expert mathematician is unequal to the attempt, but it implies a contradiction to affirm, that the infinite spirit can do this; because contradiction never is an object of infinite power, and because it implies a contradiction to measure the existence of an immortal soul by the duration of a mortal life. It can never be said that a hundred years are the thousandth or the ten thousandth, or the hundred thousandth part of eternity. The inspired writers, whose language was often as just as their ideas were pure, have told us, that life is as the "withering grass;" as "a fading flower;" as "a declining shadow;" "swifter than" the rapid and imperceptible motion of a "weaver's shuttle." They call it "a vapour," that is dissipated in the air; "a dream," of which no vestige remains when the morning is come, "a thought,"\* that vanishes as soon as it is formed; "a phantom which walketh in a vain show;" Isa. xl. 7; Ps. cii. 11; Job vii. 6; James iv. 14; Ps. lxxiii. 20. But by all these emblems they meant to excite humility in us; but not to give us any ideas of a proportion between the duration of "withering grass, fading flowers, declining shadows," the time of throwing a "weaver's shuttle," of the dissipation of "a vapour," of the passing of "a dream," of the forming and losing of "a thought," of the "appearance of a phantom," and the eternal existence of an immortal soul. Such is the life of man! and such the duration of the dominion of a tyrant over an immortal soul! a duration which is only a point in eternity. A tyrant is mortal, his empire expires

\* Our author uses the common reading of the French Bible, which is, *garde les sens*. The original word is used in the Holy Scriptures for *reflection*, Rom. vii. 25, and for *sensation*, Jam. i. 23. The reason of our following the French reading in this place is obvious. Where the same reason does not oblige us, we have made it a law, in quotations of Scripture, scrupulously to adhere to our English text.

\* Ps. xc. 9. Heb.

† Ps. xxxix. 5, 6. Heb.

with his life, and were he to employ the whole course of his life in tormenting a martyr, and in trying to impair his felicity, he would resemble an idiot throwing stones at the lightning, while, in an indivisible moment, and with an inconceivable rapidity, it caught his eye as it passed from the east to the west.

But God is "the King immortal," 1 Tim. i. 17; and the eternity of his dominion is sufficient, my dear hearers, to demonstrate the truth of the text, and to fix all the possible attention of your minds on this question, "Who would not fear thee, O King of nations?" The immortal King is the only fit object of the fear of an immortal soul. There is no empire immortal but that of God, no dominion unchangeable but his. When the soul enters eternity it will be subject only to the God of eternity: "O God, of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the work of thy hands; they shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed. But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end!" Ps. cii. 24. We must, of necessity, take up again the words *space, duration, period*, which we just now discarded for their impropriety. During the periods of eternity, through all the duration of the existence of Him, who is the same and whose years shall have no end, the immortal God will for ever produce the happiness, or the misery of an immortal soul. His dominion over it will be eternally exercised in rendering it happy or miserable. The reprobate soul will eternally be the object of the avenging power of this God, for it will eternally be under the hand of its Judge. The faithful soul will eternally be the recipient of the beneficence of the immortal God, who is the worthy object, the only object, of solid hope and supreme fear. "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell: yea, I say unto you, fear him. Who would not fear thee, O King of nations? Doth not fear appertain to thee alone?"

III. Here, my brethren, could I think that I had been preaching to marbles, and to rocks; could I think that I had been discoursing to men, who attended on the preacher without hearing the sermon, or who heard without understanding it; I should think other proofs needed to demonstrate, that God alone merited the homage of supreme fear. Could I think that I had been preaching to men, who were all absorbed in sense and matter, and who could form no ideas in their minds unless some material objects were presented to their senses, or some imagery taken from sensible objects were used to excite them: I would insist on the third part of this discourse. If the idea of a Being, whose will is self-efficient and who can act immediately on a spiritual soul, were not sufficient to incline you to render the homage of fear to God, I would represent him under the third notion, which we gave you of him, as making all creatures fulfil his will. If tyrants, executioners, prisons, dungeons, racks, tortures, pincers, caldrons of boiling oil, gibbets, stakes, were necessary; if all nature, and all the ele-

ments, were wanted to inspire that soul with fear, which is so far elevated above the elements, and all the powers of nature: I would prove to you that tyrants and executioners, prisons and dungeons, racks and tortures, and pincers, caldrons of boiling oil, gibbets and stakes, all nature and all the elements, fulfil the designs of "the King of nations;" and that, when they seem the least under his direction, they are invariably accomplishing his will.

These are not imaginary ideas of mine; but they are taken from the same Scriptures that establish the first ideas, which we have been explaining. What do our prophets and apostles say of tyrants, executioners, and persecutors? In what colours do they paint them? Behold, how God contemns the proudest potentates; see how he mortifies and abases them. "O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, the staff in your hand, is mine indignation: howbeit thy heart doth not think so. The Lord hath broken the staff of the wicked, and the sceptre of the rulers. Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee. How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cast down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations. Thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds. I will be like the Most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell. Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult, is come up into mine ears, therefore will I put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way thou camest," Isa. x. 5. 7; chap. xiv. 5. 11—15; chap. xxxvii. 29. O! how capable were our sacred authors of considering the grandees of the earth in their true point of light! O! how well they knew how to teach us what a king, or a tyrant is in the presence of Him, by whose command "kings decree justice," Prov. viii. 15; and by whose permission, and even direction, tyrants decree injustice! The last words that we quoted from Isaiah, relate to Sennacherib. And who is this Sennacherib, whose general, Rabshakeh, is "come up with a great host" to overwhelm Jerusalem? Where is this "great king of Assyria?" What is this insolent mortal, who says, "Where are the gods of Hamath, and of Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered at all his land out of my hand? Shall the Lord deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?" 2 Kings xviii. 17. 24. 33. What is this Sennacherib? And what are all those who tread in his arrogant steps? They are wild beasts; but wild beasts in chains, conducted whither an almighty arm pleases to lead them. The power of this arm is "a hook in the noses" of these animals, "a bridle in their lips;" it turns them by the *hook* to the right or to the left, and it straightens or loosens the *bridle* as it pleases. By this *hook*, by this *bridle*, God led the Assyrian beast without his knowing it, and when his heart did not think so: he led him from Assyria to Judea, from Judea to Assyria, as his wisdom required his presence in either place.

The prophets meant to inspire us with the same notion of insensible and inanimate beings, so that every thing which excites fear might lead us "to fear the King of nations," who has all things in his power, and moves all according to his own pleasure. We will not multiply proofs. The prophet, in the chapter out of which we have taken the text, mentions an object very fit to inspire us with the fear of "the King of nations," who disposes inanimate beings in such a manner: he describes a tempest at sea. The gravity of this discourse, the majesty of this place, and the character of this auditory, will not allow those descriptions which a sportive fancy invents. We allow students to exercise their imaginations in an academy, and we pass over their glaring images in favour of their youth and inexperience: but sometimes descriptions supply the place of arguments, and a solid logic, not a puerile rhetoric, requires them. We are now in this case. In order to humble man in the presence of "the King of nations," we tell him that this King can make all creatures fulfil his will. With the same design, our prophet gives a sensible example of the power of God, by transporting man to the ocean, and by showing him "the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep. God uttereth his voice," says he, in a verse that follows the text, "and there is a noise of a multitude of waters in the heavens. He causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth. He maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures," Ps. cvii. 24. 13. Thou dull stupid man! who art not stricken with the idea of a God, whose will is self-efficient, and who alone can act immediately on an immaterial soul, come and behold some sensible proofs of that infinite power of which metaphysical proofs can give thee no idea! And thou, proud insolent man! go aboard the best built vessel, put out to sea, set the most vigilant watch, surround thyself with the most formidable instruments; what art thou, when God *uttereth his voice*? What art thou, when the *noise* resounds? What art thou, when torrents of rain seem to threaten a second deluge, and to make the globe which thou inhabitest one rolling sea? What art thou, when lightnings emit their terrible flashes? What art thou, when the *winds* come roaring out of *their treasures*? What art thou then? Verily, thou art no less than thou wast in thy palace. Thou art no less than when thou wast sitting at a delicious table. Thou art no less than thou wast when every thing contributed to thy pleasure. Thou art no less than when, at the head of thine army, thou wast the terror of nations, shaking the earth with the stunning noise of thy warlike instruments: for, at thy festal board, within thy palace, among thy pleasures, at the head of thine armies, thou wast nothing before "the King of nations." As an immaterial and immortal creature, thou art subject to his immediate power: but to humble and to confound thee, he must manifest himself to thee in sensible objects. Behold him then in this formidable situation: try thy power against his: silence "the noise of the multitude of waters:" fasten the vessel that "reeleth like a drunken man;" smooth the foaming waves that "mount thee

up to heaven;" fill up the horrible gulfs whither thou goest "down to the bottoms of the mountains," Ps. cvii. 27. 26; Jonah ii. 7; dissipate the lightning that flashes in thy face; hush the bellowing thunders; confine the winds in their caverns; assuage the anguish of thy soul, and prevent its melting and exhaling with fear. How diminutive is man! my brethren. How many ways has God to confound his pride! "He uttereth his voice, and there is a noise of a multitude of waters in the heavens. He causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth. He maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures. Who would not fear thee, O King of nations?"

In this manner the prophets represent all beings animate and inanimate, material and immaterial, as concurring in the Creator's will. This is not a truth which requires the submission of faith, but every branch of it proceeds from reason, and is supported by experience. When God wills the destruction, or the deliverance of a people, all creation executes his design. When he is angry, every thing becomes an instrument of vengeance. A cherub, brandishing a flaming sword, prevents the return of guilty man to paradise. The air infected, the earth covered with noxious plants, the brute creation enraged, wage war with the rebel. Grasshoppers become "the Lord's great army," Joel ii. 11; flies swarm, waters change into blood, light turns to darkness, and all besiege the palace and the person of Pharaoh. The heavens themselves, "the stars in their courses, fight against Sisera," Judg. v. 20. The earth yawns, and swallows up Dathan and Abiram in its frightful caverns. Fire consumes Nadab and Abihu, Korah and his company. A fish buries alive the prevaricating Jonah in his wide mouth. But on the contrary, when God declares himself for a people, there is nothing in the universe which God cannot make a mean of happiness. The heavens unfurl their beauties; the sun expands his light: the earth adorns herself with flowers, and loads herself with fruits, to entertain the favourite of "the King of nations;" while the animals become teachable, and offer to bow to his service. "All things work together for good to them that love God." "All things are yours, whether Paul, or Cephas, or the world. Behold, I will do a new thing. The beasts of the field shall honour me. The beasts of the field shall honour me, the dragons and the owls: because I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen. Ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Drop down, ye heavens from above, let the earth open and bring forth salvation!" Rom. viii. 28; 1 Cor. iii. 22; Isa. xl. 19. 23; lv. 12; xlv. 8.

Thus, my brethren, has God proportioned himself to our meanness and dullness, in order to inspire us with fear. Is it necessary, to make us fear God, that we should see bodies, in various parts and prodigious masses of matter, march at his word to fulfil his will? Well, behold bodies, in various parts and in vast masses! Behold! universal nature moving

at his word, and fulfilling his will. Let us fear God in this view of him, if our minds enveloped in matter cannot conceive an idea of a Being, whose will is self-efficient, and who alone can act on immaterial souls. But, my brethren, a mind accustomed to meditation has no occasion for this last notion: the first absorbs all. A God, every act of whose will is effectual, is alone worthy of the homage of fear. A just notion of his power renders all ideas of means useless. The power of God has no need of means. Were I existing alone with God, God could make me supremely happy, or supremely miserable: one act of his will is sufficient to do either. We do not mean to enlarge the idea, when, speaking of an all-sufficient Creator, who is superior to the want of means, we treat of a concurrence of creatures: we only mean to level the subject to the capacities of some of our hearers.

Let us sum up what has been said. To consider a creature as the cause of human felicity is to pay him the homage of adoration, and to commit idolatry. The avaricious man is an idolater; the ambitious man is an idolater; the voluptuous man is an idolater. And to render to a creature the homage of fear is also idolatry; for supreme fear is as much due to God alone as supreme hope. He who fears war, and does not fear the God who sends war, is an idolater. He who fears the plague, and who does not fear the God who sends the plague, is an idolater.

It is idolatry, in public or in private adversities, to have recourse to second causes, to little subordinate deities, so as to neglect to appease the wrath of the Supreme God. To consult the wise, to assemble a council, to man fleets, to raise armies, to build forts, to elevate ramparts, and not to consider the succour of heaven, which alone is capable of giving success to all such means, is to be guilty of idolatry. Isaiah reproves the Jews in the most severe manner for this kind of idolatry. "In that day," says the prophet, speaking of the precautions which they had taken to prevent the designs of their enemies; "In that day thou didst look to the armour of the house of the forest. Ye have seen also the breaches of the city of David: and ye gathered together the waters of the lower pool. And ye have numbered the houses of Jerusalem, and the houses have ye broken down to fortify the wall. Ye have made also a ditch between the two walls, for the water of the old pool: but ye have not looked unto the Maker of this Jerusalem, neither had respect for him that fashioned it long ago. And in that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth: and behold, joy and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine; let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die. And it was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of hosts, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you, till ye die, saith the Lord of hosts," Isa. xxii. 8—14. Do we deserve less cutting reproaches? *In that day*, in the day of our public and private calamities, we have consulted wise men, we have assembled councils, we have fitted out fleets, and raised armies, we have pretended by them to secure

these provinces from impending dangers, and we have "not had respect unto him that fashioned them long ago." But what are wise men? What are councils? What are navies? What are armies and fortifications, but subordinate beings, which God directs as he pleases? Ah! ye penitential tears, ye days of sackcloth and ashes, ye solemn humiliations, ye sighs that ascend to God, ye fervent prayers, ye saints who impart your souls in fervour; and, above all, ye sincere conversions to "the King of nations," love to his laws, obedience to his commands, submission to his will, tenderness to his people, zeal for his altars, devotedness to his worship; if ye do not prevail with the "King of nations" to favour our designs, what must our destiny be? And ye tragical designs, black attempts, shameful plots, impure associations, criminal intrigues, execrable oaths, atrocious calumnies, cruel falsehoods, with what oceans of misery will ye overflow us, if ye arm "the King of nations" against us?

To conclude. There is much imbecility, if no idolatry in us, if, while we fear God, we stand in too much awe of second causes, which sometimes appear terrible to us. No, no! revolution of ages, subversion of states, domestic seditions, foreign invasions, contagious sicknesses, sudden and untimely deaths, ye are only the servants of that God, whose favourite creature I am. If, by his command, ye execute some terrible order on me, I will receive it as a comfortable order, because it is executed only for my good. Trouble my peace: perhaps it may be fatal to me. Turn the tide of my prosperity, which seems to constitute my glory: perhaps it may be dangerous to me. Snap the silken bonds that have so much influence on the happiness of my life; perhaps they may become my idols. Pluck out my eyes, cut off my hands; perhaps they may cause me to "offend," Matt. xviii. 8, and may plunge me into the bottomless abyss. Bind me to a cross: provided it be my Saviour's cross. Cut the thread of my life: provided the gates of immortal happiness be opened unto me.

Christians, let us satiate our souls with these meditations. Let us give up our hearts to these emotions. Let us fear God, and let us fear nothing else. "Fear not, thou worm Jacob. Fear thou not, for I am with thee. Be not dismayed, for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. Who will not fear thee, O King of nations? for to thee doth it appertain," Isa. xli. 10. 14. May God inspire us with these sentiments! To him be honour and glory for ever! Amen.

## SERMON XIII.

### THE MANNER OF PRAISING GOD.

Preached after the administration of the Lord's Supper.

PSALM xxxiii. 1.

*Praise is comely for the upright.*

THERE is something very majestic, my brethren, in the end for which we are now assembled



in the presence of God. His Providence has infinitely diversified the conditions of those who compose this assembly. Some are placed in the most eminent, others in the most obscure, posts of society. Some live in splendour and opulence, others in meanness and indigence. One is employed in the turbulence of the army, another in the silence of the study. Notwithstanding this infinite variety of employments, ranks, and ages, we all assemble to-day in one place; one object occupies us; one sentiment animates us; one voice makes the church resound, "praise ye the Lord, for his mercy endureth for ever," Ps. cxxxvi. 1. If there be an object that can give a mortal any ideas of the first impressions which are made on a soul, at its first entering the glorious palace of the blessed God in heaven, it is this. The first objects that strike such a soul, are multitudes of all nations, tongues, and people, concentrated in a meditation on the beneficence of God, prostrating themselves before his throne, casting their crowns at his feet, and crying, out of the abundance of their hearts, which contemplate the perfections of a Being worthy of their profoundest praise, "Amen, blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might be unto our God, for ever and ever, Amen. We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints! Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen," Rev. vii. 12; xi. 17; xv. 3; i. 5, 6. This is the employment of the blessed in heaven: this is what we are doing to-day on earth.

But what a contradiction, what a contrast appears, when lifting up the exterior habit of piety that covers some of us, we examine the inward dispositions of the heart. The psalms, which are uttered with the voice, are contradicted by the tempers of the heart. The mouths that were just now opened to bless the Creator, will presently be opened again to blaspheme and to curse him. The praises which seemed so proper to please him in whose honour they were offered, will incur this reproof, "Thou wicked man! What hast thou to do to take my covenant in thy mouth?" Ps. i. 16.

My brethren, if we would join our voices with those of angels, we must have the sentiments of angels. We must (at least, as far as the duty is imitable by such frail creatures,) we must, in order to worship God as those happy spirits praise him, love him as they do, serve him as they do, devote ourselves to him as they devote themselves to him; and this is the manner of praising God, to which I exhort, and in which I would endeavour to instruct you to-day, agreeably to the prophet's exalted notions of it in the words of the text. What day can be more proper to inspire such a noble design? What day can be more proper to engage you to mix your worship with that of glorified intelligences, than this, on which we are to come "unto the city of the living God, the heavenly

Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, and to the church of the first-born which are written in heaven?" Heb. xii. 22, 23.

But, who are we, to be admitted into a society so holy? Great God! Thou dost appear to us to-day, as thou didst formerly to thy prophet, "sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and thy train filling the temple," Isa. vi. 1. Around thee stand the seraphim, covering themselves with their wings in thy majestic presence, and crying one to another, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of thy glory," ver. 3. We are stricken as thy prophet was, with such a tremendous vision, and each of us cries, with him, "Wo is me! I am undone! I am a man of unclean lips! and yet, mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts," ver. 5. O great God! command one of thy seraphim to fly to us as he flew to him; bid him touch our mouths as he touched his, with "a live coal from off thine altar," ver. 6; and in this day of grace and mercy, let him say to each of us, "Lo this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged! Amen," ver. 7.

"Praise is comely for the upright." The praising of God is a duty of which we may form two different notions: a general, and a particular notion. By a *general* notion of praise, I mean, the exercise of a man, who, being capable of examining sublime objects, and of comprehending grand subjects, fixes his attention on the attributes of God, feels the force of those proofs which establish the truth of them, is delighted with them to a certain degree, and is happy in publishing their praise. I mean, by a *particular* notion of praising God, the exercise of a man, who, having received some signal favour of God, loves to express his gratitude for it.

Each of these exercises of praise supposes reflections, and sentiments. To praise God in the first sense, to reflect on his attributes, to converse, and to write about them without having the heart affected, and without loving a Being, who is described as supremely amiable, is a lifeless praise, more fit for a worldly philosopher than for a rational Christian. To praise God in the second sense, to be affected with the favours of God, without having any distinct notions of God, without knowing whether the descriptions of the perfections that are attributed to him be flights of fancy or real truths, is an exercise more fit for a bigot, who believes without knowing why, than for a spiritual man, who judges all things, 1 Cor. ii. 15. If we distinguish the part that these two faculties, reflection and sentiment, take in these two exercises of praise, we may observe, that the first, I mean the praise of God taken in a general sense, is the fruit of *reflection*, and the second of *sentiment*. The first is, if I may be allowed to speak so, the praise of the mind: the second is the praise of the heart.

It is difficult to determine which of these two notions prevails in the text, whether the psalmist uses the word *praise* in the first, or in the second sense. If we judge by the whole subject of the psalm, both are included. The praise of the heart is easily discovered. Whether the author of the psalm were Hezekiah, as many of the fathers thought, who say, that this

prince composed it after the miraculous defeat of Sennacherib; or whether, as it is most likely, David were the composer of it, after one of those preternatural deliverances, with which his life was so often signalized: what I call the praise of the heart, that is, a lively sense of some inestimable blessing, is clearly to be seen. On the other hand, it is still clearer, that the sacred author does not celebrate only one particular object in the psalm. He gives a greater scope to his meditation, and comprises in it all the works, and all the perfections of God.

Although the solemnity of this day calls us less to the praise of the mind than to that of the heart; although we intend to make the latter the principal subject of this discourse; yet it is necessary to attend a little to the former.

I. "The praise of the Lord," taking the word praise in the vague sense that we have affixed to the term, "is comely for the upright:" and it is comely for none but for them.

"Praise is comely for the upright." Nothing is more worthy of the attention of an intelligent being, particularly, nothing is more worthy of the meditation of a superior genius, than the wonderful perfections of the Creator. A man of superior genius is required, indeed, to use his talents to cultivate the sciences and the liberal arts: but, after all, the mind of man, especially of that man to whom God has given superior talents, which assimilate him to celestial intelligences, was not created to unravel a point in chronology, to learn the different sounds by which different nations signify their ideas, to measure a line, or to lose itself in an algebraic calculation; the mind of such a man was not created to study the stars, to count their number, to measure their magnitude, to discover more than have yet been observed. Nobler objects ought to occupy him. It becomes such a man to contemplate God, to guide the rest of mankind, to lead them to God, who "dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto," 1 Tim. vi. 16, and to teach us to attenuate the clouds that hide him from our feeble eyes. It becomes such a man to use that superiority which his knowledge gives him over us, to elevate our hearts above the low region of terrestrial things, where they grovel with the brute beasts, and to help us to place them on the bright abode of the immortal God. The praise of the Lord is comely for upright men.

But praise is comely only for upright men. I believe it is needless now to explain the word *uprightness*. The term is taken in the text in the noblest sense: this is a sufficient explication, and this is sufficient also to convince us, that the praising of God is comely for none but upright men. I cannot see, without indignation, a philosopher trifle with the important questions that relate to the attributes of God, and make them simple exercises of genius, in which the heart has no concern, examining whether there be a God, with the same indifference with which he inquires whether there be a vacuum in nature, or whether matter be infinitely divisible. On determining the questions which relate to the divine attributes depend our hopes and fears, the plans that we must form, and the course of life which we ought to pursue: and with these views we should examine the perfections of God: these are consequences that

should follow our inquiries. With such dispositions the psalmist celebrated the praises of God, in the psalm out of which we have taken the text. How comely are the praises of God in the mouth of such a man!

Let us follow the holy man a moment in his meditation. His psalm is not composed in scholastic form, in which the author confines himself to fixed rules, and, scrupulously following a philosophical method, lays down principles, and infers consequences. However, he establishes principles, the most proper to give us sublime ideas of the Creator; and he speaks with more precision of the works and attributes of God, than the greatest philosophers have spoken of them.

How absurdly have philosophers treated of the origin of the world! How few of them have reasoned conclusively on this important subject! Our prophet solves the important question by one single principle; and, what is more remarkable, this principle, which is nobly expressed, carries the clearest evidence with it. The principle is this: "By the word of the Lord, were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth," ver. 6. This is the most rational account that was ever given, of the creation of the world. The world is the work of a self-efficient will, and it is this principle alone that can account for its creation. The most simple appearances in nature are sufficient to lead us to this principle. Either my will is self-efficient, or there is some other being whose will is self-efficient. What I say of myself, I say of my parents, and what I affirm of my parents, I affirm of my more remote ancestors, and of all the finite creatures from whom they derived their existence. Most certainly, either finite beings have self-efficient wills, which it is impossible to suppose, for a finite creature with a self-efficient will is a contradiction: either, I say, a finite creature has a self-efficient will, or there is a first cause who has a self-efficient will; and that there is such a Being is the principle of the psalmist; "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made: and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth."

If philosophers have reasoned inconclusively on the origin of the world, they have spoken of its government with equal uncertainty. The psalmist determines this question with great facility, by a single principle, which results from the former, and which, like the former, carries its evidence with it. "The Lord looketh from heaven: he considereth all the works of all the inhabitants of the earth," Ps. xxxiii. 13, 14. This is the doctrine of Providence. And on what is the doctrine of Providence founded? On this principle: God "fashioneth their hearts alike," ver. 15. Attend a moment to the evidence of this reasoning, my brethren. The doctrine of Providence, expressed in these words, "God considereth the works of the inhabitants of the earth," is a necessary consequence of this principle, "God fashioneth their hearts alike," and this principle is a necessary consequence of that which the psalmist had before laid down to account for the origin of the world! Yes! from the doctrine of God the Creator of men, follows that of God the inspector, the director, rewarder, and the punisher of

their actions. One of the most specious objections that has ever been opposed to the doctrine of Providence, is a contrast between the grandeur of God and the meanness of men. How can such an insignificant creature as man be an object of the care and attention of such a magnificent being as God? No objection can be more specious, or, in appearance, more invincible. The distance between the meanest insect and the mightiest monarch, who treads and crushes reptiles to death without the least regard to them, is a very imperfect image of the distance between God and man. That which proves that it would be beneath the dignity of a monarch to observe the motions of ants, or worms, to interest himself in their actions, to punish, or to reward them, seems to demonstrate, that God would degrade himself were he to observe, to direct, to punish, to reward mankind, who are infinitely inferior to him. But one fact is sufficient to answer this specious objection: that is, that God has created mankind. Does God degrade himself more by governing than by creating mankind? Who can persuade himself, that a wise Being has given to intelligent creatures faculties capable of obtaining knowledge and virtue, without willing that they should endeavour to acquire knowledge and virtue? Or who can imagine, that a wise Being, who wills that his intelligent creatures should acquire knowledge and virtue, will not punish them if they neglect those acquisitions; and will not show by the distribution of his benefits that he approves their endeavours to obtain them?

Unenlightened philosophers have treated of the attributes of God with as much abstruseness as they have written of his works. The *moral attributes* of God, as they are called in the schools, were mysteries which they could not unfold. These may be reduced to two classes: attributes of *goodness*, and attributes of *justice*. Philosophers, who have admitted these, have usually taken that for granted which they ought to have proved. They collected together in their minds all perfections; they reduced them all to one object, which they denominated a *perfect being*; and supposing, without proving, that a perfect Being existed, they attributed to him, without proof, every thing that they considered as a perfection. The psalmist shows by a surer way that there is a God supremely just, and supremely good. It is necessary in order to convince a rational being of the justice and goodness of God, to follow such a method as that which we follow to prove his existence. When we would prove the existence of God, we say, there are creatures, therefore there is a Creator. In like manner, when we would prove that a creature is just, and a good being, we say, there are qualities of goodness and justice in creatures, therefore he, from whom these creatures derive their existence, is a Being just and good. Now, this is the reasoning of the psalmist in this psalm: "The Lord loveth righteousness and judgment; the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord," ver. 5, that is to say, it is impossible to consider the works of the Creator, without receiving evidence of his goodness. And the works of nature, which demonstrate the goodness of God, prove his justice also: for God has created us with such

dispositions, that we cannot enjoy the gifts of his goodness without obeying the laws of his righteousness. The happiness of an individual, who procures a pleasure by disobeying the laws of equity, is a violent happiness, which cannot be of long duration: and the prosperity of public bodies, when it is founded in iniquity, is an edifice, which with its bases will be presently sunk and gone.

But what we would particularly remark is, that the excellent principles of the psalmist, concerning God, are not mere speculations: but truths from which he derives practical inferences; and he aims to extend their influence beyond private persons, even to legislators and conquerors. One would think, considering the conduct of mankind, that the consequences, which are drawn from the doctrines of which we have been speaking, belong to none but to the dregs of the people; that lawgivers and conquerors have a plan of morality peculiar to themselves, and are above the rules to which other men must submit. Our prophet had other notions. What are his maxims of policy? They are all included in these words: "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance," ver. 12. What are his military maxims? they are all included in these words:—"There is no king saved by the multitude of a host; a mighty man is not delivered by much strength; a horse is a vain thing for safety; neither shall he deliver any by his great strength," ver. 16, 17. Who proposes these maxims? A hermit, who never appeared on the theatre of the world? or a man destitute of the talents necessary to shine there? No: one of the wisest of kings; one of the most bold and able generals; a man, whom God had self-elected to govern his chosen people, and to command those armies which fought the most obstinate battles, and gained the most complete victories. Were I to proceed in explaining the system of the psalmist, I might prove, that as he had a right to infer the doctrine of Providence from the works of nature, and that of the moral attributes of God from the works of creation; so from the doctrines of the moral attributes of God, of providence, and of the works of creation, he had a right to conclude, that no conquerors or lawgivers could be truly happy but those who acted agreeably to the laws of the just and good Supreme. But I shall not enlarge on this article.

Permit me only to place in one point of view the different phrases by which the psalmist describes the Deity in this psalm. "The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord. By the word of the Lord were the heavens made: and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. He gathereth the waters of the sea together, as a heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses. The Lord looketh from heaven: he beholdeth all the sons of men. From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth. He fashioneth their hearts alike; he considereth all their works," Ps. xxxiii. 5—7, 13—15. From these speculative ideas of God, he derives the following rules of practice, "Let all the earth fear the Lord: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. Our soul waiteth for the Lord: he is our help

and our shield. For our heart shall rejoice in him: because we have trusted in his holy name. Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us according as we hope in thee," Ps. xxxiii. 8; 20—22. How delightful it is, my brethren, to speak of God, when one has talents to speak of him in such a noble manner; and when one intends to promote the fear and the love of him, with a universal obedience to him, from all that is said! How well it becomes such a man to praise God! The *praise of the Lord is comely* in the mouths of *upright men*.

II. Let us now apply the subject more immediately to the service of this day. To *praise God* is a phrase, which is sometimes taken in a particular sense, for the exercise of a person, who, having received singular favours of God, delights in expressing his gratitude to him. This *praise is comely* in the mouth of an *upright man* for four reasons.

First, Because he arranges them in their true order, highly estimating what deserves a high esteem, and most highly estimating what deserves the highest esteem.

Secondly, Because he employs all his benefits in the service of his benefactor.

Thirdly, Because, while he recounts his blessings, he divests himself of all merit, and ascribes them only to the goodness of God from whom they proceed.

Fourthly, Because he imitates that goodness and love, which inclined God to bless him in such a manner.

I will affix to each of these reflections a single word. *Praise*, or if you will, *gratitude*, "is comely for the upright," because it is *wise*, *real*, *humble*, and *magnanimous*: in these four respects, "praise is comely for the upright." These are the sentiments with which the august ceremony of which we have partaken this morning, should inspire us. These are the most important reflections with which we can close this discourse.

1. The gratitude of upright men is *wise*. The praise of the Lord becomes them well, because, while they bless God for all their mercies, they arrange them in their proper order; they prize each according to its real worth, and that most of all which is of the greatest value. It is a very mortifying reflection, my brethren, that the more we study ourselves, the more clearly we perceive, that the love of the world, and of sensible things, is the chief spring of all our actions and sentiments. This disagreeable truth is proved, not only by the nature of our vices, but even by the genius of our virtues; not only by the offences that we commit against God, but by the very duties that we perform in his service.

A person so ungrateful, as not to discover any gratitude to God, when he bestows temporal blessings on him, can scarcely be found. We praise God, when he delivers us from any public calamity, or from any domestic adversity; when he recovers us from dangerous illness; when he raises us up an unexpected friend, or a protector, who assists us; when he sends us some prosperity, which renders life more easy. In such cases as these, we render a homage to God, that cannot be refused without ingratitude.

But we are extremely blameable, when, while we feel the value of these blessings, we

remain insensible of the worth of other blessings, which are infinitely more valuable, and which merit infinitely more gratitude. A blessing that directly regards the soul, is more valuable than one which regards only the body. A blessing, that regards our eternal happiness, is of greater worth, than one which influences only the happiness of this life. Whence is it then, that being so sensible of the blessings of the first kind, we are so little affected with those of the last? How comes it to pass, that we are so full of gratitude, when God gives the state some signal victory; when he prospers its trade; when he strengthens the bonds that unite it to powerful and faithful allies; and so void of it, while he continues to grant it the greatest blessing that a society of rational creatures can enjoy, I mean a liberty to serve God according to the dictates of our own consciences? Whence is it, that we are so very thankful to God for preserving our lives from the dangers that daily threaten them, and so little thankful for his miraculous patience with us, to which it is owing, that, after we have hardened our hearts against his voice one year, he invites us another year; after we have falsified our promises made on one solemnity, he calls us to another solemnity, and gives us new opportunities of being more faithful to him? Whence comes this difference? Follow it to its source. Does it not proceed from what we just now said? Is not love of the world, and of sensible things, the grand spring of our actions and sentiments? The world, the world; lo! this is the touchstone by which we judge of good and evil.

An *upright man* judges in another manner: he will, indeed, bless God for all his benefits: but, as he knows how to arrange them, so he knows how to prize each according to its worth, and how to apportion his esteem to the real value of them all.

According to such an estimation, what ought not our gratitude to God to be to-day, my dear brethren! we may assure ourselves with the utmost truth, that had the Lord united in our houses to-day pleasures, grandeurs, and dignities; had he promised each of us a life longer than that of a patriarch; a family as happy as that of Job, after his misfortunes; glory as great as that of Solomon; he would have bestowed nothing equal to that blessing which he gave us this morning. He forgave those sins, which, had they taken their natural course, would have occasioned endless remorse, and would have plunged us into everlasting misery and wo. A peace was *shed abroad* in our consciences, which gave us a foretaste of heaven. He excited hopes, that absorbed our souls in their grandeur. Let us say all in one word: he gave us his Son. "He that spared not his own Son, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Rom. viii. 32.

2. The gratitude of upright men is *real*. The praise of the Lord becomes them, because, while they praise God for his benefits, they live to the glory of their benefactor. Every gift of God furnishes us with both a motive and a mean of obedience to him. It is an excess of ingratitude to make a contrary use of his gifts, and to turn the benefits that we receive against the benefactor from whom we receive them. What gifts are they by which

God has not distinguished us? Thee he has distinguished by a penetrating genius, which renders the highest objects, the deepest mysteries, accessible to thee. Wo be to thee! if thou employ this gift to invent arguments against the truths of religion, and to find out sophisms that befriend infidelity. An *upright* man devotes this gift to the service of his benefactor; he avails himself of his genius, to discover the folly of skeptical sophisms, and to demonstrate the truth of religion. On thee he has bestowed an astonishing memory. Wo be to thee! if thou use it to retain the pernicious maxims of the world. An *upright* man dedicates this gift to his benefactor; he employs his memory in retaining the excellent lessons of equity, charity and patience, which the Holy Spirit has taught him in the Scriptures. To thee he has given an authoritative elocution, to which every hearer is forced to bow. Wo be to thee! if thou apply this rare talent to seduce the minds, and to deprave the hearts of mankind. An *upright* man devotes this blessing to the service of his benefactor; he uses his eloquence to free the minds of men from error, and their lives from vice. Towards thee God has exercised a patience, which seems contrary to his usual rules of conduct towards sinners, and by which he has abounded towards thee in forbearance and long-suffering. Wo be to thee! if thou turn this blessing to an opportunity of violating the commands of God; if thine obstinacy run parallel with his patience, and if, "because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily," "thy heart be fully set in thee to do evil," Eccl. viii. 11. An *upright* man devotes this blessing to his benefactor's service. From the patience of God he derives motives of repentance. How easily might this article be enlarged! how fruitful in instruction would it be on this solemnity! But we proceed.

3. Gratitude to God well becomes an upright man, because it is *humble*; because an upright man, by publishing the gifts of God's grace, divests himself of himself, and attributes them wholly to the goodness of him from whom they came. Far from us be a profane mixture of the real grandeurs of the Creator with the fanciful grandeurs of creatures! Far be those praises, in which he who offers them always finds, in his own excellence, the motives that induced the Lord to bestow his benefits on him!

Two reflections always exalt the gifts of God in the eyes of an upright man: a reflection on his meanness, and a reflection on his unworthiness; and it is with this comeliness of humility, if I may venture to call it so, that I wish to engage you to praise God for the blessings of this day.

1. Meditate on your *meanness*. Contrast yourselves with God, who gives himself to you to-day in such a tender manner. How soon is the capacity of man absorbed in the works and attributes of God! Conceive, if thou be capable, the grandeur of a Being, who "made the heavens by his word, and all the host of them, by the breath of his mouth." Think, if thou be capable of thinking, of the glory of a Being, who existed from all eternity, whose understanding is infinite, and whose power is irresistible, whose will is above con-

trol. Behold him filling the whole universe with his presence. Behold him in the palace of his glory, inhabiting the praises of the blessed, surrounded by thousand thousands, and by ten thousand times ten thousand angels, who excel in strength, and who delight to fly at the first signal of his will. Thou human soul! contemplate this object, and recover thy reason. What art thou? What was thine origin? What is thine end? Thou diminutive atom! great only in thine own eyes; behold thyself in thy true point of view. Dust! ashes! putrefaction! glorious only at the tribunal of thine own pride; divest thyself of the tawdry grandeur in which thou lovest to array thyself. Thou vapour! thou dream! Thou exhalation of the earth! evaporating in the air, and having no other consistence than what thine own imagination gives thee: behold thy vanity and nothingness. Yet this dream, this exhalation, this vapour, this dust and ashes and putrefaction, this diminutive creature, is an object of the eternal care and love of its God. For thee, contemptible creature! the Lord stretched out the heavens: for thee he laid the foundation of the earth: let us say more, for thee, contemptible creature! God formed the plan of redemption. What could determine the great Jehovah to communicate himself, in such a tender and intimate manner, to so contemptible a creature as man? His goodness, his goodness alone.

Although a sense of our meanness should not terrify and confound us, yet it should exclude arrogance, and excite lowly sentiments. But what will our humility be, if we estimate the gifts of God's grace by an idea of our *unworthiness*? Let each recollect the mortifying history of his own life. Remember, thou! thy fiery youth, in which, forgetting all the principles, that thy pious parents had taught thee, thou didst acknowledge no law but thine own passionate and capricious will. Remember, thou! that period, in which thy heart being infatuated with one object, and wholly employed about it, thou didst make it thine idol, and didst sacrifice to it thine honour, thy duty, thy God. Recollect, thou! the cruel use, that for many years thou didst make of thy credit, thy riches, thy rank, when, being devoured with self-love, thou wast insensible to the voice of the widow and the orphan, and to a number of distressed people, who solicited relief. Remember thou! that fatal hour, the recollection of which ought to make thy "head waters, and thine eyes a fountain of tears," Jer. ix. 1; that fatal hour, in which, God having put thee into the fiery trial of persecution, thou couldst not abide the proof. Like Peter, thou didst *not know* a disgraced Redeemer; thou didst cowardly abandon a persecuted church, and was just on the point of abjuring thy religion. Let each of us so consider himself as he seems in the eyes of a holy God. A criminal worthy of the most rigorous punishments! Let each of us say to himself, notwithstanding all this, it is I, guilty I, I, whose sins are more in number than the hairs on my head; it is I, who have been admitted this morning into the house of God; it is I, who have been invited this morning to that mystical repast, which sovereign wisdom itself prepared; it is I, who

have been encouraged against the just fears, which the remembrance of my sins had excited, and have heard the voice of God, proclaiming in my conscience, "Fear not thou worm Jacob," Isa. xli. 14. It is I, who have been "abundantly satisfied with the fatness of the house" of God, and have "drunk of the river of his pleasures," Ps. xxxvi. 8. What inclines God to indulge me in this manner? Goodness only! O surpassing and inconceivable goodness! thou shalt for ever be the object of my meditation and gratitude! "How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God!" ver. 7. These are the sentiments that ought to animate our praise to-day. Such "praise is comely for the upright."

Finally, the gratitude of an upright man is noble and magnanimous. The praise of God will become the mouth of an upright man, because he takes the love of God to him for a pattern of his behaviour to his fellow creatures. St. Paul has very emphatically expressed the happy change which the gospel produces in true Christians. "We all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord," 2 Cor. iii. 18. Some commentators, instead of reading "we all beholding as in a glass," as the expression is rendered in our translation, render the words, "We all becoming mirrors." I will not undertake to prove that this is the meaning of the term: it is certainly the sense of the apostle.\* He means to inform us, that the impression, which the evangelical display of the perfections of God makes on the souls of believers, engraves them on their minds, and renders them like mirrors, that reflect the rays, and the objects which are placed opposite to them, and represent their images. "They behold the glory of the Lord with open face. They are changed from glory to glory into the same image, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." I wish, my brethren, that the impression, which was made on you by the generosity and magnanimity of God, who loaded you this morning with his gracious benefits, may transform you to-day "into the same image from glory to glory." I would animate you with this, the most noble, the most sublime, the most comfortable, way of praising God.

What gave you so much peace and pleasure this morning, in what God did for you? Was it the pardon of your sins? Imitate it; pardon

\* The idea of reflecting, while one contemplates, the attributes of God, is a very fine thought, and fully expressive of the benevolent effects which Christianity produces in its disciples: but Mr. Saurin, whose business as a Christian minister was not with the fine, but the true, only meant, by what he had said above, that it was agreeable to the general design of the apostle. Erasmus was the first who translated St. Paul's term *κατοπτρισμοί* in speculo representantes. Beza renders it, in speculo intuentes, and the French bibles have it, nous contemplons comme en un miroir. Our author was delighted with the ingenuity of Erasmus, who however, he could not accede to his translation, because, 1. He could meet with no Greek author, cotemporary with St. Paul, who had used the term in the sense of Erasmus. 2. Because he could not perceive any connexion between that signification and the phrase with open face. He abode therefore by the usual reading. See Sermon Tom. ix. S. viii. My idea of an object pleases me, therefore it is a true idea of it, is contemptible logic: yet how many pretended articles of religion have arisen from this way of reasoning

your brethren. Was it his past forbearance with you? Imitate it; moderate that impatience which the ingratitude of your brethren excites in your minds. Was it that spirit of communication, which disposed a God, who is all-sufficient to his own happiness, to go out of himself, as it were, and to communicate his felicity to creatures? Imitate it; go out of these entrenchments of prosperity in which ye lodge, and impart your benefits to your brethren. Was it the continual watchfulness of God for the salvation of your souls? Imitate it; exert yourselves for the salvation of the souls of your brethren; suffer not those who are united to you by all the ties of nature, society and religion, to perish through your lukewarmness and negligence. While ye triumphantly exclaim, on this solemn festival, "Let us make a joyful noise to the Rock of our salvation," Ps. xcv. 1; remember your persecuted brethren, to whom God refuses this pleasure; remember "the ways of Zion," that "mourn because none come to the solemn feast," Lam. i. 4.

My brethren, how pleasing is a Christian festival! How comfortable the institution, to which we were this morning called! But, I remember here a saying of Jesus Christ to his apostles, "I have other sheep, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd," John x. 16. Alas! we also have sheep in another fold. When shall we have the comfort of bringing them into this? Ye divided families who are present in this assembly, when will ye be united? Ye children of the reformation! whom the misfortunes of the times have torn from us! ye dear parts of ourselves! when will ye come to us? When will ye be re-gathered to the flock of the great "Shepherd and Bishop of our souls?" When will ye shed in our assemblies tears of repentance, for having lived so long without a church, without sacraments, without public worship? When will ye shed tears of joy for having recovered these advantages?

Great God! Thou great "God who hidest thyself!" is it to extinguish, or to inflame our zeal, that thou delayest the happy period? Are our hopes suspended or confounded? God grant, my dear brethren, that the praise, which we render to the Lord for all his benefits, may obtain their continuance and increase! And God grant, while he gives us our "lives for a prey," Jer. xxi. 9, that those of our brethren may be given us also! To him be honour and glory for ever! Amen.

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## SERMON XIV.

### THE PRICE OF TRUTH.

PROVERBS xxiii. 23.

*Buy the Truth.*

"WHAT is truth?" John xviii. 38. This question Pilate formerly put to Jesus Christ, and there are two things, my brethren, in the Scripture account of this circumstance very surprising. It seems strange that Jesus Christ

should not answer Pilate's question; and it seems equally strange that Pilate should not repeat the question till he procured an answer from Jesus Christ. One principal design of the Son of God, in becoming incarnate, was to dissipate the clouds with which the enemy of mankind had obscured the *truth*; to free it from the numberless errors with which the spirit of falsehood had adulterated it among the miserable posterity of Adam; and to make the fluctuating conjectures of reason subside to the demonstrative evidence of revelation. Jesus Christ himself had just before said, "to this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth," ver. 37; yet, here is a man lying in the dismal night of paganism; a man born in "darkness, having no hope, and being without God in the world," Eph. v. 8; and ii. 12; here is a man, who, from the bottom of that abyss in which he lies, implores the rays of that "light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world," John i. 9; and asks Jesus Christ, "What is truth?" and Jesus Christ refused to assist his inquiry, he does not even condescend to answer this wise and interesting question. Is not this very astonishing? Is not this a kind of miracle?

But if Jesus Christ's silence be surprising, is it not equally astonishing that Pilate should not repeat the question, and endeavour to persuade Jesus Christ to give him an answer. A man, who had discovered the true grounds of the hatred of the Jews; a man, who knew that the virtues of the illustrious convict had occasioned their accusations against him; a man, who could not be ignorant of the fame of his miracles; a man, who was obliged, as it were, to become the apologist of the supposed culprit before him, and to use this plea, "I find in him no fault at all;" which condemned the pleader, while it justified him for whose sake the plea was made; this man only glances at an opportunity of knowing the *truth*. He asks, "What is truth?" But it does not much signify to him, whether Jesus Christ answer the question or not. Is not this very astonishing? Is not this also a kind of miracle?

My brethren, one of these wonders is the cause of the other, and, if you consider them in connexion, your astonishment will cease. On the one hand, Jesus Christ did not answer Pilate's question, because he saw plainly, that his iniquitous judge had not such an ardent love of *truth*, such a spirit of disinterestedness and vehement zeal, as truth deserved. On the other, Pilate, who perhaps might have liked well enough to have known *truth*, if a simple wish could have obtained it, gave up the desire at the first silence of Jesus Christ. He did not think *truth* deserved to be inquired after twice.

The conduct of Jesus Christ to Pilate, and the conduct of Pilate to Jesus Christ, is repeated every day. Our assiduity at church, our attention to the voice of the servants of God, our attachment to the sacred books in which *truth* is deposited; all these dispositions, and all these steps in our conduct, are, in a manner, so many repetitions of Pilate's question, "What is truth?" *What is moral truth?* *What is the doctrinal truth* of a future state, of judgment, of heaven, of hell? But how often,

content with the putting of these questions, do we refuse that assiduous application of the mind, that close attention of thought, which the answers to our questions would require! How often are we in pain, lest the light of the truth, that is shining around us, should force us to discover some objects, of which we choose to be ignorant! Jesus Christ, therefore, often leaves us to wander in our own miserable dark conjectures. Hence so many prejudices, hence so many erroneous opinions of religion and morality, hence so many dangerous delusions, which we cherish, even while they divert our attention from the great end, to which we ought to direct all our thoughts, designs, and views.

I would fain show you the road to truth to-day, my brethren; open to you the path that leads to it; and by motives taken from the grand advantages that attend the knowledge of it, animate you to walk in it.

I. We will examine what it costs to know *truth*.

II. What *truth* is worth.

Our text is, "buy the truth;" and the title of our sermon shall be, *The Christian's Logic*. Doubtless the greatest design that an immortal mind can revolve, is that of knowing *truth* one's self: and the design, which is next to the former in importance, and which surpasses it in difficulty, is that of imparting it to others. But if a love of *truth*; if a desire of imparting it to a people, whom I bear always on my heart; if ardent prayers to the God of *truth*; if these dispositions can obtain the knowledge of truth, and the power of imparting it, we may venture to hope, that we shall not preach in vain. May God himself crown our hopes with success!

I. We are to inquire for the road that leads to *truth*; or, to use the ideas of the text, we are to tell you what it costs to know *truth*.

Before we enter on this inquiry, it is necessary to determine what we mean by *truth*. If there be an equivocal word in the world, either in regard to human sciences, or in regard to religion, it is this word *truth*. But, not to enter into a metaphysical dissertation on the different ideas that are affixed to the term, we will content ourselves with indicating the ideas which we affix to it here.

*Truth* ought not to be considered here as subsisting in a subject, independently of the reflections of an intelligence that considers it. I do not affirm that there is not a *truth* in every object which subsists, whether we attend to it or not: but I say, that in these phrases, *to search truth*, *to love truth*, *to buy truth*, the term is relative, and expresses a harmony between the object and the mind that considers it, a conformity between the object and the idea we have of it. *To search after truth*, is to endeavour to obtain adequate ideas of the object of our reflections; and *to buy truth*, is to make all the sacrifices which are necessary for the obtaining of such ideas as are proportional to the objects of which our notions are the images. By *truth*, then, we mean, an agreement between an object and our idea of it.

But we may extend our meditation a little farther. The term *truth*, taken in the sense we have now given it, is one of those abstract

terms, the precise meaning of which can never be ascertained, without determining the object to which it is attributed. There is a *truth* in every art and science. There is a *truth* in the art of rising in the world; a certain choice of means; a certain dexterous application of circumstances; a certain promptitude at seizing an opportunity. The courtier *buys* this *truth*, by his assiduity at court, by his continual attention to the looks, the features, the gestures, the will, the whimsies of his prince. The merchant *buys* this *truth* at the expense of his rest and his health; sometimes at the expense of his life, and often at that of his conscience and his salvation. In like manner, there is a *truth* in the sciences. A mathematician racks his invention, spends whole nights and days, suspends the most lawful pleasures, and the most natural inclinations, to find the solution of a problem in a relation of figures, in a combination of numbers. These are not the *truths* which the Wise Man exhorts us to *buy*. They have their value, I own, but how seldom are they worth what they cost to obtain!

What then is Solomon's idea? Does he mean only the *truths* of religion, and the science of salvation? There, certainly, that which is *truth* by excellence may be found; nor can it be *bought* too dear. I do not think, however, that it would comprehend the precise meaning of the Wise Man to understand by *truth* here the science of salvation alone. His expression is vague, it comprehends all *truths*, it offers to the mind a general idea, the idea of universal *truth*. "Buy the truth."

But what is this general idea of *truth*? What is *universal truth*? Does Solomon mean, that we should aim to obtain adequate ideas of all beings, that we should try to acquire the perfection of all arts, that we should comprehend the mysteries of all sciences? Who is equal to this undertaking?

It seems to me, my brethren, that when he exhorts us here to "buy the truth," in this vague and indeterminate sense, he means to excite us to endeavour to acquire that happy disposition of mind which makes us give to every question, that is proposed to us, the time and attention which it deserves: to each proof its evidence; to each difficulty its weight; to every good its real value. He means to inspire us with that accuracy of discernment, that equity of judgment, which would enable us to consider a demonstration as demonstrative, and a probability as probable only, what is worthy of a great application as worthy of a great application, what deserves only a moderate love as worthy of only a moderate love, and what deserves an infinite esteem as of an infinite esteem; and so on. This, I think, my brethren, is the disposition of mind with which Solomon means to inspire us. This, if I may be allowed to say so, is an aptness to *universal truth*. With this disposition, we may go as far in the attainment of particular *truths* as the measure of the talents, which we have received of God, and the various circumstances, in which Providence has placed us, will allow. Especially, by this disposition, we shall be convinced of this principle, to which Solomon's grand design was to conduct us; that the science of salvation is that, which, of all others,

deserves the greatest application of our minds and hearts; and with this disposition we shall make immense advances in the science of salvation.

But neither this *universal truth*, nor the disposition of mind which conducts us to it, can be acquired without labour and sacrifice. They must be bought. "Buy the truth." And, to confine myself to some distinct ideas, *universal truth*, or the disposition of mind, which leads to it, requires the sacrifice of *dissipation*; the sacrifice of *indolence*; the sacrifice of *precipitancy* of judgment; the sacrifice of *prejudice*; the sacrifice of *obstinacy*; the sacrifice of *curiosity*; the sacrifice of the *passions*. We compress the matter in seven precepts.

1. Be attentive.
2. Do not be discouraged at labour.
3. Suspend your judgment.
4. Let prejudice yield to reason.
5. Be teachable.
6. Restrain your avidity of knowing.
7. In order to edify your mind, subdue your heart.

This is the price at which God has put up this *universal truth*, and the disposition that leads to it. If you cannot resolve on making all these sacrifices, you may, perhaps, arrive at some particular truth: but you can never obtain *universal truth*. You may, perhaps, become famous mathematicians, or geometers, judicious critics, or celebrated officers; but you can never become real disciples of *truth*.

1. The sacrifice of dissipation is the first price we must pay for the *truth*. *Be attentive* is the first precept, which we must obey, if we would know it. A modern philosopher\* has carried, I think, this precept too far. He pretends, that the mind of man is united to two very different beings: first to the portion of matter, which constitutes his body, and next, to God, to eternal wisdom, to universal reason. He pretends, that, as the emotions which are excited in our brain, are the cause of our sentiments, effects of the union of the soul to the body; so attention is the occasional cause of our knowledge, and of our ideas, effects of the union of our mind to God, to eternal wisdom, to universal reason. The system of this philosopher on this subject has been, long since, denominated a philosophical romance. It includes, however, the necessity, and the advantage, of attention, which is of the last importance. Dissipation is a turn of mind, which makes us divide our mind among various objects, at a time when we ought to fix it wholly on one. Attention is the opposite disposition, which collects, and fixes our ideas on one object. Two reflections will be sufficient to prove that *truth* is unattainable without the sacrifice of dissipation, and the application of a close attention.

The first reflection is taken from the *nature* of the human mind, which is finite, and contracted within a narrow sphere. We have only a portion of genius. If, while we are examining a compound proposition, we do not proportion our attention to the extent of the proposition, we shall see it only in part, and we shall fall into error. The most absurd propositions

\* Malbranche in his Search after Truth. Book iii. chap. 6.



have some motives of credibility. If we consider only two motives of credibility, in a subject which has two degrees of probability, and if we consider three degrees of probability in a subject which has only four, this last will appear more credible to us than the first.

The second reflection is taken from *experience*. Every one who has made the trial, knows that things have appeared to him true or false, probable or certain, according to the dissipation which divided, or the attention which fixed, his mind in the examination. Whence is it, that on certain days of retirement, recollection, and meditation, piety seems to be the only object worthy of our attachment, and, with a mind fully convinced, we say, "My portion, O Lord, is to keep thy words?" Ps. cxix. 57. Whence is it, that, in hearing a sermon, in which the address of the preacher forces our attention in a manner in spite of ourselves, we exclaim, as Israel of old did, "All that the Lord hath spoken, we will do?" Exod. xix. 8. Whence is it, that on a death-bed, we freely acknowledge the solidity of the instructions that have been given us on the emptiness of worldly possessions, and readily join our voices to all those that cry, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity, and vexation of spirit?" Eccl. i. 2. Whence is it, on the contrary, that in the gayety of youth, and in the vigour of health, the same objects appear to us substantial and solid, which seem void and vexatious when we come to die? How comes it to pass, that a commerce with the world subverts all the systems of piety, which we form in our closets? How is it, that demonstrations expire when sermons end, and that all we have felt in the church ceases to affect us when we go out of the gate? Is there, then, nothing sure in the nature of beings? Is *truth* nothing but an *exterior denomination*, as the schools term it; nothing but a creature of reason, a manner of conceiving? Does our mind change its nature, as circumstances change the appearance of things? Does that, which was true in our closets, in our churches, in a calm of our passions, become false when the passions are excited, when the church doors are shut, and the world appears? God forbid! It is because, in the first circumstances, we are all taken up with studying the *truth*; whereas health, the world, the passions, disperse (so to speak) our attention, and by dissipating, weaken it.

I add farther, Dissipation is one ordinary source, not only of errors in judgment, but also of criminal actions in practice. We declaim, perhaps too much, against the malice of mankind. Perhaps men may not be so wicked as we imagine. When we can obtain their attention to certain truths, we find them affected with them; we find their hearts accessible to motives of equity, gratitude, and love. If men seem averse to these virtues, it is sometimes because they are taken up with a circle of temporal objects; it is because their attention is divided, and dissipated among them; it is because the hurry of the world incessantly defeats them. Ignorance and error are inseparable from dissipation. *Be attentive*, then, is the first precept we give you. The sacrifice of dissipation, then, is necessary, in order to our arrival at the knowledge of *truth*.

But, if truth can be obtained only by observing this precept, and by making this sacrifice, let us ingeniously own, *truth* is put up at a price, and at a great price. The expression of the Wise Man is just, the truth must be bought. "Buy the truth." Our minds, averse from recollection and attention, love to rove from object to object; they particularly avoid those objects which are intellectual, and which have nothing to engage the senses, of which kind are the truths of religion. The majesty of an invisible God, "who hideth himself," cannot captivate them; and as they are usually employed about earthly things, so terrestrial ideas generally involve them. Satan, who knows that a believer, studious of the truth, is the most formidable enemy to his empire, strives to divert him from it. As soon as Abraham prepares his offering, the birds of prey interrupt his sacrifice: a disciple of *truth* drives such birds away. Among various objects, amidst numerous dissipations, in spite of opposite ideas, which resist and combat one another, he gathers up his attention, and unreservedly turns his soul to the study of *truth*.

2. The second sacrifice is that of indolence, or slothfulness of mind; and, *Be not discouraged at labour*, is the second precept, which must be observed, if you would obtain the knowledge of *truth*. This article is connected with the preceding. The sacrifice of dissipation cannot be made, without making this of indolence, or sluggishness of mind. Attention is labour; it is even one of the most painful labours. The labour of the mind is often more painful than that of the body; and the greatest part of mankind have less aversion to the greatest fatigues of the body, than to the least application of mind. The military life seems the most laborious; yet, what an innumerable multitude of men prefer it before the study of the sciences! This is the reason; the study of the sciences requires a contention, which costs our indolence more than the military life would cost it.

Although the labour of the mind be painful, yet it is surmountable, and it is formed in the same manner in which fatigue of body is rendered tolerable. A man who is accustomed to ease and rest; a man, who has been delicately brought up, cannot bear to pass days and nights on horseback, to have no settled abode, to be continually in action, to waste away by the heat of the day, and the inclemency of the night. Nothing but use and exercise can harden a man to these fatigues. In like manner, a man, who has been accustomed to pass his days and nights on horseback, to have no settled abode, to be continually in action, to wear himself out with the heat of the day, and the cold of the night; a man whose body seems to have changed its nature, and to have contracted the hardness of iron, or stone; such a man cannot bear the fatigue of attention. It is then necessary to accustom the mind to labour, to enure it to exercise, to render it apt, by habit and practice, to make those efforts of attention, which elevate those, who are capable of them, to ideas the most sublime, and to mysteries the most abstruse.

They, whom Providence calls to exercise mechanical arts, have reason to complain; for every thing, that is necessary to discharge the

duties of their calling, diverts their attention from what we are now recommending, and absorbs their minds in sensible and material objects. God, however, will exercise his equitable mercy towards them, and their cases afford us a presumptive proof of that admirable diversity of judgment, which God will observe at the last day. He will make a perfect distribution of the various circumstances of mankind; and "to whom he hath committed much, of him he will ask the more," Luke xii. 48.

Let no one abuse this doctrine. Every mechanic is engaged, to a certain degree, to sacrifice indolence and dullness of mind. Every mechanic has an immortal soul. Every mechanic ought to "buy the truth" by labour and attention. Let every one of you, then, make conscience of devoting a part of his time to recollection and meditation. Let each, amidst the meanest occupations, accustom himself to think of a future state. Let each endeavour to surmount the reluctance, which alas! we all have, to the study of abstract subjects. *Be not disheartened at labour*, is our second precept. The sacrifice of indolence and sluggishness of mind, is the second sacrifice which *truth* demands.

3. It requires, in the next place, that we should sacrifice precipitancy of judgment. Few people are capable of this sacrifice: indeed, there are but few who do not consider *suspension of judgment* as a weakness, although it is one of the noblest efforts of genius and capacity. In regard to human sciences, it is thought a disgrace to say, I cannot determine such, or such a question: the decision of it would require so many years' study and examination. I have been but so many years in the world, and I have spent a part in the study of this science, a part in the pursuit of that; one part in this domestic employment, and another in that. It is absurd to suppose that I have been able to examine all the principles, and all the consequences, all the calculations, all the proofs, and all the difficulties, on which the illustration of this question depends. Wisdom requires, that my mind should remain undetermined on this question; that I should neither affirm, nor deny, any thing of a subject, the evidences and the difficulties of which are alike unknown to me.

In regard to religion, people usually make a scruple of conscience of suspending their judgments; yet, in our opinion, a Christian is so much the more obliged to do this, by how much more the *truths* of the gospel surpass in sublimity and importance all the objects of human science. I forgive this folly in a man educated in superstition, who is threatened with eternal damnation, if he renounce certain doctrines, which not only he has not examined, but which he is forbidden to examine under the same penalty. But that casuists, who are, or who ought to be, men of learning and piety, should imagine they have obtained a signal victory over infidelity, and have accredited religion, when, by the help of some terrific declamations, they have extorted a catechumen's consent; this is what we could have scarcely believed, had we not seen numberless examples of it. And that you, my brethren, who are a free people, you who are spiritual men, and ought to "judge all things," 1 Cor. ii. 15, that you should at any time submit to such casuists; this

is what we could have hardly credited, had not experience afforded us too many mortifying proofs.

Let us not incorporate our fancies with religion. The belief of a *truth*, without evidence, can render us no more agreeable to God than the belief of a falsehood. A *truth*, received without proof, is, in regard to us, a kind of falsehood. Yea, a *truth*, received without evidence, is a never-failing source of many errors; because a *truth*, received without evidence, is founded, in regard to us, only on false principles. And if, by a kind of hazard, in which reason has no part, a false principle engages us to receive a *truth* on this occasion, the same principle will engage us to receive an error on another occasion. We must then suspend our judgments, whatever inclination we may naturally have to determine at once, in order to save the attention and labour, which a more ample discussion of *truth* would require. By this mean, we shall not attain, indeed, all knowledge; but we shall prevent all errors. The goodness of God does not propose to enable us to know all truth; but it proposes to give us all needful help to escape error. It is conformable to his goodness, that we should not be obliged, by a necessity of nature, to consent to error; and the help needful for the avoiding of falsehood, he has given us. Every man is entirely free to withhold his consent from a subject which he has not considered in every point of view.

4. The fourth sacrifice, which *truth* demands, is that of prejudice; and the fourth precept is this, *Let prejudice yield to reason*. This precept needs explanation. The term *prejudice* is equivocal. Sometimes it is employed to signify a proof, which has not a full evidence, but which, however, has some weight: so that a great number of prejudices, which, taken separately, could not form a demonstration, taken together ought to obtain an assent. But, sometimes the word *prejudice* has an odious meaning, it is put for that impression, which a circumstance, foreign from the proposition, makes on the mind of him, who is to determine, whether the proposition ought to be received or rejected. In this sense we use the word, when we say a man is full of *prejudice*, in order to describe that disposition, which makes him give that attention and authority to false reasonings, which are due only to solid arguments.

Our fourth precept is to be taken in a different sense, according to the different meaning which is given to this term. If the word *prejudice* be taken in the first sense, when we require you to make prejudice yield to reason, we mean, that you should give that attention, and authority, to a presumption, or a probability, which presumptive or probable evidence requires. We mean, that demonstrative evidence should always prevail over appearances. The equity of this precept is self-evident; yet, perhaps, it may not be improper to show the necessity of obeying it, in order to engage our conduct the more closely to it. I said just now, that men were enemies to that labour, which the finding out of *truth* requires. Yet men love knowledge. From the combination of these two dispositions arises their propensity to *prejudice*. A

man, who yields to *prejudice*, frees himself from that labour, which a search after *truth* would require; and thus gratifies his indolence. He flatters himself he has obtained *truth*, and so he satisfies his desire of knowledge. We must guard against this temptation. This is the first sense of the precept, Let prejudice yield to reason.

When in the second sense, which we have given to the word *prejudice*, we require him, who would be a disciple of *truth*, to make prejudice yield to reason, we mean, that whenever he examines a question, he should remove every thing that is not connected with it. *Prejudice*, in our first sense, sometimes conducts to *truth*; but *prejudice*, of the second kind, always leads us from it. What idea would you form of a man, who in examining this question, *Is there a part of the world called America?* should place among the arguments, which determine him to affirm, or to deny the question, this consideration; *The sun shines to-day in all its splendour*; or this, *The sun is concealed behind thick clouds?* Who does not see, that these middle terms, by which the disputant endeavours to decide the point, have no concern with the solution of the question? This example I use only for the sake of conveying my meaning, and I do not design by it to guard you against this particular error. None of you, in examining the question, which we just now mentioned, has ever regarded, either as proofs, or as objections, these considerations. *The sun shines to-day in all its splendour, The sun is hidden to-day behind the clouds.* However, it is too true, that in questions of far greater importance, we often determine our opinions by reasons, which are as foreign from the matter as those just now mentioned. For example, it is a question, either whether such a man be an accurate reasoner, or whether he expresses a matter clearly, or whether his evidence deserves to be received or rejected. What can be more foreign from any of these questions, than the habit he wears, the number of servants that wait on him, the equipage he keeps, the tone in which he reasons, the dogmatical air with which he decides? And, yet, how often does a dogmatical decision, a peculiar tone, a pompous equipage, a numerous retinue, a certain habit, how often does each of these become a motive to mankind to receive the testimony of such a man, and to engage them to resign their reason to him? In like manner, a man may understand all history, ancient and modern, he may possess all the oriental languages, he may know the customs of the most remote and barbarous nations, and he may be, all the time, a bad logician: for what relation is there between the knowledge of customs, tongues, and histories, ancient and modern, and an accurate habit of reasoning? And yet how often does the idea of a man, bustling with science of this kind, impose on our minds? How often have we imagined that a man, who knew what the *soul* was called in thirty or forty different languages, knew its nature, its properties, and its duration, better than he who knew only what it was called in his own mother tongue? The term *prejudice* (we repeat it again) which sometimes signifies a probability, is sometimes put

for that impression, which a circumstance, foreign from the question under examination, makes on the mind. When we demand the sacrifice of *prejudice*, in this latter sense, we mean to induce you to avoid all motives of credibility, except those which have some relation, near, or remote, to the subject in hand.

This precept will appear more important to you, if you apply it to a particular subject. We will mention a famous example, that will prove the necessity of sacrificing prejudice, in both the senses we have mentioned. There is a case, in which the great number of those who adhere to a communion, form a prejudice in its favour. One communion is embraced by a multitude of scholars, philosophers, and fine geniuses: another communion has but few partisans of these kinds: hence arises a probability, a presumption, a *prejudice*, in favour of the first, and against the last of these communities. It is probable, that the community, which has the greatest number of fine geniuses, philosophers, and scholars, is more rational than that which has the least. However, this is only a probability, this is not a demonstration. The most elevated minds are capable of the greatest extravagances, as the highest saints are subject to the lowest falls. If you can demonstrate the truth of that religion, which the multitude of great men condemn, the probability which arises from the multitude, ought to yield to demonstration. Sacrifice *prejudice* in this first sense.

But there is a case in which a great number of partisans do not form even a probability in favour of the doctrine they espouse. For example, the church of Rome perpetually urges the suffrage of the multitude in its favour. And we reply, that the multitude of those, who adhere to the Roman church, does not form even a presumption in their favour, and we prove it.

If you affirm that a multitude forms a probability in favour of any doctrine, it must be supposed that this multitude have examined the doctrine which they profess, and profess only what they believe. But we must, first, object against that part of the multitude which the church of Rome boasts of, which is composed of indolent members, who continue in the profession of their ancestors by chance, as it were, and without knowing why. We must object, next, against an infinite number of ignorant people in that community, who actually know nothing about the matter. We must object against whole provinces, and kingdoms, where it is hardly known that there is a divine book, on which the faith of the church is founded. We must object against that army of ecclesiastics, who are not wiser than the common people, on account of their being distinguished from them by a particular habit, and who waste their lives in eternal idleness, at least in exercises which have no relation to an inquiry after *truth*. We must object, farther, against all those zealous defenders of the church, who are retained in it by the immense riches they possess there, who judge of the weight of an argument by the advantages which it procures them, and who actually reason thus: The church in which ministers are poor, is a bad church; that which enriches

them is a good church: but this church enriches its ministers, and that suffers them to be poor; the latter, therefore, is a bad church, and the former is the only good one. We must object, finally, against all those callous souls, "who hold the truth in unrighteousness," Rom. i. 18, and who oppose it only in a party spirit. If you pursue this method, you will perceive, that the multitude, which alarmed you, will be quickly diminished; and that this argument, so often repeated by the members of the church of Rome, does not form even a probability in favour of that communion.

5. The fifth sacrifice, which *truth* demands, is that of obstinacy; and the fifth precept which you must obey, if you mean to attain it, is this, *Be teachable*. This maxim is self-evident. What can be more irrational, than a disposition to defend a proposition, only because we have had the rashness to advance it, and to choose to heap up a number of absurdities rather than to relinquish one, which had escaped without reflection or design? What can be more absurd, than that disposition of mind, which makes us prefer falling a thousand times into falsehood, before saying, for once, I mistake? Had we some knowledge of mankind, were we to form a system of morality on metaphysical ideas, it would seem needless to prescribe docility, and one would think every body would be naturally inclined to practise this virtue. But what seems useless in speculation is very often essential in practice. Let us guard against obstinacy. Let us always consider that the noblest victory, which we obtain over ourselves. Let each of us say, when *truth* requires it, I have erred, I consecrate the remainder of my life to publish that *truth*, which I have hitherto misunderstood, and which I opposed only because I had the misfortune to misunderstand it.

6. *Truth* requires the sacrifice of curiosity, and the sixth precept, which is proposed to us, is, *Restrain your avidity of knowing*. This is a difficult sacrifice, the precept is even mortifying. Intelligence is one of the noblest prerogatives of man. The desire of knowledge is one of the most natural desires. We do not, therefore, condemn it, as bad in itself: but we wish to convince you, that, to give an indiscreet scope to it, instead of assisting in the attainment of *truth*, is to abandon the path that leads to it; and by aspiring to the knowledge of objects above our reach, and which would be useless to us during our abode in this world, and destructive of the end for which God has placed us here, we neglect others that may be discovered, and which have a special relation to that end. We ought then to sacrifice curiosity, to refrain from an insatiable desire of knowing every thing, and to persuade ourselves, that some truths, which are often the objects of our speculations, are beyond the attainment of finite minds, and, particularly, of those finite minds, on which God has imposed the necessity of studying other truths, and of practising other duties.

7. But, of all the sacrifices which *truth* requires, that of the passions is the most indispensable. We have proved this on another occasion,\* and we only mention it to-day.

\* Sermon, Tom. II. Ser. neuvieme. Sur les passions.

Such are the sacrifices which *truth* requires of us, such are the precepts which we must practise to obtain it, and the explication of these may account for some sad phenomena. Why are so many people deceived? Why do so many embrace the grossest errors? Why do so many people admit the most absurd propositions as if they were demonstrations? Why, in one word, are most men such bad reasoners? It is because rectitude of thought cannot be acquired without pains and labour; it is because *truth* is put up at a price; it is because it costs a good deal to attain it, and because few people value it so as to acquire it by making the sacrifices which, we have said, the *truth* demands.

II. Let us proceed to inquire the *worth* of *truth*; for, however great the sacrifices may be, which the attainment of *truth* requires, they bear no proportion to the advantages which *truth* procures to its adherents. 1. *Truth* will open to you an infinite source of pleasure. 2. It will fit you for the various employments to which you may be called in society. 3. It will free you from many disagreeable doubts about religion. 4. It will render you intrepid at the approach of death. The most cursory inspection of these four objects will be sufficient to convince you, that, at whatever price God has put up *truth*, you cannot purchase it too dearly. *Buy the truth*.

1. *Truth* will open to you an infinite source of pleasure. The pleasure of knowledge is infinitely superior to the pleasures of sense, and to those which are excited by the turbulent passions of the heart. If the knowledge of *truth* be exquisitely pleasing when human sciences are the objects of it, what delight is it not attended with, when the science of salvation is in view?

My brethren, forgive me, if I say, the greater part of you are not capable of entering into these reflections. As you usually consider religion only in a vague and superficial manner; as you know neither the beauty nor the importance of it; as you see it neither in its principles nor in its consequences, so it is a pain to you to confine yourselves to the study of it. Reading tires you; meditation fatigues you; a sermon of an hour wearies you quite out; and, judging of others by yourselves, you consider a man who employs himself silently in the closet to study religion, a man, whose soul is in an ecstasy when he increases his knowledge, and refines his understanding; you consider him as a melancholy kind of man, whose brain is turned, and whose imagination is become wild through some bodily disorder. To study, to learn, to discover: in your opinions, what pitiable pursuits! The elucidation of a period! The cause of a phenomenon! The arrangement of a system! There is far more greatness of soul in the design of a courtier, who, after he has languished many hours in the antichamber of a prince, at length obtains one glance of the prince's eye. There is much more solidity in the projects of a gamester, who proposes, in an instant to raise his fortune on the ruin of that of his neighbour. There is much more reality in the speculations of a merchant, who discovers the worth of this thing, and the value of that; who taxes, if I

may be allowed to speak so, heaven, and earth, and sea, all nature, and each of its component parts.

But you deceive yourselves grossly. The study of religion, as we apply to it in our closets, is very different from that which you exercise under a sermon, sometimes not well preached, and often badly heard; and from that which you exercise in the hasty reading of a pious book. As we meditate, we learn; and as we learn, the desire of learning increases. In our studies, we consider religion in every point of light. There, we compare it with the dictates of conscience, with the desires of the human heart, and with the general concert of all creatures. There, we admire to see the God of nature in harmony with the God of religion; or rather, we see religion is the renovation and embellishment of nature. There, we compare author with author, economy with economy, prophecy with event, event with prophecy. There, we are delighted to find, that, notwithstanding diversities of times, places, conditions, and characters, the sacred authors harmonize, and prove themselves animated by one spirit: a promise made to Adam is repeated to Abraham, confirmed by Moses, published by the prophets, and accomplished by Jesus Christ. There, we consider religion as an assemblage of truths, which afford one another a mutual support; and, when we make some new discovery, when we meet with some proof, of which we had been ignorant before, we are involved in pleasures, far more exquisite than those which you derive from all your games, from all your amusements, from all the dissipations, which consume your lives. We enjoy a satisfaction in advancing in this delightful path, infinitely greater than that which you taste, when your ambition, or your avarice, is gratified: we *look*, like the cherubim, to the mystical ark, and *desire* thoroughly to know all its contents, 1 Pet. i. 12.

A Christian, who understands how to satiate his soul with these sublime objects, can always derive pleasure from its fountain. "If ye continue in my word," said the Saviour of the world, "ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free," John viii. 31, 32. This saying is true in many respects, and perhaps it may, not improperly, be applied to our subject. A man, who has no relish for *truth*, is a slave, leisure time is a burden to him. He must crawl to every inferior creature, prostrate himself before it, and humbly entreat it to free him from that listlessness which dissolves and destroys him; and he must by all means avoid the sight of himself, which would be intolerable to him. But a Christian, who knows the *truth*, and loves it, and who endeavours to make daily advances in it, is delivered from this slavery: "The truth hath made him free." In retirement, in his closet, yea, in a desert, his meditation supplies the place of the whole world, and of all its delights.

2. *Truth* will fit you for the employments to which you are called in society. Religion, and Solomon, the herald of it, had certainly a view more noble and sublime than that of preparing us for the exercise of those arts which employ us in the world. Yet, the advantages of *truth* are not confined to religion. A man, who has

cultivated his mind, will distinguish himself in every post in which Providence may place him. An irrational, sophistical turn of mind, incapacitates all who do not endeavour to correct it. Rectitude of thought, and accuracy of reasoning, are necessary every where. How needful are they in a political conference? What can be more intolerable than the harangues of those senators, who, while they should be consulting measures for the relieving of public calamities, never understand the state of a question, nor ever come nigh the subject of deliberation; but employ that time in vain declamations, foreign from the matter, which ought to be devoted to the discussion of a particular point, on which the fate of a kingdom depends? How needful is such a rectitude of thought in a council of war! What, pray, is a general, destitute of this? He is an arm without a head: he is a madman, who may mow down ranks on his right hand, and cover the field with carnage on the left; but who will sink under the weight of his own valour, and, for want of discernment, will render his courage often a burden, and sometimes a ruin to his country. This article of my discourse addresses itself principally to you who are heads of families. It is natural to parents to wish to see their children attain the most eminent posts in society. If this desire be innocent, it will engage you to educate your children in a manner suitable to their destination. Cultivate their reason, regard that as the most necessary science, which forms their judgments, and which renders their reasoning powers exact.

This is particularly necessary to those whom God calls to officiate in the church. What can be more unworthy of a minister of *truth*, than a sophistical turn of mind? What more likely method to destroy religion, than to establish *truth* on arguments which would establish falsehood? What can be more unreasonable, than that kind of logic which serves to reason with, if I may be allowed to speak so, only from hand to mouth; which pulls down with one hand what it builds with the other; which abandons, in disputing with adversaries of one kind, the principles it had established, in disputing with adversaries of another kind? What sad effects does this method, too often practised by those who ought to abhor it, produce in the church? Are we called to oppose teachers, who carry the free agency of man beyond its due bounds? Man is made a trunk, a stone, a being destitute of intelligence and will. Are we called to oppose people, who, under pretence of defending the perfections of God, carry the slavery of man beyond its due bounds? Man is made a seraphical intelligence; the properties of disembodied spirits are attributed to him; he is represented capable of elevating his meditations to the highest heavens, and of attaining the perfections of angels and cherubims. Are we called to oppose adversaries, who carry the doctrine of good works too far? The necessity of them is invalidated; they are said to be suited to the condition of a Christian, but they are not made essential to Christianity; the essence of faith is made to consist in a bare desire of being saved, or, if you will, of being sanctified, a desire, into which enters, neither that knowledge of the heart, nor that denial of

self, nor that mortification of the passions, without which every desire of being sanctified is nothing but an artifice or corruption, which turns over a work to God that he has imposed on man. Are we called to oppose people, who enervate the necessity of good works? The Christian vocation is made to consist in impracticable exercises, in a degree of holiness inaccessible to frail men. The whole genius of religion, and of all its ordinances, is destroyed; the table of the Lord is surrounded with devils, and fires, and flames, and is represented rather as a tribunal where God exercises his vengeance; as a mount Ebal, from whence he cries, "Cursed be the man, Cursed be the man;" than as a throne of grace, to which he invites penitent sinners, and imparts to them all the riches of his love. Are we called to oppose men, who would make God the author of sin, and who, from the punishments, which he inflicts on sinners, derive consequences injurious to his goodness and mercy? All the reiterated declarations of Scripture are carefully collected, all the tender expostulations, all the attracting invitations, which demonstrate that man is the author of his own destruction, and that "God will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth," 1 Tim. ii. 4. Are we called to resist adversaries, who weaken the empire of God over his creatures? God is made, I do not say an inexorable master, I do not say a severe king; but, O horrid! he is made a tyrant, and worse than a tyrant. It has been seriously affirmed that he formed a great part of mankind with the barbarous design of punishing them for ever and ever, in order to have the cruel pleasure of showing how far his avenging justice and his flaming anger can go. It has been affirmed, that the decree, pronounced against the reprobate before his birth, not only determines him to punishment after the commission of sin, but infallibly inclines him to sin; because that is necessary to the manifestation of divine justice, and to the felicity of the elect; who will be much happier in heaven, if there be thousands and millions of miserable souls in the flames of hell, than if all mankind should enjoy the felicity of paradise.

O, my God! if any among us be capable of forming ideas so injurious to thy perfections, impute it not to the whole society of Christians; and let not all our churches suffer for the irregularities of some of our members! One single altar prepared for idols, one single act of idolatry, was formerly sufficient to provoke thy displeasure. Jealous of thy glory, thou didst inflict on the republic of Israel thy most terrible chastisements, when they associated false gods with thee. Hence those dreadful calamities, hence those eternal banishments, hence heaven and earth employed to punish the guilty. But if Jews experienced such a rigorous treatment for attributing to false gods the perfections of the true God, what punishments will not you suffer, Christians, if, in spite of the light of the gospel, which shines around you, you tax the true God with the vices of false gods; if by a theology unworthy of the name, you attribute to a holy God the cruelty, the injustice and the falsehood, of those idols

to which corrupt passions alone gave a being, as well as attributes agreeable to their own abominable wishes? That disposition of mind, which conducts to universal *truth*, frees a man from these contradictions, and harmonizes the pastor and the teacher with himself.

3. *Truth* will deliver you from disagreeable doubts about religion. The state of a mind, which is "carried about with every wind of doctrine," Eph. iv. 14, to use an expression of St. Paul, is a violent state; and it is very disagreeable, in such interesting subjects, as those of religion, to doubt whether one be in the path of *truth*, or in the road of error; whether the worship, that one renders to God, be acceptable, or odious, to him; whether the fatigues, and sufferings, that are endured for religion, be punishments of one's folly, or preparations for the reward of virtue.

But if this state of mind be violent, it is difficult to free one's self from it. There are but two sorts of men, who are free from the inquietudes of this state: they who live without reflection, and they, who have seriously studied religion; they are the only people who are free from doubts.

We see almost an innumerable variety of sects, which are diametrically opposite to one another. How can we flatter ourselves, that we belong to the right community, unless we have profoundly applied ourselves to distinguish *truth* from falsehood?

We hear the partisans of these different religions anathematize and condemn one another. How is it, that we are not afraid of their denunciations of wrath?

We cannot doubt that, among them, who embrace systems opposite to ours, there is a great number, who have more knowledge, more erudition, more genius, more penetration, than we. How is it that we do not fear, that these adversaries, who have had better opportunities of knowing the *truth* than we, actually do know it better; and that they have employed more time to study it, and have made a greater progress in it?

We acknowledge, that there are, in the religion we profess, difficulties which we are not able to solve; bottomless depths, mysteries, which are not only above our reason, but which seem opposite to it. How is it, that we are not stumbled at these difficulties? How is it, that we have no doubt of the truth of a religion, which is, in part, concealed under impenetrable veils?

We are obliged to own, that prejudices of birth, and education, are usually very influential over our minds. Moreover, we ought to remember, that nothing was so carefully inculcated on our infant minds as the articles of our faith. How can we demonstrate, that these articles belong to the class of demonstrative truths, and not to that of the prejudices of education?

We know, by sad experience, that we have often admitted erroneous propositions for incontestable principles; and that when we have thought ourselves in possession of demonstration, we have found ourselves hardly in possession of probability. How is it, that we do not distrust the judgments of minds so subject to illusion, and which have been so often deceived?

From these different reflections arises a mixture of light and darkness, a contrast of certainty and doubt, infidelity and faith, skepticism and assurance, which makes one of the most dreadful states in which an intelligent soul can be. If men are not a constant prey to the gloomy thoughts that accompany this state, it is because sensual objects fill the whole capacity of their souls: but there are certain moments of reflection and self-examination, in which reason will adopt these distressing thoughts, and oblige us to suffer all their exquisite pain.

A man, who is arrived at the knowledge of the *truth*, a man, who has made all the sacrifices necessary to arrive at it, is superior to these doubts: not only because *truth* has certain characters, which distinguish it from falsehood, certain rays of light, which strike the eye, and which it is impossible to mistake; but also because it is not possible, that God should leave those men in capital errors, whom he has enabled to make such grand sacrifices to *truth*. If he do not discover to them at first all that may seem fundamental in religion, he will communicate to them all that is fundamental in effect. He will bear with them, if they embrace some circumstantial errors, into which they fall only through a frailty inseparable from human nature.

4. Finally, consider the value of *truth* in regard to the calm which it procures on a death-bed. *Truth* will render you intrepid at the sight of death. Cato of Utica, it is said, resolved to die, and not being able to survive the liberty of Rome, and the glory of Pompey, desired, above all things, to convince himself of the truth of a future state. Although he had meditated on this important subject throughout the whole course of his life, yet he thought it was necessary to re-examine it at the approach of his death. For this purpose, he withdrew from society, he sought a solitary retreat, he read Plato's book on the immortality of the soul, studied the proofs with attention, and convinced of this grand truth, in tranquility he died. Methinks I hear him answering, persuaded of his immortality, all the reasonings that urge him to continue in life. If Cato had obtained only uncertain conjectures on the immortality of the soul, he would have died with regret; if Cato had known no other world, he would have discovered his weakness in quitting this. But Plato gave Cato satisfaction. Cato was persuaded of another life. The sword with which he destroyed his natural life, could not touch his immortal soul. The soul of Cato saw another Rome, another republic, in which tyranny should be no more on the throne, in which Pompey would be defeated, and Cesar would triumph no more.\*

How pleasing is the sight of a heathen, persuading himself of the immortality of the soul by the bare light of reason! And how painful is the remembrance of his staining his reflections with suicide! But I find in the firmness, which resulted from his meditations, a motive to obey the precepts of the Wise Man in the text. While the soul floats in uncertainty, while it hovers between light and dark-

ness, persuasion and doubt; while it has only presumptions and probabilities in favour of religion; it will find it impossible to view death without terror: but, an enlightened, established Christian, finds in his religion a sure refuge against all his fears.

If a pagan Cato defied death, what cannot a Christian Cato do? If a disciple of Plato could pierce through the clouds, which hid futurity from him, what cannot a disciple of Jesus Christ do? If a few proofs, the dictates of unassisted reason, calmed the agitations of Cato; what cannot all the luminous proofs, all the glorious demonstrations do, which ascertain the evidence of another life? God grant we may know the *truth* by our own experiences! To him be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

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## SERMON XV.

### THE ENEMIES AND THE ARMS OF CHRISTIANITY.

PREACHED ON EASTER DAY.

EPHESIANS VI. 11—13.

*Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this World; against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand.*

It is a very remarkable circumstance of the life of Jesus Christ, my brethren, that while he was performing the most public act of his devotedness to the will of God, and while God was giving the most glorious proofs of his approbation of him, Satan attacked him with his most violent assaults. Jesus Christ having spent thirty years in meditation and retirement, preparatory to the important ministry for which he came into the world, had just entered on the functions of it. He had consecrated himself to God by baptism; the Holy Spirit had descended on him in a visible form; a heavenly voice had proclaimed in the air, "This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased," Matt. iii. 17, and he was going to meditate forty days and nights on the engagements on which he had entered, and which he intended to fulfil. These circumstances, so proper, in all appearance, to prevent the approach of Satan, are precisely those, of which he availed himself to thwart the design of salvation, by endeavouring to produce rebellious sentiments in the Saviour's mind.

My brethren, the conduct of this wicked spirit to "the author and finisher of our faith," Heb. xii. 2, is a pattern of his conduct to all them who fight under his banners. Never does this enemy of our salvation more furiously attack us, than when we seem to be most sure of victory. You, my brethren, will experience his assaults as well as Jesus Christ did. Would to God, we could assure ourselves, that it would be glorious to you, as it was to the divine Redeemer! Providence unites to-day the two

\* Plutarch M. Cato Min.

festivals of Easter, and the Lord's Supper. In keeping the first, we have celebrated the anniversary of an event, without which "our preaching is vain, your faith is vain, and ye are yet in your sins," 1 Cor. xv. 14. 17. I mean the resurrection of the Saviour of the world. In celebrating the second, you have renewed your professions of fidelity to that Jesus, who was declared, with so much glory, "to be the Son of God, by the resurrection of the dead," Rom. i. 4. It is precisely in these circumstances, that Satan renews his efforts to obscure the evidences of your faith, and to weaken your fidelity to Christ. In these circumstances also, we double our efforts to enable you to defeat his assaults, in which, alas! many of us choose rather to yield than to conquer. The strengthening of you is our design; my dear brethren, assist us in it.

And thou, O great God, who called us to fight with formidable enemies, leave us not to our own weakness: "teach our hands to war, and our fingers to fight," Ps. cxlvi. 1. Cause us "always to triumph in Christ," 2 Cor. ii. 14. "Make us more than conquerors through him that loved us," Rom. viii. 37. Our enemies are thine: "arise, O God, let thine enemies be scattered, let them that hate thee flee before thee?" Amen. Ps. lxxviii. 1.

All is metaphorical in the words of my text. St. Paul represents the temptations of a Christian under the image of a combat, particularly of a wrestling. In ordinary combats there is some proportion between the combatants; but in this, which engages the Christian, there is no proportion at all. A Christian, who may be said to be, more properly than his Redeemer, "despised and rejected of men," Isa. liii. 3, a man who "is the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things," 1 Cor. iv. 13, is called to resist, not only *flesh and blood*, feeble men like himself; but men before whom imagination prostrates itself; men, of whom the Holy Spirit says, "Ye are gods," Ps. lxxxii. 6, that is, potentates and kings. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world."

Moreover, a Christian, whatever degree of light and knowledge grace has bestowed on him, whatever degree of steadiness and resolution he has acquired in Christianity, always continues a man who is called to resist a superior order of intelligences, whose power we cannot exactly tell, but who, the Scripture assures us, can, in some circumstances, raise tempests, infect the air, and disorder all the elements; I mean devils. "We wrestle against spiritual wickedness in high places."

As St. Paul represents the temptations of a Christian under the notion of a *war*, so he represents the dispositions, that are necessary to overcome them, under the idea of *armour*. In the words, which follow the text, he carries the metaphor farther than the genius of our language will allow. He gives the Christian a *military belt, and shoes, a helmet, a sword, a shield, a buckler*, with which he resists *all the fiery darts of the wicked*. But I cannot discuss all these articles without diverting this exercise from its chief design. By laying aside the figurative language of the apostle, and by reducing

the figures to truth, I reduce the temptations, with which the devil and his angels attack the Christian, to two general ideas. The first are sophisms, to seduce him from the evidence of *truth*; and the second are inducements, to make him desert the dominion of *virtue*. The Christian is able to overcome these two kinds of temptations. The Christian remains victorious after a war, which seems at first so very unequal. This is precisely the meaning of the text: "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."

1. The first artifices of Satan are intended to seduce the Christian from the *truth*, and, we must own, these darts were never so poisonous as they are now. The emissaries of the devil, in the time of St. Paul; the heathen philosophers, the scribes and pharisees, were but scholars and novices in the art of colouring falsehood, in comparison of our deists and skeptics, and other antagonists of our holy religion. But, however formidable they may appear, we are able to make them "lick the dust," Micah vii. 17, and as the art of disguising error was never carried so far before, so, thanks be to God, my brethren, that of unmasking falsehood, and of displaying truth in all its glory, has extended with it.

The Christian knows how to disentangle truth from six artifices of error. There are six sophisms, that prevail in those wretched productions, which our age has brought forth for the purpose of subverting the truth.

1. The first artifice is the confounding of those matters, which are proposed to our discussion; and the requiring of metaphysical evidence of facts which are not capable of it.

2. The second artifice is the opposing of possible circumstances against other circumstances, which are evident and sure.

3. The next artifice pretends to weaken the evidence of known things, by arguments taken from things that are unknown.

4. The fourth artifice is an attempt to render the doctrines of the gospel absurd and contradictory, under pretence that they are obscure.

5. The fifth article proposes arguments foreign from the subject in hand.

6. The last forms objections, which derive their weight, not from their own intrinsic gravity; but from the superiority of the genius of him who proposes them.

1. The *matters*, which are proposed to our discussion, are *confounded*; and metaphysical evidence of facts is required, which are not, in the nature of them, capable of this kind of evidence. We call that *metaphysical evidence*, which is founded on a clear idea of the essence of a subject. For example, we have a clear idea of a certain number: if we affirm, that the number, of which we have a clear idea, is equal, or unequal, the proposition is capable of metaphysical evidence: but a question of fact can only be proved by a union of circumstances, no one of which, taken apart, would be



sufficient to prove the fact, but which taken all together, make a fact beyond a doubt. As it is not allowable to oppose certain circumstances against a proposition that has metaphysical evidence, so it is unreasonable to require metaphysical evidence to prove a matter of fact. I have a clear notion of a given number; I conclude from this notion, that the number is equal or unequal, and it is in vain to object to me, that all the world does not reason as I do. Let it be objected to me, that they, who affirm that the number is equal or unequal, have perhaps some interest in affirming it. Objections of this kind are nothing to the purpose, they are circumstances which do not at all affect the nature of the number, nor the evidence on which I affirm an equality, or an inequality, of the given number; for I have a clear idea of the subject in hand. In like manner, I see a union of circumstances, which uniformly attests the truth of a fact under my examination; I yield to this evidence, and in vain is it objected to me, that it is not metaphysical evidence, the subject before me is not capable of it.

We apply this maxim to all the facts on which the truth of religion turns, such as these: there was such a man as Moses, who related what he saw, and who himself wrought several things which he recorded. There were such men as the prophets, who wrote the books that bear their names, and who foretold many events several ages before they came to pass. Jesus, the son of Mary, was born in the reign of the emperor Augustus, preached the doctrines which are recorded in the gospel, and by crucifixion was put to death. We make a particular application of this maxim to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, which we this day commemorate, and it forms a shield to resist *all the fiery darts* that attack it. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is a fact, which we ought to prove; it is an extraordinary fact, for the demonstration of which, we allow, stronger proofs ought to be adduced, than for the proof of a fact that comes to pass in the ordinary course of things. But after all, it is a fact; and, in demonstrating facts no proofs ought to be required, but such as establish facts. We have the better right to reason thus with our opponents, because they do not support their historical skepticisms without restrictions. On the contrary, they admit some facts, which they believe on the evidence of a very few circumstances. But if a few circumstances demonstrate some facts, why does not a union of all possible circumstances demonstrate other facts.

2. The second artifice is the *opposing of possible circumstances*, which may or may not be against other circumstances which are evident and sure. All arguments, that are founded on possible circumstances, are only uncertain conjectures, and groundless suppositions. Perhaps there may have been floods, perhaps fires, perhaps earthquakes, which, by abolishing the memorials of past events, prevent our tracing things back from age to age to demonstrate the eternity of the world, and our discovery of monuments against religion. This is a strange way of reasoning against men, who are armed with arguments which are taken from phenomena avowed, notorious, and real. When we

dispute against infidelity; when we establish the existence of a Supreme Being; when we affirm that the Creator of the universe is eternal in his duration, wise in his designs, powerful in his executions, and magnificent in his gifts; we do not reason on probabilities, nor attempt to establish a thesis on a may-be. We do not say, perhaps there may be a firmament, that covers us; perhaps there may be a sun, which enlightens us; perhaps there may be stars, which shine in the firmament; perhaps the earth may support us; perhaps aliment may nourish us; perhaps we breathe; perhaps air may assist respiration; perhaps there may be a symmetry in nature, and in the elements. We produce these phenomena, and we make them the basis of our reasoning, and of our faith.

3. The third artifice consists in the *weakening of the evidence of known things, by arguments taken from things which are unknown*. This is another source of sophisms invented to support infidelity. It grounds a part of the difficulties, which are opposed to the system of religion, not on what is known, but on what is unknown. Of what use are all the treasures, which are concealed in the depths of the sea? Why are so many metals buried in the bowels of the earth? Of what use are so many stars, which glitter in the firmament? Why are there so many deserts uninhabited, and uninhabitable? Why so many mountains inaccessible? Why so many insects, which are a burden to nature, and which seem designed only to disfigure it? Why did God create men, who must be miserable, and whose misery he could not but foresee? Why did he confine revelation for so many ages to one single nation, and, in a manner, to one single family? Why does he still leave such an infinite number of people to "sit in darkness and in the shadow of death?" Hence the infidel concludes, either that there is no God, or that he has not the perfections which we attribute to him. The Christian, on the contrary, grounds his system on principles that are evident and sure.

We derive our arguments, not from what we know not, but from what we do know. We derive them from characters of intelligence, which fall under our observation, and which we see with our own eyes. We derive them from the nature of finite beings. We derive them from the united attestations of all mankind. We derive them from miracles, which were wrought in favour of religion. We draw them from our own hearts, which evince, by a kind of reasoning superior to all argument, superior to all scholastic demonstrations, that religion is made for man, that the Creator of man is the author of religion.

4. The fourth article is an *attempt to prove a doctrine contradictory and absurd, because it is obscure*. Some doctrines of religion are obscure; but none are contradictory. God acts towards us in regard to the doctrines of faith, as he does in regard to the duties of practice. When he gives us laws, he gives them as a master, not as a tyrant. Were he to impose laws on us, which are contrary to order, which would debase our natures, and which would make innocence productive of misery; this would not be to ordain laws as a master, but as a tyrant. Then our duties would be in di-

rect opposition. That, which would oblige us to obey, would oblige us to rebel. It is the eminence of the perfections of God, which engages us to obey him: but his perfections would be injured by the imposition of such laws as these, and therefore we should be instigated to rebellion.

In like manner, God has characterized truth and error. Were it possible for him to give error the characters of truth, and truth the characters of error, there would be a direct opposition in our ideas; and the same reason which would oblige us to believe, would oblige us to disbelieve: because that which engages us to believe, when God speaks, is, that he is infallibly true. Now, if God were to command us to believe contradictions, he would cease to be infallibly true; because nothing is more opposite to truth than self-contradiction. This is the maxim, which we admit, and on which we ground our faith in the mysteries of religion. A wise man ought to know his own weakness; to convince himself that there are questions which he has not capacity to answer; to compare the greatness of the object with the littleness of the intelligence, to which the object is proposed; and to perceive that this disproportion is the only cause of some difficulties, which have appeared so formidable to him.

Let us form grand ideas of the Supreme Being. What ideas ought we to form of him? Never has a preacher a fairer opportunity of giving a scope to his meditation, and of letting his imagination loose, than when he describes the grandeur of that which is most grand. But I do not mean to please your fancies by pompous descriptions; but to edify your minds by distinct ideas. God is an infinite Being. In an infinite being there must be things which infinitely surpass finite understanding; it would be absurd to suppose otherwise. As the Scripture treats of this infinite God, it must necessarily treat of subjects which absorb the ideas of a finite mind.

5. The fifth article attacks the truth by arguments foreign from the subject under consideration. To propose arguments of this kind is one of the most dangerous tricks of error. The most essential precaution, that we can use, in the investigation of truth, is to distinguish that which is foreign from the subject from that which is really connected with it; and there is no question in divinity, or philosophy, casuistry, or policy, which could afford abstruse and endless disputes, were not every one, who talks of it, fatally ingenious in the art of incorporating in it a thousand ideas, which are foreign from it.

You hold such and such doctrines, say some: and yet Luther, Calvin, and a hundred celebrated divines in your communion, have advanced many false arguments in defence of it. But what does this signify to me? The question is not whether these doctrines have been defended by weak arguments; but whether the arguments, that determine me to receive them, be conclusive, or sophistical and vague.

You receive such a doctrine: but Origen, Tertullian, and St. Augustine, did not believe it. And what then? Am I inquiring what

these fathers did believe, or what they ought to have believed?

You believe such a doctrine: but very few people believe it beside yourself: the greatest part of Europe, almost all France, all Spain, all Italy, whole kingdoms disbelieve it, and maintain opinions diametrically opposite. And what is all this to me? Am I examining what doctrines have the greatest number of partisans, or what doctrines ought to have the most universal spread?

You embrace such a doctrine: but many illustrious persons, cardinals, kings, emperors, triple-crowned heads, reject what you receive. But what avails this reasoning to me? Am I considering the rank of those who receive a doctrine, or the reasons which ought to determine them to receive it? Have cardinals, have kings, have emperors, have triple-crowned heads, the clearest ideas? Do they labour more than all other men? Are they the most indefatigable inquirers after truth? Do they make the greatest sacrifices to order? Are they, of all mankind, the first to lay aside those prejudices and passions, which envelope and obscure the truth?

6. The last artifice is this: *Objections which are made against the truth, derive their force, not from their own reasonableness, but from the superiority of the genius of him who proposes them.* There is no kind of truth, which its defenders would not be obliged to renounce, were it right to give up a proposition, because we could not answer all the objections which were formed against it. A mechanic could not answer the arguments, that I could propose to him, to prove, when he walks, that there is no motion in nature, that it is the highest absurdity to suppose it. A mechanic could not answer the arguments, that I could propose to him, to prove that there is no matter, even while he felt and touched his own body, which is material. A mechanic could not answer the arguments, that I could propose to him, when he had finished his day's work, to prove that I gave him five shillings, even when I had given him but three. And yet, a mechanic has more reason for his assertions, than the greatest geniuses in the universe have for their objections, when he affirms, that I gave him but three shillings, that there is motion, that there is a mass of matter to which his soul is united, and in which it is but too often, in a manner, buried as in a tomb.

You simple, but sincere souls: you spirits of the lowest class of mankind, but often of the highest at the tribunal of reason and good sense, this article is intended for you. Weigh the words of the second commandment, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, thou shalt not bow down thyself to them." You have more reason to justify your doctrine and worship, than all the doctors of the universe have to condemn them; by their most specious, and, in regard to you, by their most indissoluble objections. Worship Jesus Christ in imitation of the angels of heaven, to whom God said, "Let all the angels of God worship him," Heb. i. 6. Pray to him, after the example of St. Stephen, and say unto him, as that holy martyr said, in the hour of death,

"Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," Acts vii. 59. Believe on the testimony of the inspired writers, that he is eternal, as his Father is; that, with the Father, he is the Creator of the world; that, like the Father, he is Almighty; that he has all the essential attributes of the Deity, as the Father has. You have more reason for these doctrines, and for this worship than the most refined sophists have for all their most specious objections, even for those which, to you, are the most unanswerable. "Hold that fast which ye have," let "no man take your crown," Rev. iii. 11.

II. We have seen the darts which Satan shoots at us, to subdue us to the dominion of *error*: let us now examine those with which he aims to make us submit to the empire of *vice*; but, lest we should overcharge your memories with too many precepts, we will take a method different from that which we have followed in the former part of this discourse; and, in order to give you a more lively idea of that steadiness, with which the apostle intended to animate us, we will show it you reduced to practice; we will represent such a Christian, as St. Paul himself describes in the text, "wrestling against flesh and blood, against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." We will show you the Christian resisting four sorts of the fiery darts of the wicked. The false maxims of the world. The pernicious examples of the multitude. Threatenings and persecutions. And the snares of sensual pleasures.

1. Satan attacks the Christian with "false maxims of the world." These are some of them. Christians are not obliged to practise a rigid morality. In times of persecution, it is allowable to palliate our sentiments, and, if the heart be right with God, there is no harm in a conformity to the world. The God of religion is the God of nature, and it is not conceivable, that religion should condemn the feelings of nature; or, that the ideas of fire and brimstone, with which the Scriptures are filled, should have any other aim, than to prevent men from carrying vice to extremes: they cannot mean to restrain every act of sin. The time of youth is a season of pleasure. We ought not to aspire at saintship. We must do as other people do. It is beneath a man of honour to put up with an affront; a gentleman ought to require satisfaction. No reproof is due to him who hurts nobody but himself. Time must be killed. Detraction is the salt of conversation. Impurity, indeed, is intolerable in a woman; but it is very pardonable in men. Human frailty excuses the greatest excesses. To pretend to be perfect in virtue, is to subvert the order of things, and to metamorphose man into a pure disembodied intelligence. My brethren, how easy it is to make proselytes to a religion so exactly fitted to the depraved propensities of the human heart!

These maxims have a singular character, they seem to unite that which is most irregular with that which is most regular in the heart; and they are the more likely to subvert our faith, because they seem to be con-

sistent with it. However, all that they aim at is, to unite heaven and hell, and, by a monstrous assemblage of heterogeneous objects, they propose to make us enjoy the pleasures of sin and the joys of heaven. If Satan were openly to declare to us, that we must proclaim war with God; that we must make an alliance with him against the divine power; that we must oppose his majesty: reason and conscience would reject propositions so detestable and gross. But, when he attacks us by such motives as we have related; when he tells us, not that we must renounce the hopes of heaven, but that a few steps in an easy path will conduct us thither. When he invites us, not to deny religion, but to content ourselves with observing a few articles of it. When he does not strive to render us insensible to the necessities of a poor neighbour, but to convince us that we should first take care of ourselves, for charity, as they say, begins at home:—do you not conceive, my brethren, that there is in this morality a secret poison, which slides insensibly into the heart, and corrodes all the powers of the soul?

The Christian is not vulnerable by any of these maxims. He derives help from the religion, which he professes, against all the efforts that are employed to divert him from it; and he conquers by resisting Satan as Jesus Christ resisted him, and, like him, opposes maxim against maxim, the maxims of Christ against the maxims of the world. Would Satan persuade us, that we follow a morality too rigid? It is written, we must "enter in at a strait gate," Matt. vii. 13; "pluck out the right eye, cut off the right hand," chap. v. 29, 30; "deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Christ," chap. xvi. 24. Does Satan say it is allowable to conceal our religion in a time of persecution? It is written, we must confess Jesus Christ; "whosoever shall deny him before men, him will he deny before his Father who is in heaven; he who loveth father or mother more than him, is not worthy of him," chap. x. 32, 33. 37. Would Satan inspire us with revenge? It is written, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves," Rom. xii. 19. Does Satan require us to devote our youthful days to sin? It is written, "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth," Eccles. xii. 1. Does Satan tell us that we must not aspire to be saints? It is written, "Be ye holy, for I am holy," 1 Pet. i. 16. Would Satan teach us to dissipate time? It is written, "we must redeem time," Eph. v. 16; we must "number our days," in order to "apply our hearts unto wisdom," Ps. xc. 12. Would Satan encourage us to slander our neighbour? It is written, "Revilers shall not inherit the kingdom of God," 1 Cor. vi. 10. Does Satan tell us we deserve no reproof when we do no harm? It is written, we are to practise "whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever constitutes virtue, whatsoever things are worthy of praise," Phil. iv. 8. Would Satan tempt us to indulge impurity? It is written, "our bodies are the members of Christ," and it is a crime to "make them the members of a harlot," 1 Cor. vi. 15. Would Satan unite heaven and earth? It is written, "There is no concord between Christ and Belial, no com-

munion between light and darkness," 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15; "no man can serve two masters," Matt. vi. 24. Does Satan urge the impossibility of perfection? It is written, "Be ye perfect, as your Father, who is in heaven, is perfect," chap. v. 48.

2. There is a difference between those who preach the maxims of Jesus Christ; and those who preach the maxims of the world. The former, alas! are as frail as the rest of mankind, and they themselves are apt to violate the laws which they prescribe to others; so that it must be sometimes said of them, "What they bid you observe, observe and do; but do not ye after their works," Matt. xxiii. 3. They who preach the maxims of the world, on the contrary, never fail to confirm the pernicious maxims, which they advance by their own examples; and hence a second quiver of those *darts*, with which Satan attempts to destroy the virtues of Christianity; I mean the *examples of bad men*.

Each order of men, each condition of life, each society, has some peculiar vice, and each of these is so established by custom, that we cannot resist it, without being accounted, according to the usual phrase, men of another world. Vicious men are sometimes respectable persons. They are parents, they are ministers, they are magistrates. We bring into the world with us a turn to imitation. Our brain is so formed as to receive impressions from all exterior objects, and if I may be allowed to speak so, to take the form of every thing that affects it. How difficult is it, my brethren, to avoid contagion, when we breathe an air so infected! The desire of pleasing often prompts us to that which our inclinations abhor, and very few people can bear this reproach; you are unfashionable and unpolite! How much harder is it to resist a torrent, when it falls in with the dispositions of our own hearts! The Christian, however, resolutely resists this attack, and opposes model to model, the patterns of Jesus Christ, and of his associates, to the examples of an apostate world.

The first, the great model, the exemplar of all others, is Jesus Christ. Faith, which always fixes the eyes of a Christian on his Saviour, incessantly contemplates his virtues, and also inclines him to holiness by stirring up his natural propensity to imitation. Jesus Christ reduced every virtue, which he preached, to practice. Did he preach a detachment from the world? And could it be carried farther than the divine Saviour carried it? He was exposed to hunger, and to thirst; to the inclemency of seasons, and to the contempt of mankind: he had no fortune to recommend him to the world, no great office to render him conspicuous there. Did he preach zeal? He passed the day in the instructing of men, and, as the saving of souls filled up the day, the night he spent in praying to God. Did he preach patience? "When he was reviled, he reviled not again," 1 Pet. ii. 23. Did he preach love? "Greater love than he, had no man, for he laid down his life for his friends," John xv. 13. His incarnation, his birth, his life, his cross, his death, are so many voices,

each of which cries to us, "behold how he loved you," chap. xi. 35.

Had Jesus Christ alone practised the virtues which he prescribed to us, it might be objected, that a man must be "conceived of the Holy Ghost," Matt. i. 20, to resist the force of custom. But we have seen many Christians, who have walked in the steps of their master. The primitive church was "compassed about with a happy society, a great cloud of witnesses," Heb. xii. 1. Even now in spite of the power of corruption, we have many illustrious examples; we can show magistrates, who are accessible: generals, who are patient; merchants, who are disinterested; learned men, who are teachable; and devotees, who are lowly and meek.

If the believer could find no exemplary characters on earth, he could not fail of meeting with such in heaven. On earth, it is true, haughtiness, sensuality, and pride, are in fashion. But the believer is not on earth. He is reproached for being a man of another world. He glories in it, he is a man of another world, he is a heavenly man, he is a "citizen of heaven," Phil. iii. 20. His heart is with his treasure, and his soul, transporting itself by faith into the heavenly regions, beholds customs there different from those which prevail in this world. In heaven it is the fashion to bless God, to sing his praise, to cry, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts," Isa. vi. 3, to animate one another in celebrating the glory of the great Supreme, who reigns and fills the place. On earth, fashion proceeds from the courts of kings, and the provinces are polite when they imitate them. The believer is a heavenly courtier; he practises, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, the customs of the court whence he came, and to which he hopes to return.

3. Satan assaults the Christian with the threatenings of the world, and with the persecutions of those who are in power. Virtue, I own, has a venerable aspect, which attracts respect from those who hate it: but, after all, it is hated. A beneficent man is a troublesome object to a miser: the patience of a believer throws a shade over the character of a passionate man: and the men of the world will always persecute those virtues, which they cannot resolve to practice.

Moreover, there is a kind of persecution, which approaches to madness, when, to the hatred, which our enemies naturally have against us, they add sentiments of superstition; when, under pretence of religion, they avenge their own cause; and, according to the language of Scripture, think that to kill the saints is "to render service to God," John x. 2. Hence so many edicts against primitive Christianity, and so many cruel laws against Christians themselves. Hence the filling of a thousand deserts with exiles, and a thousand prisons with confessors. Hence the letting loose of bears, and bulls, and lions, on the saints, to divert the inhabitants of Rome. Hence the applying of red hot plates of iron to their flesh. Hence iron pincers to prolong their pain by pulling them in piecemeal. Hence caldrons of boiling oil, in which, by the industrious

cruelty of their persecutors, they died by fire and by water too. Hence burning brazen bulls, and seats of fire and flame. Hence the skins of wild beasts in which they were wrapped, in order to be torn and devoured by dogs. And hence those strange and nameless punishments, which would seem to have rather the air of fables than of historical facts, had not Christian persecutors, (good God! must these two titles go together!) had not Christian persecutors . . . . Let us pass this article, my brethren, let us cover these bloody objects with a veil of patience and love.

Ah! how violent is this combat! Shall I open the wounds again, which the mercy of God has closed? Shall I recall to your memories the falls of some of you? "Give glory to God," Josh. vii. 19. Cast your eyes for a moment on that fatal day, in which the violence of persecution wrenched from you a denial of the Saviour of the world, whom in your souls you adored; made you sign with a trembling hand, and utter with a faltering tongue, those base words against Jesus Christ, "I do not know the man," Matt. xxvi. 72. Let us own, then, that Satan is infinitely formidable, when he strikes us with the thunderbolts of persecution.

A new combat brings on a new victory, and the constancy of the Christian is displayed in many a triumphant banner. Turn over the annals of the church, and behold how a fervid faith has operated in fiery trials. It has inspired many Stephens with mercy, who, while they sank under their persecutors, said "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge," Acts vii. 60. Many with St. Paul have abounded in patience, and have said, "Being reviled, we bless, being defamed, we entreat," 1 Cor. iv. 12, 13. It has filled a Barlaam with praise, who, while his hand was held over the fire to scatter that incense which in spite of him, his persecutors had determined he should offer, sang, as well as he could, "Blessed be the Lord, who teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight," Ps. cxliv. 2. It transported that holy woman with joy, who said, as she was going to suffer, crowns are distributed to-day, and I am going to receive one. It inspired Mark, bishop of Arethusa, with magnanimity, who, according to Theodoret, after he had been mangled and slashed, bathed in a liquid, of which insects are fond, and hung up in the sun to be devoured by them, said to the spectators, I pity you, ye people of the world, I am ascending to heaven, while ye are crawling on earth. And how many Marks of Arethusa, how many Barlaams, how many Stephens, and Pauls, have we known in our age, whose memories history will transmit to the most distant times!

4. But how formidable soever Satan may be, when he shoots the fiery darts of persecution at us, it must be granted, my brethren, he discharges others far more dangerous to us, when, having studied our passions, he presents those objects to our hearts which they idolize, and gives us the possession, or the hope of possessing them. The first ages of Christianity, in which religion felt all the rage of tyrants, were not the most fatal to the church. Great tribulations produced great virtues, and the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church.

But when under Christian emperors, believers enjoyed the privileges of the world, and the profession of the faith was no obstacle to worldly grandeur, the church became corrupt, and, by sharing the advantages, partook of the vices of the world.

Among the many different objects, which the world offers to our view, there is always one, there are often more, which the heart approves. The heart, which does not glow at the sight of riches, may sigh after honours. The soul that is insensible to glory, may be enchanted with pleasure. The demon of concupiscence, revolving for ever around us, will not fail to present to each of us that enticement, which of all others is the most agreeable to us. See his conduct to David. He could not entice him by the idea of a throne to become a parricide, and to stain his hands with the blood of the anointed of the Lord: but, as he was inaccessible one way, another art must be tried. He exhibited to his view an object fatal to his innocence: the prophet saw, admired, was dazzled, and inflamed with a criminal passion, and to gratify it, began in adultery, and murder closed the scene.

My brethren, you do not feel these passions now, your souls are attentive to these great truths, and, while you hear of the snares of concupiscence, you discover the vanity of them. But if, instead of our voice, Satan were to utter his; if, instead of being confined within these walls, you were transported to the pinnacle of an eminent edifice; were he there to show you "all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them," Matt. iv. 8, and to say to each of you, There, you shall content your pride: here, you shall satiate your vengeance; yonder, you shall roll in voluptuousness. I fear, I fear, my brethren, very few of us would say to such a dangerous enemy, "Satan, get thee hence," ver. 10.

This is the fourth assault, which the demon of cupidity makes on the Christian; this is the last triumph of Christian constancy and resolution. In these assaults the Christian is firm. The grand ideas, which he forms of God, makes him fear to irritate the Deity, and to raise up such a formidable foe. They fill him with a just apprehension of the folly of that man, who will be happy in spite of God. For self-gratification, at the expense of duty, is nothing else but a determination to be happy in opposition to God. This is the utmost degree of extravagance: "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?" 1 Cor. x. 22.

Over all, the Christian fixes his eye on the immense rewards, which God reserves for him in another world. The good things of this world, we just now observed, have some relation to our passions: but, after all, can the world satisfy them? My passions are infinite, every finite object is inadequate to them. My ambition, my voluptuousness, my avarice, are only irritated, they are not satisfied, by all the objects which the present world exhibits to my view. Christians, we no longer preach to you to limit your desires. Expand them, be ambitious, be covetous, be greedy of pleasure: but be so in a supreme degree. - Jerusalem, "enlarge the place of thy tent, stretch forth

the curtains of thine habitations, spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes," Isa. liv. 2. The throne of thy sovereign, the pleasures that are at his right hand, the inexhaustible mines of his happiness, will quench the utmost thirst of thy heart.

From what has been said, I infer only two consequences, and them, my brethren, I would use to convince you of the grandeur of a Christian, and of the grandeur of an intelligent soul.

1. Let us learn to form *grand ideas of a Christian*. The pious man is often disdained in society by men of the world. He is often taxed with narrowness of genius, and meanness of soul. He is often dismissed to keep company with those, whom the world calls *good folks*. But what unjust appraisers of things are mankind! How little does it become them to pretend to distribute glory! Christian is a grand character. A Christian man unites in himself what is most grand, both in the mind of a philosopher, and in the heart of a hero.

The unshaken steadiness of his soul elevates him above whatever is most grand in the mind of a philosopher. The philosopher flatters himself that he is arrived at this grandeur; but he only imagines so; it is the Christian who possesses it. He alone knows how to distinguish the true from the false. The Christian is the man who knows how to ascend to heaven, to procure wisdom there, and to bring it down and to diffuse on earth. It is the Christian who having learned, by the accurate exercise of his reason, the imperfection of his knowledge, and having supplied the want of perfection in himself, by submitting to the decisions of an infallible Being, steadily resists all the illusions, and all the sophisms of error and falsehood.

And, as he possesses, as he surpasses, whatever is most grand in the mind of a philosopher, so he possesses whatever is most grand in the heart of a hero. That grandeur, of which the worldly hero vainly imagines himself in possession, the Christian alone really enjoys. It is the Christian who first forms the heroic design of taking the perfections of God for his model, and then surmounts every obstacle that opposes his laudable career. It is the Christian who has the courage, not to route an army, neither to cut a way through a squadron, nor to scale a wall; but to stem an immoral torrent, to free himself from the maxims of the world, to bear pain and to despise shame, and, what perhaps may be yet more magnanimous, and more rare, to be impregnable against whole armies of voluptuous attacks. It is the Christian then who is the only true philosopher, the only real hero. Let us be well persuaded of this truth; if the world despise us, let us, in our turn, despise the world; let us be highly satisfied with that degree of elevation, to which grace has raised us. This is the first consequence.

2. We infer from this subject *the excellence of your souls*. Two mighty powers dispute the sovereignty over them, God and Satan. Satan employs his subtlety to subdue you to him: he terrifies you with threatenings, he enchants you with promises, he endeavours to produce errors in your minds, and passions in your hearts.

On the other hand, God, having redeemed you with the purest and most precious blood, *having shaken*, in your favour, "the heavens and the earth, the sea, and the dry land," Hag. ii. 6, still continues to resist Satan for you, to take away his prey from him; and from the highest heaven, to animate you with these grand motives, which we have this day been proposing to your meditation. To-day God would attract you, by the most affecting means, to himself.

While heaven and earth, God and the world, endeavour to gain your souls, do you alone continue indolent? Are you alone ignorant of your own worth? Ah! learn to know your own excellence, triumph over flesh and blood, trample the world beneath your feet, go from conquering to conquer. Listen to the voice that cries to you, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne," Rev. iii. 21. Continue in the faith, "hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown," ver. 11. Having fought through life, redouble your believing vigour at the approach of death.

All the wars which the world makes on your faith, should prepare you for the most great, the most formidable attack of all, "The last enemy that shall be destroyed, is death," 1 Cor. xv. 26. The circumstances of death are called an agony, that is, a wrestling. In effect, it is the mightiest effort of Satan, and therefore our faith should redouble its vigorous acts.

Then Satan will attack you with cutting griefs, and doubts and fears; then will he present to you a deplorable family, whose cries and tears will pierce your hearts, and who, by straitening the ties that bind you to the earth, will raise obstacles to prevent the ascent of your souls to God. He will alarm you with the idea of divine justice, and will terrify you with that of consuming fire, which must devour the adversaries of God. He will paint, in the most dismal colours, all the sad train of your funerals, the mournfully nodding hearse, the torch, the shroud, the coffin and the pall; the frightful solitude of the tomb, or the odious putrefaction of the grave. At the sight of these objects, the flesh complains, nature murmurs, religion itself seems to totter and shake: but fear not; your faith, your faith will support you. Faith will discover those eternal relations into which you are going to enter; the celestial armies, that will soon be your companions; the blessed angels, who wait to receive your souls and to be your convoy home. Faith will show you that in the tomb of Jesus Christ which will sanctify yours; it will remind you of that blessed death, which renders yours precious in the sight of God; it will assist your souls to glance into eternity; it will open the gates of heaven to you; it will enable you to behold, without murmuring, the earth sinking away from your feet; it will change your deathbeds into triumphal chariots, and it will make you exclaim, amidst all the mournful objects that surround you, "O grave where is thy victory? O death where is thy sting?" 1 Cor. xv. 55.

My brethren, our most vehement desires, our private studies, our public labours, our

vows, our wishes, and our prayers, we consecrate to prepare you for that great day. "For this cause, I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.—Now, unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end."—Amen. Eph. iii. 14. 16. 21.

## SERMON XVI.

### THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST.

ISAIAH ix. 6, 7.

*Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth, even for ever.*

I ANTICIPATE the festival which the goodness, or rather the magnificence, of God invites you to celebrate on Wednesday next. All nature seems to take part in the memorable event, which on that day we shall commemorate, I mean the birth of the Saviour of the world. Herod turns pale on his throne; the devils tremble in hell; the wise men of the East suspend all their speculations, and observe no sign in the firmament, except that which conducts them to the place where lies the incarnate Word, "God manifest in the flesh," 1 Tim. iii. 16; an angel from heaven is the herald of the astonishing event, and tells the shepherds, "Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people, for unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord," Luke ii. 10, 11, "the multitude of the heavenly host" eagerly descend to congratulate men on the Word's assumption of mortal flesh, on his "dwelling among men," in order to enable them to "behold his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth," John i. 14; they make the air resound with these acclamations, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men," Luke ii. 14.

What think ye? Does this festival require no preparation of you? Do you imagine, that you shall celebrate it as you ought, if you content yourself with attending on a few discourses, during which, perhaps, while you are present in body, you may be absent in spirit; or with laying aside your temporal cares, and

your most turbulent passions, at the church-gates, in order to take them up again as soon as divine service ends? The king Messiah is about to make his triumphant entry among you. With what pomp do the children of this world, who are wise, and, we may add, magnificent, in their generation, Luke xvi. 8, celebrate the entries of their princes? They strew the roads with flowers, they raise triumphal arches, they express their joy in shouts of victory, and in songs of praise. Come, then, my brethren, let us to-day "prepare the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight," Matt. iii. 3; "let us be joyful together before the Lord, let us make a joyful noise before the Lord the King, for he cometh to judge the earth," Ps. cxviii. 6. 9; or, to speak in a more intelligible, and in a more evangelical manner, Come ye miserable sinners, laden with the insupportable burdens of your sins; come ye troubled consciences, uneasy at the remembrance of your many idle words, many criminal thoughts, many abominable actions; come ye poor mortals, "tossed with tempests and not comforted," Isa. liv. 11, condemned first to bear the infirmities of nature, the caprices of society, the vicissitudes of age, the turns of fortune, and then the horrors of death, and the frightful night of the tomb; come behold "The Wonderful, the Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace" take him into your arms, learn to desire nothing more, when you possess him. May God enable each of you, to say, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." Amen.

You have heard the prophecy on which our meditations in this discourse are to turn.—"Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it, with judgment and with justice, from henceforth, even for ever." These words are more dazzling than clear: let us fix their true meaning; and, in order to ascertain that, let us divide this discourse into two parts.

I. Let us explain the prediction.

II. Let us show its accomplishment.

In the first part, we will prove, that the prophet had the Messiah in view; and, in the second, that our Jesus has fully answered the design of the prophet, and has accomplished, in the most just and sublime of all senses, the whole prediction: "Unto us a child is born," and so on.

I. Let us explain the prophet's prediction, and let us fix on the extraordinary child, to whom he gives the magnificent titles in the text. Indeed, the grandeur of the titles sufficiently determines the meaning of the prophet; for to whom, except to the Messiah, can these appellations belong, "The Wonderful, The Counsellor, The mighty God, The Prince of Peace, The everlasting Father?" This natural sense of the text, is supported by the authority of an inspired writer, and what is, if not of any great weight in point of argument, at least very singu-

lar as an historical fact, it is supported by the authority of an angel. The inspired writer whom we mean is St. Matthew; who manifestly alludes to the words of the text, by quoting those which precede them, which are connected with them, and which he applies to the times of the Messiah: for, having related the imprisonment of John, and, in consequence of that, the retiring of Jesus Christ into Galilee, he adds, that the divine Saviour, "came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea-coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim: that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles: the people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up," Matt. iv. 12. The angel of whom I spoke is Gabriel; who, when he declared to Mary the choice which God had made of her to be the mother of the Messiah, applied to her Son the characters by which Esaias describes the child in the text, and paints him in the same colours: "Thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David. And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end," Luke i. 31.

How conclusive soever these proofs may appear in favour of the sense we have given of the prophecy, they do not satisfy this intractable age, which is always ready to embrace any thing that seems likely to enervate the truths of religion. Sincerity requires us to acknowledge, that although our prophecy is clear of itself, yet there arises some obscurity from the order in which it is placed, and from its connexion with the foregoing and following verses. On each we will endeavour to throw some light, and, for this purpose, we will go back, and analyze this, and the two preceding chapters.

When Esaias delivered this prophecy, Ahaz reigned over the kingdom of Judah, and Pekah, the son of Remaliah, over that of Israel. You cannot be ignorant of the mutual jealousy of these two kingdoms. There is often more hatred between two parties, whose religion is almost the same, than between those whose doctrines are in direct opposition. Each considers the other as near the truth: each is jealous lest the other should obtain it; and, as it is more likely that they, who hold the essential truths of religion, should surpass others sooner than they who raise the very foundations of it, the former are greater objects of envy than the latter. The kingdoms of Israel and Judah were often more envenomed against one another than against foreigners. This was the case in the reign of Ahaz, king of Judah. Pekah, king of Israel, to the shame of the ten tribes, discovered a disposition like that, which has sometimes made the Christian world blush; I mean, that a prince, who worshipped the true God, in order to destroy his brethren, made an alliance with an idolater. He allied himself to Rezin, a pagan prince, who reigned over

that part of Syria, which constituted the kingdom of Damascus. The kingdom of Judah had often yielded to the forces of these kings, even when each had separately made war with it. Now they were united; and intended jointly to fall on the Jews, and to overwhelm, rather than to besiege Jerusalem. Accordingly, the consternation was so great in the holy city, that, the Scripture says, "The heart of Ahaz was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind," Isa. vii. 2.

Although the kingdom of Judah had too well deserved the punishments which threatened it; and although a thousand outrages, with which the inhabitants had insulted the Majesty of heaven, seemed to guarantee the country to the enemy, yet God came to their assistance. He was touched, if not with the sincerity of their repentance, at least with the excess of their miseries. He commanded Esaias to encourage their hopes. He even promised them, not only that all the designs of their enemies should be rendered abortive; but that the two confederate kingdoms, "within three-score and five years," ver. 8, should be entirely destroyed. Moreover, he gave Ahaz the choice of a sign to convince himself of the truth of the promise. Ahaz was one of the most wicked kings that ever sat on the throne of Judah: so that the Scripture could give no worse character of this prince, nor describe his perseverance in sin more fully, than by saying that he *was always Ahaz*.\* He refused to choose a sign, not because he felt one of those noble emotions, which makes a man submit to the testimony of God without any more proof of its truth than the testimony itself; but because he was inclined to infidelity and ingratitude; and probably because he trusted in his ally, the king of Assyria. Notwithstanding his refusal, God gave him signs, and informed him, that before the prophet's two children, one of whom was already born, and the other would be born shortly, should arrive at years of discretion, the two confederate kings should retreat from Judea, and be entirely destroyed.

Of the first child, see what the seventh chapter of the Revelations of our prophet says. We are there told, that this son of the prophet was named Shearjashub, that is, "the remnant shall return," ver. 3; a name expressive of the meaning of the sign, which declared that the Jews should return from their rebellions, and that God would return from his anger. The other child, then unborn, is mentioned in the eighth chapter, where it is said "the prophetess bare a son," ver. 3.

God commanded the prophet to take the first child, and to carry him to that pool, or piece of water, which was formed by the waters of Siloah, which supplied the stream known by the name of "The fuller's conduit," 2 Kings xviii. 17, and which was at the foot of the eastern wall of Jerusalem. The prophet was ordered to produce the child in the presence of all the affrighted people, and to say to them, "Before this child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that

\* 2 Chron. xviii. 22. This is that King Ahaz. Eng. Version. C'estoit toujours le rol Achaz. Fr. Idem. erat rex Achaz. Jun. Tremel.



thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings," Isa. vii. 16. If this translation be retained, *the land* signifies the kingdom of Israel, and that of Syria, from which the enemy came, and which on account of their coming, the Jews abhorred. I should rather render the words, *the land for which thou art afraid*, and by the *land* understand Judea, which was then in a very dangerous state. But the prophecy began to be accomplished in both senses about a year after it was uttered. Tiglath Pileser, king of Assyria, not only drew off the forces of Rezin and Pekah from the siege of Jerusalem, but he drove them also from their own countries. He first attacked Damascus. Rezin quitted his intended conquest, and returned to defend his capital, where he was slain; and all his people were carried into captivity, 2 Kings xvi. 9. Tiglath Pileser then marched into the kingdom of Israel, and victory marched along with him at the head of his army, 1 Chron. v. 26. He subdued the tribes of Reuben and Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh, all the inhabitants of Galilee, and the tribe of Nephthalim, and carried them captives beyond Euphrates; and sixty-five years after, that is, sixty-five years after the prediction of the total ruin of the kingdom of Israel by the prophet Amos, the prophecy was fulfilled by Salmanassar, chap. vii. 11, according to the language of our prophet, "within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken, that it be not a people," Isa. vii. 8. Thus was this prophecy accomplished, "before this child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land, for which thou art afraid, shall be forsaken of both her kings."

God determined that the prophet's second child should also be a sign of the truth of the same promise. He assured Isaiah, that before the child, who should shortly be born, could learn to articulate the first sounds, which children were taught to pronounce; "before the child should have knowledge to cry, My father, and my mother, the riches of Damascus, and the spoil of Samaria, that is, of the kingdom of Israel, should be taken away by the king of Assyria," chap. viii. 4. This is the same promise confirmed by a second sign. God usually gives more than one, when he confirms any very interesting prediction, as we see in the history of Pharaoh, and the patriarch Joseph, Gen. xli. 1, &c.

But as all the mercies that were bestowed on the Jews, from the time of Abraham, were grounded on the covenant which God had made with that patriarch, their common father and head; or rather, as, since the fall, men could expect no favour of God but in virtue of the Mediator of the church; it is generally to be observed in the prophecies, that when God gave them a promise, he directed their attention to this grand object. Either the idea of the covenant, or the idea of the Mediator, was a seal, which God put to his promises, and a bar against the unbelief and distrust of his people. Every thing might be expected from a God, whose goodness was so infinite, as to prepare such a noble victim for the salvation of mankind. He, who would confine Satan in everlasting chains, and vanquish sin and death, was fully able to deliver his people from the

incursions of Rezin, and Pekah, the son of Remaliah. To remove the present fears of the Jews, God reminds them of the wonders of his love, which he had promised to display in favour of his church in ages to come: and commands his prophet to say to them. "Ye trembling leaves of the wood, shaken with every wind, peace be to you! Ye timorous Jews, cease your fears! let not the greatness of this temporal deliverance, which I now promise you, excite your doubts! God has favours incomparably greater in store for you, they shall be your guarantees for those which ye are afraid to expect. Ye are in covenant with God. Ye have a right to expect those displays of his love in your favour, which are least credible. Remember the blessed seed, which he promised to your ancestors, Gen. xxii. 18. "Behold! a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and call his name Immanuel," Isa. vii. 14. The spirit of prophecy, that animates me, enables me to penetrate through all the ages that separate the present moment from that in which the promise shall be fulfilled. I see the divine child, my "faith the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," Heb. xi. 1, and grounded on the word of that God, "who changeth not," Mal. iii. 6, who "is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent," Numb. xxiii. 19; I dare speak of a miracle, which will be wrought eight hundred years hence, as if it had been wrought to-day, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a child is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

This, my brethren, is the prophet's scope in the three chapters which we have analyzed, and particularly in the text. But if any one of you receive our exposition, without any farther discussion, he will discover more docility than we require, and he would betray his credulity without proving his conviction. How often does a commentator substitute his own opinions for those of his author, and, by forging, if I may be allowed to speak so, a new text, elude the difficulties of that which he ought to explain? Let us act more ingenuously. There are two difficulties, which attend our comment; one is a particular, the other is a general difficulty.

The particular difficulty is this: we have supposed, that the mysterious child, spoken of in our text, is the same of whom the prophet speaks, when he says, "A virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel;" and that this child is different from that whom Isaiah gave for a sign of the present temporal deliverance, and of whom it is said, "Before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings." This supposition does not seem to agree with the text; read the following verses, which are taken from chap. vii. "Behold! a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel: Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil and choose the good. But before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose

the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings," ver. 14—16. Do not the last words, "before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good," seem to belong to the words which immediately precede them, "Behold! a virgin shall conceive and bear a son?" Immanuel, then, who was to be born of a *virgin*, could not be the Messiah; the prophet must mean the child, of whom he said, "Before he know to refuse the evil and choose the good," Judea shall be delivered from the two confederate kings.

How indissoluble soever this objection may appear, it is only an apparent difficulty, and it lies less in the nature of the thing than in the arrangement of the terms. Represent to yourselves the prophet executing the order which God had given him, as the third verse of the seventh chapter relates; "Go forth now to meet Ahaz, thou, and Shearjashub thy son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool." Imagine Isaiah, in the presence of the Jews, holding his son Shearjashub in his arms, and addressing them in this manner; the token that God gives you, of your present deliverance, that he is still your God, and that ye are still his covenant people, is the renewal of the promise to you which he made to your ancestors concerning the Messiah; to convince you of the truth of what I assert, I discharge my commission, "Behold! a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel," that is, *God with us*. He shall be brought up like the children of men, "butter and honey shall he eat, until he know to refuse the evil, and choose the good," that is, until he arrive at years of maturity. In virtue of this promise, which will not be ratified till some ages have expired, behold what I promise you now; *before the child*, not before the child, whom I said just now, a virgin should bear; but before the child in my arms (the phrase may be rendered *before this child*;) before Shearjashub, whom I now lift up, "shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land, for which ye are in trouble, shall be forsaken of both her kings." You see, my brethren, *the child*, whom, the prophet said, "a virgin should conceive," could not be Shearjashub, who was actually present in his father's arms. The difficulty, therefore, is only apparent, and, as I observed before, it lay in the arrangement of the terms, and not in the nature of the thing. This is our answer to what I called a *particular* difficulty.

A *general* objection may be made against the manner in which we have explained these chapters, and in which, in general, we explain other prophecies. Allow me to state this objection in all its force, and, if I may use the expression, in all its enormity, in order to show you, in the end, all its levity and folly.

The odious objection is this; an unbeliever would say, the three chapters of Isaiah, of which you have given an arbitrary analysis, are equivocal and obscure, like the greatest part of those compilations, which compose the book of the visionary flights of this prophet, and like all the writings, that are called *predictions, prophecies, revelations*. Obscurity is the grand character of them, even in the opinion of those who have given sublime and curious explanations of them. They are capable

of several senses. Who has received authority to develop those ambiguous writings, to determine the true meaning, among the many different ideas which they excite in the reader, and to each of which the terms are alike applicable? During seventeen centuries, Christians have racked their invention to put a sense on the writings of the prophets advantageous to Christianity, and the greatest geniuses have endeavoured to interpret them in favour of the Christian religion. Men, who have been famous for their erudition and knowledge, have taken the most laborious pains to methodize these writings; one generation of great men have succeeded another in the undertaking; is it astonishing that some degree of success has attended their labours, and that, by dint of indefatigable industry, they have rendered those prophecies venerable, which would have been accounted dark and void of design, if less pains had been taken to adapt a design, and less violence had been used in arranging them in order.

This is the objection in all its force, and, as I said before, in all its enormity. Let us inquire whether we can give a solution proportional to this boasted objection of infidelity.

Our answer will be comprised in a chain of propositions, which will guard you against those who find mystical meanings where there are none, as well as against those who disown them where they are. To these purposes attend to the following propositions;—

1. They were not the men of our age who forged the book, in which, we imagine, we discover such profound knowledge; we know, it is a book of the most venerable antiquity, and we can demonstrate, that it is the most ancient book in the world.

2. This venerable antiquity, however, is not the chief ground of our admiration: the benevolence of its design; the grandeur of its ideas; the sublimity of its doctrines; the holiness of its precepts; are, according to our notion of things, if not absolute proofs of its divinity, at least advantageous presumptions in its favour.

3. Among divers truths which it contains, and which it may be supposed some superior geniuses might have discovered, I meet with some, the attainment of which I cannot reasonably attribute to the human mind: of this kind are some predictions, obscure I grant, to those to whom they were first delivered, but rendered very clear since by the events. Such are these two, among many others. The people, who are in covenant with God, shall be excluded; and people who are not shall be admitted. I see the accomplishment of these predictions with my own eyes, in the rejection of the Jews, and in the calling of the gentiles.

4. The superior characters which signalize these books, give them the right of being mysterious in some places, without exposing them to the charge of being equivocal, or void of meaning; for some works have acquired this right. When an author has given full proof of his capacity in some propositions, which are clear and intelligible; and when he expresses himself, in other places, in a manner obscure, and hard to be understood, he is not to be taxed, all on a sudden with writing irrationally. A meaning is to be sought in his

expressions. It is not to be supposed, that geniuses of the highest order sink at once beneath the lowest minds. Why do we not entertain such notions of our prophets? Why is not the same justice due to the extraordinary men, whose respectable writings we are pleading for, to our Isaiahs, and Jeremiahs, which is allowed to Juvenal and Virgil? What! shall some pretty thought of the latter, shall some ingenious stroke of the former, conciliate more respect to them, than the noble sentiments of God, the sublime doctrines, and the virtuous precepts of the holy Scriptures, can obtain for the writers of the Bible?

5. We do not pretend, however, to abuse that respect, which it would be unjust to withhold from our authors. We do not pretend to say that every other obscure passage contains a mystery, or that, whenever a passage appears unintelligible, we have a right to explain it in favour of the doctrine which we profess; but we think it right to consider any passage in these books prophetic when it has the three following marks.

The first is the *insufficiency of the literal meaning*. I mean, a text must be accounted prophetic, when it cannot be applied, without offering violence to the language, to any event that fell out when it was spoken, or any then present or past object.

2. The second character of a prophecy, is an *infallible commentary*. I mean, when an author of acknowledged authority gives a prophetic sense to a passage under consideration, we ought to submit to his authority and adopt his meaning.

3. The last character is a *perfect conformity between the prediction and the event*. I mean when prophecies, compared with events, appear to have been completely accomplished, several ages after they had been promulged, it cannot be fairly urged that the conformity was a lucky hit: but it ought to be acknowledged, that the prophecy proceeded from God, who, being alone capable of foreseeing what would happen, was alone capable of foretelling the event, in a manner so circumstantial and exact. All these characters unite in favour of the text which we have been explaining, and in favour of the three chapters which we have in general expounded.

The first character, that is, the insufficiency of a literal sense, agrees with our explication. Let any event in the time of Isaiah be named, any child born then, or soon after, of whom the prophet could reasonably affirm what he does in our text, and in the other verse which we have connected with it. "A virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

The second distinguishing mark, that is, an infallible commentary, agrees with our explication. Our evangelists and apostles, those venerable men, whose mission comes recommended to us by the most glorious miracles, by the healing of the sick, by the expulsion of *demons*, by the raising of the dead, by a gene-

ral subversion of all nature, our evangelists and apostles took these passages in the same sense in which we take them, they understood them of the Messiah, as we have observed before.

The third character, that is, a perfect conformity between event and prediction, agrees also with our explication. We actually find a child, some ages after the time of Isaiah, who exactly answers the description of him of whom the prophet spoke. The features are similar, and we own the likeness. Our Jesus was really born of a virgin: he was truly Immanuel, *God with us*; in him are really united, all the titles, and all the perfections, of the "Wonderful, The Counsellor, The mighty God, the everlasting father;" as we will presently prove. Can we help giving a mysterious meaning to these passages? Can we refuse to acknowledge, that the prophet intended to speak of the Messiah? These are the steps, and this is the end of our meditation in favour of the mystical sense, which we have ascribed to the words of the text.

Would to God the enemies of our mysteries would open their eyes to these objects, and examine the weight of these arguments! Would to God a love, I had almost said a rage, for independency, for a system that indulges, and inflames the passions, had not put some people on opposing these proofs! Infidelity and skepticism would have made less havoc among us, and would not have decoyed away so many disciples from truth and virtue! And would to God also, Christian ministers would never attempt to attack the systems of infidels and skeptics without the armour of demonstration! Would to God love of the marvellous may no more dazzle the imaginations of those who ought to be guided by truth alone! And would to God the simplicity and the superstition of the people may never more contribute to support that authority, which some rash and dogmatical geniuses usurp! Truth should not borrow the arms of falsehood to defend itself; nor virtue those of vice. Advantages should not be given to unbelievers and heretics, under pretence of opposing heresy and unbelief. We should render to God "a reasonable service," Rom. xii. 1, we should be all spiritual men, "judging all things," 1 Cor. ii. 15, according to the expression of the apostle. But I add no more on this article.

Hitherto we have spoken, if I may say so, to reason only, it is time now to speak to conscience. We have been preaching by arguments and syllogisms to the understanding, it is time now to preach by sentiments to the heart. Religion is not made for the mind alone; it is particularly addressed to the heart, and to the heart I would prove that our Jesus has accomplished, in the most sublime of all senses, this prophecy in the text, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given," and so on. This is our second part.

II. The terms *throne, kingdom, government*, are metaphorical, when they are applied to God, to his Messiah, to the end, which religion proposes, and to the felicity which it procures. They are very imperfect, and if I may venture to say so, very low and mean, when they are used to represent objects of such infinite grandeur. No, there is nothing suffi-

ciently noble in the characters of the greatest kings, nothing wise enough in their maxims, nothing gentle enough in their government, nothing pompous enough in their courts, nothing sufficiently glorious in their achievements, to represent fully the grandeur and the glory of our Messiah.

Who is a king? What is a throne? Why have we masters? Why is sovereign power lodged in a few hands? And what determines mankind to lay aside their independence, and to lose their beloved liberty? The whole implies, my brethren, some mortifying truths. We have not knowledge sufficient to guide ourselves, and we need minds wiser than our own to inspect and to direct our conduct. We are indigent, and superior beings must supply our wants. We have enemies, and we must have guardians to protect us.

Miserable men! how have you been deceived in your expectations? what disorders could anarchy have produced greater than those which have sometimes proceeded from sovereign authority? You sought guides to direct you: but you have sometimes fallen under the tuition of men who, far from being able to conduct a whole people, knew not how to guide themselves. You sought nursing fathers, to succour you in your indigence: but you have fallen sometimes into the hands of men, who had no other designs than to impoverish their people, to enrich themselves with the substance, and to fatten themselves with the blood, of their subjects. You sought guardians to protect you from your enemies: but you have sometimes found executioners, who have used you with greater barbarity than your most bloody enemies would have done.

But all these melancholy truths apart; suppose the fine notions, which we form of kings and of royalty, of sovereign power and of the hands that hold it, were realized: how incapable are kings, and how inadequate is their government, to the relief of the innumerable wants of an immortal soul! Suppose kings of the most tender sentiments, formidable in their armies, and abundant in their treasures; could they heal the maladies that afflict us here, or could they quench our painful thirst for felicity hereafter? Ye Cesars! Ye Alexanders! Ye Trajans! Ye who were, some of you, like Titus, the parents of your people, and the delights of mankind! Ye thunderbolts of war! Ye idols of the world! What does all your pomp avail me? Of what use to me, are all your personal qualifications, and all your regal magnificence? Can you;—Can they, dissipate the darkness that envelops me; calm the conscience that accuses and torments me; reconcile me to God; free me from the control of my commanding and tyrannical passions; deliver me from death; and discover immortal happiness to me? Ye earthly gods! ignorant and wretched like me; objects like me of the displeasure of God; like me exposed to the miseries of life; slaves to your passions like me; condemned like me to that frightful night in which death involves all mankind; ye can relieve neither your own miseries nor mine!

Show me a government that supplies these wants: that is the empire I seek. Show me

a king, who will conduct me to the felicity to which I aspire: such a king I long to obey. My brethren, this empire we are preaching to you: such a king is the king Messiah.—“Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called WONDERFUL,” because he is the substance and the centre, of all the wondrous works of God.

But purify your imaginations, and do not always judge of man as if he were a being destitute of reason and intelligence. When we speak of man, do not conceive of a being of this present world only; a creature placed for a few days in human society, wanting nothing but food and raiment, and the comforts of a temporal life; but attend to your own hearts. In the sad circumstances into which sin has brought you, what are your most important wants? We have already insinuated them. You need knowledge; you need reconciliation with God; you want support through all the miseries of life; and you need consolation against the fear of death. Well! all these wants the king Messiah supplies. I am going to prove it, but I conjure you at the same time, not only to believe, but to act. I would, by publishing the design of the Saviour's incarnation, engage you to concur in it. By explaining to you the nature of his empire, I would fain teach you the duties of his subjects. By celebrating the glory of the king Messiah, I long to see it displayed among you in all its splendid magnificence.

You want *knowledge*: you will find it in the king Messiah: He is the COUNSELLOR, He is the “True light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world,” John i. 9. “In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,” Col. ii. 3. “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon him, the Lord hath anointed him to preach good tidings unto the meek,” Isa. lxi. 1. The Spirit of the Lord rests upon him, the “spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord,” chap. xi. 2. He has “the tongue of the learned,” chap. l. 4, and the wisdom of the wise. Ask him to explain to you the grand appearances of nature; which exercise the speculations of the most transcendent geniuses, and absorb their defective reason, and all his answers will discover the most profound and perfect knowledge of them. Inquire of him whence all the visible creation came, the luminaries of heaven, and the magnificent treasures of the earth. Ask him to reveal to you the “God, who hideth himself,” Isa. xlv. 15. Ask him the cause of those endless disorders, which mix with that profusion of wisdom which appears in the world. Ask him whence the blessings come which we enjoy, and whence the calamities that afflict us. Ask him what is the origin, the nature, the destiny, the end of man. Of all these articles, the *Counsellor* will tell you more than Plato, and Socrates, and all the philosophers, who only felt after the truth, Acts xvii. 27, who themselves discovered and taught others to see only a few rays of light, darkened with prejudices and errors.

This is the first idea of the king Messiah;

this is the first source of the duties of his subjects, and of the dispositions with which they ought to celebrate his nativity, and with which alone they can celebrate it in a proper manner. To celebrate properly the festival of his nativity, truth must be esteemed; we must be desirous of attaining knowledge; we must come from the ends of the earth, like the wise men of the East, to contemplate the miracles which the Messiah displays in the new world: like Mary, we must be all attention to receive the doctrine that proceeds from his sacred mouth; like the multitude, we must follow him into deserts and mountains, to hear his admirable sermons.—This is the first duty, which the festival that you are to celebrate next Wednesday demands. Prepare yourselves to keep it in this manner.

You want *reconciliation* with God, and this is the grand work of the king Messiah. He is the *Prince of Peace*. He terminates the fatal war which sin has kindled between God and you, by obtaining the pardon of your past sins, and by enabling you to avoid the commission of sin for the future. He obtains the pardon of sins past for you. How can a merciful God resist the ardent prayers which the Redeemer of mankind addresses to him, in behalf of those poor sinners for whom he sacrificed himself? How can a merciful God resist the plea of the blood of his Son, which cries for mercy for the miserable posterity of Adam? As the king Messiah reconciles you to God, by obtaining the pardon of your past sin, so he reconciles you, by procuring strength to enable you to avoid it for time to come. Having calmed those passions which prevented your knowing what was right, and your loving what was lovely, he gave you laws of equity and love. How can you resist, after you have known him, the motives on which his laws are founded? Every difficulty disappears, when examples so alluring are seen, and when you are permitted, under your most discouraging weaknesses, to approach the treasures of grace, which he has opened to you, and to derive purity from its source. Does gratitude know any difficulties? Is not every act of obedience easy to a mind animated by a love as vehement as that, which cannot but be felt for a Saviour, who in the tenderest manner has loved us?

This is the second idea of the king Messiah, this is the second source of the duties of his subjects, and of the dispositions essential to a worthy celebration of the feast of his nativity. Come next Wednesday, deeply sensible of the danger of having that God for your enemy, who holds your destiny in his mighty hands, and whose commands all creatures obey.—Come with an eager desire of reconciliation to him. Come and hear the voice of the Prince of Peace, who publishes peace; “peace to him that is near, and to him that is far off,” Isa. lvii. 19. While Moses is mediator of a covenant between God and the Israelites on the top of the holy mountain, let not Israel violate the capital article at the foot of it. While Jesus Christ is descending to reconcile you to God, do not declare war against God; insult him not by voluntary rebellions, after

he has voluntarily delivered you from the slavery of sin, under which you groaned. Return not again to those sins which “separated between you and your God,” Isa. lix. 2, and which would do it again, though Jesus should become incarnate again, and should offer himself every day to expiate them.

You need *support under the calamities of this life*, and this also you will find in the king Messiah. He is THE MIGHTY GOD, and he will tell you, while you are suffering the heaviest temporal afflictions, “although the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, yet my kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed,” chap. liv. 10. Under your severest tribulations, he will assure you, that “all things work together for good to them that love God,” Rom. viii. 28. He will teach you to shout victory under an apparent defeat, and to sing this triumphant song, “Thanks be unto God, who always causeth us to triumph in Christ,” 2 Cor. ii. 14. “In all these things we are more than conquerors, through him who loved us,” Rom. viii. 37.

This is the third idea of the king Messiah, and this is the third source of the duties of his subjects, and of the dispositions which are necessary to the worthily celebrating of the festival of his nativity. Fall in, Christian soul! with the design of thy Saviour, who, by elevating thy desires above the world, would elevate thee above all the catastrophes of it. Come, behold Messiah, thy king, lodging in a stable, and lying in a manger: hear him saying to his disciples, “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head,” Matt. viii. 20. Learn from this example not to place thy happiness in the possession of earthly good. Die to the world, die to its pleasures, die to its pomps. Aspire after other ends, and nobler joys, than those of the children of this world, and then worldly vicissitudes cannot shake thy bliss.

Finally, you have need of one to *comfort you under the fears of death*, by opening the gates of eternal felicity to you, and by satiating your avidity for existence and elevation. This consolation the king Messiah affords. He is the “everlasting Father, THE FATHER OF ETERNITY, his throne shall be built up for all generations,” Ps. lxxxix. 4; he has received “dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed,” Dan. vii. 14, and his subjects must reign eternally with him. When thou, Christian! art confined to thy dying bed, he will approach thee with all the attractive charms of his power and grace: he will say to thee, “Fear not thou worm Jacob,” Isa. xli. 14, he will whisper these comfortable words in thine ear, “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee: and when through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee,” chap. xliii. 2. He will open heaven to thee, as he opened

it to St. Stephen; and he will say to thee, as he said to the converted thief, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise," Luke xxiii. 43.

This is the fourth idea of the king Messiah, and this is the fourth source of the duties of his subjects. How glorious is the festival of his nativity! What grand, noble, and sublime sentiments does it require of us! The subjects of the king Messiah, the children of the everlasting Father, should consider the economy of time in its true point of view, they should compare "things which are seen, which are temporal, with things which are not seen, which are eternal," 2 Cor. iv. 18. They should fix their attention upon the eternity, fill their imaginations with the glory of the world to come, and learn, by just notions of immortality, to estimate the present life; the "declining shadow; the withering grass; the fading flower; the dream that flieth away; the vapour that vanisheth," and is irrecoverably lost, Ps. cii. 11; Isa. xl. 7; Job xx. 8; and James iv. 14.

These, my brethren, are the characters of your king Messiah, these are the characters of the divine child, whose birth you are to celebrate next Wednesday, and in these ways only can you celebrate it as it deserves. We conjure you by that adorable goodness, which we are going to testify to you again, we conjure you by that throne of grace, which God is about to ascend again; we conjure you by those ineffable mercies which our imaginations cannot fully comprehend, which our minds cannot sufficiently admire, nor all the emotions of our hearts sufficiently esteem; we conjure you to look at, and, if you will pardon the expression, to lose yourselves in these grand objects; we conjure you not to turn our solemn festivals, and our devotional days, into seasons of gaming and dissipation. Let us submit ourselves to the king Messiah; let us engage ourselves to his government; let his dominion be the ground of all our joy.

"O most mighty! thou art fairer than the children of men. Grace is poured into thy lips, therefore God hath blessed thee for ever!" Ps. xlv. 3. 2. "The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion, saying, Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies! Thy people shall be willing in the day, when thou shalt assemble thy host in holy pomp!"\* Yea, reign over thine enemies, great King! bow their rebellious wills; prevent their fatal counsels; defeat all their bloody designs! Reign also over thy friends, reign over us! Make us a willing

people! Assemble all this congregation, when thou shalt come with thy host in holy pomp! Let not the flying of the clouds, which will serve thee for a triumphal chariot; let not the pomp of the holy angels in thy train, when thou shalt come to "judge the world in righteousness;" let not these objects affright and terrify our souls: let them charm and transport us; and, instead of dreading thine approach, let us hasten it by our prayers and sighs! "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly, Amen." To God be honour and glory, for ever and ever, Amen.

## SERMON XVII.

### THE VARIETY OF OPINIONS ABOUT CHRIST.

MATTHEW xvi. 13—17.

*When Jesus came into the coasts of Cesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven.*

If any prejudice be capable of disconcerting a man's peace, it is that which arises from observing the various opinions of mankind. We do not mean those which regard uninteresting objects. As we may mistake them without danger, so we may suppose, either that men have not sufficiently considered them, or that the Creator may, without injuring the perfections of his nature, refuse those assistances which are necessary for the obtaining of a perfect knowledge of them. But how do the opinions of mankind vary about those subjects, which our whole happiness is concerned to know? One affirms, that the works of nature are the productions of chance: another attributes them to a First Cause, who created matter, regulated its form, and directed its motion. One says, that there is but one God, that it is absurd to suppose a plurality of Supreme Beings, and that to prove there is one, is thereby to prove that there is but one: another says, that the Divine Nature being infinite, can communicate itself to many, to an infinity, and form many infinities, all really perfect in their kind. Moreover, among men who seem to agree in the essential points of religion, among Christians who bear the same denomination, assemble in the same places of worship, and subscribe the same creeds, ideas of the same articles very different, sometimes diametrically opposite, are discovered. As there are numerous opinions on matters of speculation, so there are endless notions about practice. One contents himself with half a system, containing only some general duties which belong to worldly decency: another insists on uniting virtue with every circumstance, every transaction, every instant, and, if I may be allowed to speak so, every indivisible point of life. One thinks

\* We retain the reading of the French Bible here; because our author paraphrases the passage after that version. *Ton peuple sera un peuple plein de franc vou loir au jour que tu assembleras ton armee en sainte pompe. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness.* The passage seems to be a prophetic allusion to one of those solemn festivals, in which conquerors, and their armies, on their return from battle, offered a part of their spoil, which they had taken from their enemies, to God, from whom the victory came. These free-will offerings were carried in grand procession. They were holy, because agreeable to the economy under which the Jews lived; and they were beautifully holy, because they were not exacted, but proceeded from the voluntary gratitude of the army. In large conquests, the troops and the offerings were out of number, like the drops of such a shower of dew, as the morning brought forth in the youth, or spring of the year. See 2 Chron. 13—15, and xv. 10—15. We have ventured this hint on a passage which seems not very clear in our version.

it lawful to associate the pleasures of the world with the practice of piety; and he pretends that good people differ from the wicked only in some enormities, in which the latter seem to forget they are men, and to transform themselves into wild beasts: another condemns himself to perpetual penances and mortifications, and if at any time he allow himself recreations, they are never such as savour of the spirit of the times, because they are the livery of the world.

I said, my brethren, that if any prejudices make deep impressions on the mind of a rational man, they are those which are produced by a variety of opinions. They sometimes drive men into a state of uncertainty and skepticism, the worst disposition of mind, the most opposite to that persuasion, without which there is no pleasure, and the most contrary to the grand design of religion, which is to establish our consciences, and to enable us to reply to every inquirer on these great subjects, "I know, and am persuaded," Rom. xiv. 14.

Against this temptation Jesus Christ guarded his disciples. Never was a question more important, never were the minds of men more divided about any question, than that which related to the person of our Saviour. Some considered him as a politician, who under a veil of humility, hid the most ambitious designs; others took him for an enthusiast. Some thought him an emissary of the devil: others an envoy from God. Even among them who agreed in the latter, "some said that he was Elias, some John the Baptist, and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets." The faith of the apostles was in danger of being shaken by these divers opinions. Jesus Christ comes to their assistance, and having required their opinions on a question which divided all Judea, having received from Peter the answer of the whole apostolical college, he praises their faith, and, by praising it, gave it a firmer establishment.

My brethren, may the words of Jesus Christ make everlasting impressions on you! May those of you who, because you have acted rationally, by embracing the belief, and by obeying the precepts of the gospel, are sometimes taxed with superstition, sometimes with infatuation, and sometimes with melancholy, learn from the reflections that we shall make on the text, to rise above the opinions of men, to be firm and immoveable amidst temptations of this kind, always faithfully to adhere to truth and virtue, and to be the disciples only of them. Grant, O Lord! that they who like St. Peter have said to Jesus Christ, "Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God," may experience such pleasure as the answer of the Divine Saviour gave to the apostle's soul, when he said, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." Amen.

The questions and the answers which are related in the text will be our only divisions of this discourse.

Jesus Christ was travelling from Bethany to Cesarea, not to that Cesarea which was situated on the Mediterranean sea, at first called the tower of Strato, and afterwards Cesarea, by

Herod the Great, in honour of the emperor Augustus; but to that which was situated at the foot of Mount Lebanon, and which had been repaired and embellished in honour of Tiberius, by Philip the Tetrarch, the son of Herod.

Jesus Christ, in his way to this city, put this question to his disciples, "Whom do men say that I, the son of man, am?" or, as it may be rendered, Whom do men say that I am? Do they say that I am the Son of man?

We will enter into a particular examination of the reasons which determined the Jews of our Saviour's time, and the inspired writers with them, to distinguish the Messiah by the title *Son of man*. Were we to determine any thing on this subject, we should give the preference to the opinion of those who think the phrase *Son of Man*, means *man* by excellence. The Jews say *son of man*, to signify a *man*. Witness, among many other passages, this well-known saying of Balaam, "God is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent," Numb. xxiii. 19. The Messiah is called the *Man*, or the *Son of Man*, that is, the *Man* of whom the prophecies had spoken, the *Man* whose coming was the object of the desires and prayers of the whole church.

It is more important to inquire the design of Jesus Christ, in putting this question to his disciples, "Whom do men say that I am?" It is one of those questions, the meaning of which can be determined only by the character of him who proposes it; for it may be put from many different motives.

Sometimes *pride* puts this question. There are some people who think of nothing but themselves, and who imagine all the world think about them too: they suppose they are the subject of every conversation; and fancy every wheel which moves in society has some relation to them; if they be not the principal spring of it. People of this sort are very desirous of knowing what is said about them, and, as they have no conception that any but glorious things are said of them, they are extremely solicitous to know them, and often put this question, "Whom do men say that I am?" Would you know what they say of you? Nothing at all. They do not know you exist, and except a few of your relations, nobody in the world knows you are in it.

The question is sometimes put by *curiosity*, and this motive deserves condemnation, if it be accompanied with a desire of reformation. The judgment of the public is respectable, and, to a certain degree, it ought to be a rule of action to us. It is necessary sometimes to go abroad, to quit our relations, and acquaintances, who are prejudiced in our favour, and to inform ourselves of the opinions of those who are more impartial on our conduct. I wish some people would often put this question, "Whom do men say that I am?" The answers they would receive would teach them to entertain less flattering, and more just notions of themselves. "Whom do men say that I am?" They say, you are haughty, and proud of your prosperity; that you use your influence only to oppress the weak; that your success is a public calamity; and that you are a tyrant whom every one abhors. "Whom do men

say that I am?" They say, you have a serpent's tongue, that "the poison of adders is under your lips;" Ps. cxl. 3, that you inflame a whole city, a whole province, by the scandalous tales you forge, and which, having forged, you industriously propagate; they say, you are infernally diligent in sowing discord between wife and husband, friend and friend, subject and prince, pastor and flock. "Whom do men say that I am?" They say you are a sordid, covetous wretch; that mammon is the God you adore; that, provided your coffers fill, it is a matter of indifference to you, whether it be by extortion, or by just acquisition, whether it be by a lawful inheritance, or by an accursed patrimony.

*Revenge* may put the question, "Whom do men say that I am?" We cannot but know that some reports, which are spread about us, are disadvantageous to our reputation. We are afraid, justice should not be done to us, we, therefore, wish to know our revilers, in order to mark them out for our vengeance. The inquiry in this disposition is certainly blameable. Let us live uprightly, and let us give ourselves no trouble about what people say of us. If there be some cases in which it is useful to know the popular opinion, there are others in which it is best to be ignorant of it. If religion forbids us to avenge ourselves, prudence requires us not to expose ourselves to the temptation of doing it. A heathen has given us an illustrious example of this prudent conduct, which I am recommending to you: I speak of Pompey the Great. He had defeated Perpenna, and the traitor offered to deliver to him the papers of Sertorius, among which were letters from several of the most powerful men in Rome, who had promised to receive Sertorius into Italy, and to put all to death who should attempt to resist him. Pompey took all the papers, burnt all the letters, by that mean prevented all the bloody consequences which would have followed such fatal discoveries, and, along with them, sacrificed that passion, which many, who are called Christians, find the most difficult to sacrifice, I mean revenge.

But this question, "Whom do men say that I am?" may be put by *benevolence*. The good of society requires each member to entertain just notions of some persons. A magistrate, who acts disinterestedly for the good of the state, and for the support of religion, would be often distressed in his government, if he were represented as a man devoted to his own interest, cruel in his measures, and governed by his own imperious tempers. A pastor, who knows and preaches the truth, who has the power of alarming hardened sinners, and of exciting the fear of hell in them, in order to prevent their falling into it, or, shall I rather say, in order to draw them out of it: such a pastor will discharge the duties of his office with incomparably more success, if the people do him justice, than if they accuse him of fomenting errors, and of loving to surround his pulpit with "devouring fire and everlasting burnings;" Isa. xxxiii. 14. Benevolence may incline such persons to inquire what is said of them, in order to rectify mistakes, which may be very injurious to those

who believe them. In this disposition Jesus Christ proposed the question in the text to his disciples. Benevolence directed all the steps of our Saviour, it dictated all his language, it animated all his emotions; and, when we are in doubt about the motive of any part of his conduct, we shall seldom run any hazard, if we attribute it to his benevolence. In our text he established the faith of his disciples by trying it. He did not want to be told the public opinions about himself, he knew them better than they of whom he inquired: but he required his disciples to relate people's opinions, that he might give them an antidote against the poison that was enveloped in them.

The disciples answered: "Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some Elias; and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets." They omitted those odious opinions, which were injurious to Jesus Christ, and refused to defile their mouths with the execrable blasphemies, which the malignity of the Jews uttered against him. But with what shadow of appearance could it be thought that Jesus Christ was John the Baptist? You may find, in part, an answer to this question in the fourteenth chapter of this gospel, ver. 1—10. It is there said, that Herod Antipas, called the Tetrarch, that is, the king of the fourth part of his father's territories, beheaded John the Baptist at the request of Herodias.

Every body knows the cause of the hatred of that fury against the holy man: John the Baptist held an opinion, which now-a-days passes for an error injurious to the peace of society, that is, that the high rank of those who are guilty of some scandalous vices, ought not to shelter them from the censures of the ministers of the living God; and that they who commit, and not they who reprove such crimes, are responsible for all the disorders which such censures may produce in society. A bad courtier, but a good servant of him, who had sent him to "prepare the way of the Lord, and to make his paths straight," Luke iii. 4, he told the incestuous Herod, without equivocating, "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother Philip's wife," Matt. xiv. 4; Herodias could not plead her cause with equity, and therefore she pleaded it with cruelty. Her daughter Salome had pleased Herod at a feast, which was made in the castle of Macheron, on the birth-day of the king. He showed the same indulgence to her, that Flaminius the Roman showed to a court lady, who had requested that consul to gratify her curiosity with the sight of beheading a man. An indulgence, certainly less shocking in a heathen, than in a prince educated in the knowledge of the true God. It was a common opinion among the Jews that the resurrection of the martyrs was anticipated. Many thought all the prophets were to be raised from the dead at the coming of the Messiah, and some had spread a report, which reached Herod, that John the Baptist enjoyed that privilege.

The same reasons, which persuaded some Jews to believe that he, whom they called Jesus, was John the Baptist risen from the dead, persuaded others to believe, that he was some "one of the prophets," who, like John, had been put to a violent death, for having spoken



with a similar courage against the reigning vices of the times in which they lived. This was particularly the case of Jeremiah. When this prophet was only fourteen years of age, and, as he said of himself, when he could *not speak*, because he was a *child*, Jer. i. 6, he delivered himself with a freedom of speech that is hardly allowable in those who are grown gray in a long discharge of the ministerial office. He censured, without distinction of rank or character, the vices of all the Jews, and having executed this painful function from the reign of Josiah to the reign of Zedekiah, he was, if we believe a tradition of the Jews, which Tertullian, St. Jerome, and many fathers of the church have preserved, stoned to death at Tahapanes in Egypt, by his countrymen: there he fell a victim to their rage against his predictions. The fact is not certain; however, it is admitted by many Christians, who have pretended that St. Paul had the prophet Jeremiah particularly in view, when he proposed, as examples to Christians, some who "were stoned," Heb. xi. 37, whom he places among the "cloud of witnesses." However uncertain this history of the prophet's lapidation may be, some Jews believed it, and it was sufficient to persuade them that Jesus Christ was Jeremiah.

As Elias was translated to heaven without dying, the opinions, of which we have been speaking, were not sufficient to persuade other Jews that Jesus Christ was Elias; but a mistaken passage of Malachi was the ground of this notion. It is the passage which concludes the writings of that prophet; "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord," Mal. iii. 5. This prophecy was perfectly plain to the disciples of Jesus Christ, for in him, and in John the Baptist they saw its accomplishment. But the Jews understood it literally. They understand it so still, and, next to the coming of the Messiah, that of Elias is the grand object of their hopes. It is Elias, according to them, who will "turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers," ver. 6. It is Elias who will prepare the ways of the Messiah, will be his forerunner, and will anoint him with holy oil. It is Elias, who will answer all questions, and solve all difficulties. It is Elias, who will obtain by his prayers the resurrection of the just. It is Elias, who will do for the dispersed Jews what Moses did for the Israelites enslaved in Egypt; he will march at their head, and conduct them to Canaan. All these expressions are taken from the Rabbins, whose names I omit, as well as the titles of the books from which I have quoted the passages now mentioned.

Such were the various opinions of the Jews about Jesus Christ; and each continued in his own prejudice without giving himself any farther trouble about it. But how could they remain in a state of tranquillity, while questions of such importance remained in dispute? All their religion, all their hopes, and all their happiness, depended on the solution of this problem: who is the man about whom the opinions of mankind are so divided? The questions, strictly speaking, were these: is the Redeemer

of Israel come? Are the prophecies accomplished? Is the Son of God among us, and has he brought with him peace, grace, and glory? What kind of beings were the Jews, who left these great questions undetermined, and lived without elucidating them? Are you surprised at these things, my brethren? your indolence on questions of the same kind is equally astonishing to considerate men. The Jews had business, they must have neglected it; they loved pleasures and amusements, they must have suspended them; they were stricken with whatever concerned the present life, and they must have sought after the life to come, they must have shaken off that idleness in which they spent their lives, and have taken up the cross and followed Jesus Christ. These were the causes of that indolence which surprises you, and these were the causes of that ignorance which concealed Jesus Christ from them, till he made himself known to them by the just, though bloody calamities, which he inflicted on their nation. And these are also the causes of that ignorance, in which the greater part of you are involved, in regard to many questions as important as those which were agitated then. Will a few acts of faith in God, and of love to him, assure us of our salvation, or must these acts be continued, repeated, and established? Does faith consist in barely believing the merit of the Saviour, or does it include an entire obedience to his laws? Is the fortune, that I enjoy with so much pleasure, display with so much parade, or hide with so much niggardliness, really mine, or does it belong to my country, to my customers, to the poor, or to any others, whom my ancestors have deceived, from whom they have obtained, and from whom I withhold it? Does my course of life lead to heaven or to hell? Shall I be numbered with "the spirits of just men made perfect," Heb. xii. 23, after I have finished my short life, or shall I be plunged with devils into eternal flames? My God! how is it possible for men quietly to eat, drink, sleep, and, as they call it, amuse themselves, while these important questions remain unanswered! But, as I said of the Jews, we must neglect our business; suspend our pleasures; cease to be dazzled with the present, and employ ourselves about the future world: perhaps also we must make a sacrifice of some darling passion, abjure some old opinion; or restore some acquisition, which is dearer to us than the truths of religion, and the salvation of our souls. Wo be to us! Let us no more reproach the Jews; the causes of their indolence are the causes of ours. Ah! let us take care, lest, like them, we continue in ignorance, till the vengeance of God command death, and devils, and hell, to awake us with them "to everlasting shame," Dan. xii. 2.

Jesus Christ, having heard from the mouths of his apostles what people thought of him, desired also to hear from their own mouths (we have assigned the reasons before) what they themselves thought of him. "He saith unto them, but whom say ye that I am?" Peter instantly replied for himself, and for the whole apostolical college, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

St. Peter was a man of great vivacity, and

people of this cast are subject to great mistakes; as ready to speak as to think; they often fall into mistakes, through the same principle that inclines them to embrace the truth, and to maintain it. St. Peter's history often exemplifies this remark. Does he hear Jesus Christ speak of his approaching death? "Lord (says he,) spare thyself, this shall not be to thee," Matt. xvi. 22. Does he see a few rays of celestial glory on the holy mount! He is stricken with their splendour, and exclaims, "Lord, it is good for us to be here," chap. xvii.

4. Does he perceive Jesus Christ in the hands of his enemies? He draws a sword to deliver him, and cuts off the ear of Malchus. But, if this vivacity expose a man to great inconveniences, it is also accompanied with some fine advantages. When a man of this disposition attends to virtue, he makes infinitely greater proficiency in it than those slow men do, who pause, and weigh, and argue out all step by step: the zeal of the former is more ardent, their flames are more vehement, and after they are become wise by their mistakes, they are patterns of piety. St. Peter on this occasion, proves beforehand all we have advanced. He feels himself animated with a holy jealousy, in regard to them who partake with him the honour of apostleship, and it would mortify him, could he think, that any one of the apostolical college has more zeal for his master, to whom he has devoted his heart, and his life, all his faculty of loving, and all the powers of his soul; he looks, he sparkles, and he replies, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

"Thou art the Christ," or, thou art the Messiah, the King promised to the church. He calls this king "the Son of God." The Jews gave the Messiah this title, which was an object of their hopes. Under this idea the prophecies had promised him, "the Lord hath said unto me, thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee," Ps. ii. 7. God himself conferred this title on Jesus Christ from heaven, "This is my beloved Son," Matt. iii. 17. Under this idea the angel promised him to his holy mother, "thou shalt bring forth a Son, he shall be great, and shall be called, the Son of the Highest," Luke i. 31, 32. They are two very different questions, I grant, whether the Jewish church acknowledged that the Messiah should be "the Son of God;" and whether they knew all the import of this august title. It cannot, however, be reasonably doubted, I think, whether they discovered his dignity, although they might not know the doctrine of Christ's divinity so clearly, nor receive it with so much demonstration, as Christians have received it. I should digress too far from my subject, were I to quote all the passages from the writings of the Jews which learned men have collected on this article. Let it suffice to remark, that if it could be proved, that the Jewish church affixed only confused ideas to the title "Son of God," which is given to the Messiah, it is beyond a doubt, I think, that the apostles affixed clear ideas to the terms, and that in their style, *God* and *Son of God* are synonymous: witness, among many other passages, St. Thomas's adoration of Jesus Christ expressed in these words, "My Lord and my God."

Let us not engage any farther in this controversy now; let us improve the precious moments which remain to the principal design that we proposed in the choice of the subject, that is, to guard you against the temptations which arise from that variety of opinions which are received, both in the world and in the church, on the most important points of religion. The comparison we are going to make of St. Peter's confession of faith, with the judgment of Jesus Christ on it, will conduct us to this end.

Jesus Christ assured St. Peter, that the confession of faith, which he then made, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," was not a production of frail and corrupted nature, or, as he expresses it, That "flesh and blood" have not revealed these things unto him. Flesh and blood mean here, as in many passages we have quoted at other times, frail and corrupted nature. Jesus Christ assured St. Peter, that this confession was a production of grace, which had operated in him, and which would conduct him to the supreme good. This is the meaning of these words, "My Father, who is in heaven, hath revealed these things unto thee." What were the characters of the faith of St. Peter which occasioned the judgment that Jesus Christ made of it? and how may we know whether our faith be of the same divine original? Follow us in these reflections: "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, flesh and blood hath not produced the faith that thou hast professed, but my Father who is in heaven, hath revealed it to thee." In order to convince thee of the truth of my assertions, consider first the circumstances which Providence has improved to produce thy faith: secondly, the efforts which preceded it: thirdly, the evidence that accompanies it: fourthly, the sacrifices which seal and crown it: and, lastly the nature of the very frailties which subsist with it.—Let us explain these five characters, and let us make an application of them. Let us know St. Peter; or, rather, let us learn to know ourselves. With this, the most important point, we will conclude this discourse.

1. Let us attend to the *circumstances* which Providence had improved to the producing of St. Peter's faith. There are in the lives of Christians, certain signal circumstances, in which we cannot help perceiving a particular hand of Providence working for their salvation. Mistakes on this article may produce, and foment, superstitious sentiments. We have, in general, a secret bias to fanaticism. We often meet with people who imagine themselves the central points of all the designs of God; they think, he watches only over them, and that, in all the events in the universe, he has only their felicity in view. Far from us be such extravagant notions. It is, however, strictly true, that there are in the lives of Christians some signal circumstances, in which we cannot help seeing a particular Providence working for their salvation. Of whom can this be affirmed more evidently than of the apostles? They by an inestimable privilege, were not only witnesses of the life of Jesus Christ, hearers of his doctrine, and spectators of his miracles: but they were admitted to an inti-

macy with him; they had liberty at all times, and in all places, to converse with him, to propose their doubts, and to ask for his instructions; they were at the source of wisdom, truth, and life. St. Peter had these advantages not only in common with the rest of the apostles: but he, with James and John, were chosen from the rest of the apostles to accompany the Saviour, when, on particular occasions, he laid aside the veils which concealed him from the rest, and when he displayed his divinity in his greatest glory. A faith produced in such extraordinary circumstances, was not the work of flesh and blood, it was a production of that almighty grace, that ineffable love, which wrought the salvation of St. Peter.

My brethren, although we have never enjoyed the same advantages with St. Peter: yet, it seems to me, those whom God has established in piety, may recollect the manner in which he has improved some circumstances to form the dispositions in them that constitute it. Let each turn his attention to the different conditions through which God has been pleased to conduct him. Here I was exposed to such or such a danger, and delivered from it by a kind of miracle; there, I fell into such or such a temptation, from which I was surprisingly recovered; in such a year I was connected with a baneful company, from which an unexpected event freed me: at another time, I met with a faithful friend, the most valuable of all acquisitions, whose kind advice and assistance, recommended by his own example, were of infinite use to me: some of these dangerous states would have ruined me, if the projects, on which I was most passionately bent, had succeeded according to my wishes; for they were excited by worldly objects, and I was infatuated with their glory; and others would have produced the same effect, if my adverse circumstances had either increased or continued. I repeat, it again, my brethren, each of us may recollect circumstances in his life in which a kind Providence evidently interposed, and made use of them to tear him from the world, and thereby enabled him to adopt this comfortable declaration of Jesus Christ, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father, which is in heaven."

2. Let us remark *the efforts* which preceded faith. God has been pleased to conceal the truth under veils, in order to excite our arduous industry to discover it. The obscurity that involves it for a time, is not only agreeable to the general plan of Providence, but it is one of the most singularly beautiful dispensations of it. If, then, you have attended to the truth only in a careless, indolent manner, instead of studying it with avidity, it is to be feared you have not obtained it: at least, it may be presumed, your attachment to it is less the work of Heaven than of the world. But if you can attest you have silenced prejudice to hear reason, you have consulted nature to know the God of nature; that, disgusted with the little progress you could make in that way, you have had recourse to revelation; that you have stretched your meditation, not only to ascertain the truth of the gospel, but to obtain a deep, thorough knowledge of it; that you have considered this as

the most important work to which your attention could be directed; that you have sincerely and ardently implored the assistance of God to enable you to succeed in your endeavours; that you have often knocked at the door of mercy to obtain it; and that you have often adopted the sentiments, with the prayer of David, and said, "Lord open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law!" Ps. cxix. 18. If you can appeal to Heaven for the truth of these practices, be you assured, your faith, like St. Peter's, is not a production of flesh and blood, but a work of that grace which never refuses itself to the sighs of a soul seeking it with so much vehement desire.

3. *The evidence* that accompanies faith is our next article. People may sincerely deceive themselves; indeed erroneous opinions are generally received on account of some glimmerings that hover around them and dazzle the beholders. The belief of an error seems, in some cases, to be grounded on principles as clear as those of truth. It is certain, however, that truth has a brightness peculiar to itself; an evidence, that distinguishes it from whatever is not true. The persuasion of a man, who rests on demonstration, is altogether different from that of him who is seduced by sophisms. Evidence has its prerogatives and its rights. Maintain who will, not only with sincerity, but with all the positiveness and violence of which he is capable, that there is nothing certain; I am fully persuaded that I have evidence, incomparably clearer, of the opposite opinion. In like manner, when I affirm that I have an intelligent soul, and that I animate a material body; when I maintain that I am free, that the Creator has given me the power of turning my eyes to the east, or to the west; that while the Supreme Being, on whom I own I am entirely dependant, shall please to continue me in my present state, I may look to the east or to the west, as I choose, without being forced by any superior power to turn my eyes toward one of these points, rather than towards the other: when I admit these propositions, I find myself guided by brightness of evidence, which it is impossible to find in the opposite propositions. A sophist may invent some objections, which I cannot answer; but he can never produce reasons, that counterbalance those which determine me; he may perplex, but he can never persuade me. In like manner, an infidel may unite every argument in favour of a system of infidelity; a Turk may accumulate all his imaginations in support of Mohammedism; a Jew may do the same for Judaism; and they may silence me, but they can never dissuade me from Christianity. The religion of Jesus Christ has peculiar proof. The brightness of that evidence, which guides the faith of a Christian, is a guarantee of the purity of the principle from which it proceeds.

4. Observe *the sacrifices* that crown the faith of a Christian. There are two sorts of these: the one comprehends some valuable possessions; the other some tyrannical passions. Religion requires sacrifices of the first kind in times of persecution, when the most indispensable duties of a Christian are punished as atrocious crimes; when men, under pretence of religion, let loose their rage against them who sincerely

love religion, and when, to use our Saviour's style, they think "to do service to God," John xvi. 2, by putting the disciples of Christ to death. Happy they! who, among you, my brethren, have been enabled to make sacrifices of this kind! You bear, I see, the marks of the disciples of a crucified Saviour; I respect the cross you carry, and I venerate your wounds. Yet these are doubtful evidences of that faith which the grace of our heavenly Father produces. Sometimes they even proceed from a disinclination to sacrifices of the second kind. Infatuation has made confessors; vain glory has produced martyrs; and there is a phenomenon in the church, the cross of casuists, and the most insuperable objection against the doctrine of assurance and perseverance; that is, there are men, who, after they have resisted the greatest trials, yield to the least; men who, having at first fought like heroes, at last fly like cowards; who, after they have prayed for their persecutors, for those who confined them in dungeons, who, to use the psalmist's language, "ploughed upon their backs, and made long their furrows," Ps. cxxix. 3, could not prevail with themselves on the eve of a Lord's supper-day to forgive a small offence committed by a brother, by one of the household of faith. There have been men who, after they had resisted the tortures of the rack, fell into the silly snares of voluptuousness. There have been men who, after they had forsaken all their ample fortunes, and rich revenues, were condemned for invading the property of a neighbour, for the sake of a trifling sum, that bore no proportion to that which they had quitted for the sake of religion. O thou "deceitful, and desperately wicked heart of man! O thou heart of man! who can know thee!" Jer. xvii. 9. Yet study thy heart, and thou wilt know it. Search out the principle from which thine actions flow, content not thyself with a superficial self-examination; and thou wilt find, that want of courage to make a sacrifice of the last kind is sometimes that which produces a sacrifice of the first. One passion indemnifies us for the sacrifice of another. But to resign a passion, the resignation of which no other passion requires; to become humble without indemnifying pride by courting the applause that men sometimes give to humility; to renounce pleasure without any other pleasure than that of pleasing the Creator; to make it our meat and drink, according to the language of Scripture, "to do the will of God; to deny one's self; to crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts; to present the body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God," John iv. 34; Matt. xvii. 24; Gal. v. 24; Rom. xii. 1, these are the characters of that faith which flesh cannot produce; "that which is born of the flesh is flesh," John iii. 6, but a faith which sacrifices the flesh itself, is a production of the grace of the "Father which is in heaven."

5. To conclude, St. Peter's faith has a fifth character, which he could not well discover in himself, before he had experienced his own frailty, but which we, who have a complete history of his life, may very clearly discern. I ground the happiness of St. Peter, and the idea I form of his faith, on the very nature of his fall. Not that we ought to consider sin as an

advantage, nor that we adopt the maxim of those who put sin among the "all things which work together for good to them that love God," Rom. viii. 28. Ah! if sin be an advantage, may I be for ever deprived of such an advantage? May a constant peace between my Creator and me for ever place me in a happy incapacity of knowing the pleasure of reconciliation with him! It is true, however, that we may judge by the nature of the falls of good men of the sincerity of their faith, and that the very obstacles which the remainder of corruption in them opposes to their happiness, are, properly understood, proofs of the unchangeableness of their felicity.

St. Peter fell into great sin after he had made the noble confession in the text. He committed one of those atrocious crimes which terrify the conscience, trouble the joy of salvation, and which sometimes, confound the elect with the reprobate. Of the same Jesus, to whom St. Peter said in the text, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God;" and elsewhere, "we believe, and are sure, that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God;" of the same Jesus he afterwards said, "I know not the man," John vi. 69; Matt. xxvi. 72. Ye know not the man! And who, then, did you say, had the "words of eternal life?" Ye know not the man! And with whom, then, did you promise to "go to prison and to death?" Ye know not the man! And whom have you followed, and whom did you declare to be "the Son of the living God?" Notwithstanding this flagrant crime; notwithstanding this denial, the scandal of all ages, and an eternal monument of human weakness; in spite of this crime, the salvation of St. Peter was sure; he was the object of the promise, "Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not," Luke xxii. 31, 32. And "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona," was not only true but infallible. The very nature of his fall proves it. Certain struggles, which precede the commission of sin; a certain infelicity, that is felt during the commission of it; above all, certain horrors which follow; an inward voice, that cries, Miserable wretch! what hast thou done? A certain hell, if I may venture so to express myself, a certain hell, the flames of which divine love alone can kindle, characterize the falls of which I speak.

This article is for you, poor sinners! who are so hard to be persuaded of the mercy of God towards you; who imagine the Deity sits on a tribunal of vengeance, surrounded with thunder and lightning, ready to strike your guilty heads. Such a faith as St. Peter's never fails. When by examining your own hearts, and the histories of your own lives, you discover the characters which we have described, you may assure yourselves, that all the powers of hell united against your salvation can never prevent it. Cursed be the man who abuses this doctrine! Cursed be the man who poisons this part of Christian divinity! Cursed be the man who reasons in this execrable manner! St. Peter committed an atrocious crime, in an unguarded moment, when reason, troubled by a revolution of the senses, had lost the power of reflection: I therefore risk nothing by commit-

ting sin coolly and deliberately. St. Peter disguised his Christianity for a moment, when the danger of losing his life made him lose sight of the reasons that induce people to confess their Christianity, then I may disguise mine for thirty or forty years together, and teach my family to act the same hypocritical part; then I may live thirty or forty years, without a church, without sacraments, without public worship; when I have an opportunity, I may loudly exclaim, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God;" and when that confession would injure my interest, or hazard my fortune, or my life, I may hold myself always in readiness to cry as loudly, "I know not the man;" I may abjure that religion which Jesus Christ preached, which my fathers sealed with their blood, and for which a "cloud of witnesses," Heb. xii. 1, my contemporaries, and my brethren, went, some into banishment, others into dungeons, some to the galleys, and others to the stake. Cursed be the man who reasons in this execrable manner. "Ah! how shall I bless whom God hath not blessed."

I repeat it again, such a faith as St. Peter's never fails, and the very nature of the falls of such a believer proves the sincerity and the excellence of his faith. We would not wish to have him banish entirely from his soul that fear which the Scriptures praise, and to which they attribute grand effects. A Christian, an established Christian I mean, ought to live in perpetual vigilance, he ought always to have these passages in his mind, "Be not high-minded, but fear. Hold that fast which thou hast that no man take thy crown. When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned, in his sin he shall die," Rom. xii. 20; Rev. iii. 11, and Ezek. xviii. 24. From these Scriptures, such a Christian as I have described will not infer consequences against the certainty of his salvation; but consequences directly contrary; and there is a degree of perfection which enables a Christian soldier even in spite of some momentary repulses in war, to sing this triumphant song, "Who shall separate me from the love of Christ? In all things I am more than conqueror, through him that loved me! Thanks be unto God, who always causeth me to triumph in Christ!" Rom. viii. 35, 37, and 2 Cor. ii. 14.

O! how amiable, my brethren, is Christianity! How proportional to the wants of men! O! how delightful to recollect its comfortable doctrines, in those sad moments, in which sin appears, after we have fallen into it, in all its blackness and horror! How delightful to recollect its comfortable doctrines in those distressing periods, in which a guilty conscience drives us to the verge of hell, holds us on the brink of the precipice, and obliges us to hear those terrifying exclamations which arise from the bottom of the abyss: "The fearful, the unbelieving, the abominable, whoremongers, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone!" Rev. xxi. 8. How happy then to be able to say, I have sinned indeed! I have repeatedly committed the crimes which plunge men into "the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone!" I have repeatedly been fearful and unclean! per-

haps I may be so again! Perhaps I may forget all the resolutions I have made to devote myself for ever to God! Perhaps I may violate my solemn oaths to my sovereign Lord! Perhaps I may again deny my Redeemer! Perhaps, should I be again tried with the sight of scaffolds and stakes, I might again say, "I know not the man!" But yet, I know I love him! Nothing, I am sure, will ever be able to eradicate my love to him! I know, if I "love him," it is "because he first loved me," 1 John iv. 19; and I know, that he, "having loved his own who are in the world, loved them unto the end," John xiii. 1.

O my God! What would become of us without a religion that preached such comfortable truths to us? Let us devote ourselves for ever to this religion, my brethren. The more it strengthens us against the horrors which sin inspires, the more let us endeavour to surmount them by resisting sin. May you be adorned with these holy dispositions, my brethren! May you be admitted to the eternal pleasures which they procure, and may each of you be able to apply to himself the declaration of Jesus Christ to St. Peter, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father, who is in heaven." God grant you these blessings! To him be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

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## SERMON XVIII.

### THE LITTLE SUCCESS OF CHRIST'S MINISTRY.\*

#### ROMANS X. 21.

*All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.*

THE object that St. Paul presents to our view in the text, makes very different impressions on the mind, according to the different sides on which it is viewed. If we consider it in itself, it is a prodigy, a prodigy which confounds reason, and shakes faith. Yes, when we read the history of Christ's ministry; when the truth of the narrations of the evangelists is proved beyond a doubt; when we transport ourselves back to the primitive ages of the church, and see, with our own eyes, the virtues and the miracles of Jesus Christ; we cannot believe that the Holy Spirit put the words of the text into the mouth of the Saviour of the world: "All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." It should seem, if Jesus Christ had displayed so many virtues, and operated so many miracles, there could not have been one infidel; not one Jew, who could have refused to embrace Christianity, nor one libertine, who could have refused to have become a good man: one would think, all the synagogue must have fallen at the feet of Jesus Christ, and desired an admission into his church.

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\* The style of reasoning which runs through this sermon, and the whole of its moral character, must place the author among the first of preachers, and the best of men. J. S.

But when, after we have considered the unsuccessfulness of Christ's ministry in itself, we consider it in relation to the ordinary conduct of mankind, we find nothing striking, nothing astonishing, nothing contrary to the common course of events. An obstinate resistance of the strongest motives, the tenderest invitations, interests the most important, and demonstrations the most evident, is not, we perceive, an unheard-of thing; and instead of breaking out into vain exclamations, and crying, *O times! O manners!* we say with the wise man, "That which is done, is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun," Eccles. i. 9.

I have insensibly laid out, my brethren, the plan of this discourse. I design, first, to show you the unsuccessfulness of Christ's ministry as a prodigy, as an eternal opprobrium to that nation in which he exercised it. And I intend, secondly, to remove your astonishment, after I have excited it; and, by making a few reflections on you yourselves, to produce in you a conviction, yea, perhaps a preservation, of a certain uniformity of corruption, which we cannot help attributing to all places, and to all times.

O God, by my description of the infidelity of the ancient Jews to-day, confirm us in the faith! May the portraits of the depravity of our times, which I shall be obliged to exhibit to this people, in order to verify the sacred history of the past, inspire us with as much contrition on account of our own disorders, as astonishment at the disorders of the rest of mankind! Great God! animate our meditations to this end with thy Holy Spirit. May this people, whom thou dost cultivate in the tenderest manner, be an exception to the too general corruption of the rest of the world! Amen.

I. Let us consider the unbelief of the Jews as a prodigy of hardness of heart, an eternal shame and opprobrium to the Jewish nation, and let us spend a few moments in lamenting it. We have supposed, that the text speaks of their infidelity. Christians who regard the authority of St. Paul, will not dispute it: for the apostle employs three whole chapters of his Epistle to the Romans, the ninth, the tenth, and the eleventh, to remove the objections which the casting off of the Jews might raise against Christianity, among those of that nation who had embraced the gospel.

One of the most weighty arguments which he uses to remove this stumbling-block is, the prediction of their unbelief in their prophecies; and among the other prophecies which he alleges is my text, quoted from the sixty-fifth of Isaiah.

It is worthy of observation, that all the other passages, which the apostles cite on this occasion from the prophets, were taken by the ancient Jews in the same sense that the apostle gives them. This may be proved from the Talmud. I do not know a more absurd book than the Talmud: but one is, in some sort, repaid for the fatigue of turning it over by an important discovery, so to speak, which every page of that book makes; that is, that whatever pains the Jews have been at to ener-

vate the arguments which we have taken from the theology of their ancestors, they themselves cannot help preserving proofs of their truth. I would compare, on this article, the Talmud of the Jews with the mass-book of the church of Rome. Nothing can be more opposite to the doctrine of the gospel, and to that of the reformation, than the Romish missal: yet we discover in it some traces of the doctrine of the primitive church; and although a false turn is given to much of the ancient phraseology, yet it is easy to discover the primitive divinity in this book, so that some authors have thought the missal the most eligible refutation of the worship prescribed by the missal itself. We consider the Talmud, and other writings of the modern Jews, in the same light. The ancient Jews, we see, took the prophecies which St. Paul alleges, in the three chapters that I have quoted, in the same sense in which the apostle took them, and like him, understood them of the infidelity of the Jews in the time of the Messiah.

St. Paul, in Rom. ix. 25, quotes a prophecy from Hosea, "I will call them my people, which were not my people." The ancient Jews took this prophecy in the apostle's sense, and we have this gloss on the words of Hosea still in the Talmud: "The time shall come, wherein they, who were not my people, shall turn unto the Lord, and shall become my people," chap. ii. 23.

St. Paul, in Rom. ix. 23, cites a prophecy from Isaiah, "Behold, I lay in Sion a stumbling-stone," chap. viii. 14. The ancient Jews took this prophecy in the same sense, and we have still this gloss in the Talmud; "When the Son of David shall come," that is to say, in the time of the Messiah, "the two houses of the fathers," that is, the kingdom of Israel, and that of Judah (these two kingdoms included the whole nation of the Jews,) "the two houses of the fathers shall be cast off, according as it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumbling-stone."

The apostle, in Rom. x. 19, alleges a passage from Deuteronomy; "I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people," chap. xxxii. 21. The Jews, both ancient and modern, take this prophecy in the same sense, and one of their books, entitled, "The book by excellence," explains the whole chapter of the time of the Messiah.

Our text is taken, by St. Paul from Isaiah's prophecy, "All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." The ancient Jews took the words in the same sense, as we can prove by the writings of the modern Jews. Aben Ezra quotes an ancient Rabbi, who explains the prophecy more like a Christian than a Jew. These are his words: "I have found the nations which called not on me: but, as for my people, in vain have I stretched out my hands unto them." St. Paul proves that the hardness of heart of the Jewish nation was foretold by the prophets, and the Jews, in like manner, have preserved a tradition of the infidelity of their nation in the time of the Messiah: hence this saying of a Rabbi, "God abode three years and a half on Mount Olivet

in vain; in vain he cried, Seek ye the Lord! and therefore am I found of them who sought me not."

We have, then, a right to say, that my text speaks of the unbelief of the Jews in the time of the Messiah. This we were to prove, and to prove this infidelity is to exhibit a prodigy of hardness of heart, the eternal opprobrium and shame of the Jewish nation. This is the first point of light in which we are to consider unbelief, and the smallest attention is sufficient to discover its turpitude.

Consider the pains that Jesus Christ took to convince and to reform the Jews. To them he consecrated the first functions of his ministry; he never went out of their towns and provinces; he seemed to have come only for them, and to have brought a gospel formed on the plan of the law, and restrained to the Jewish nation alone. The evangelists have remarked these things, and he himself said, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel," Matt. xv. 24. When he sent his apostles, he expressly commanded them "not to go into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans to enter not," chap. x. 5. And the apostles, after his ascension, began to exercise their ministry after his example, by saying to the Jews, "Unto you first, God sent his Son Jesus to bless you," Acts iii. 26.

Consider, farther, the means which Jesus Christ employed to recover this people. Here a boundless field of meditation opens: but the limits of these exercises forbid my enlarging, and I shall only indicate the principal articles.

What proper means of conviction did Jesus omit in the course of his ministry among this people? Are miracles proper? "Though ye believe not me, believe the works," John x. 32. Were extraordinary discourses proper? "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin," chap. xv. 22. Is innocence proper? "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" chap. viii. 46. Is the authority of the prophets necessary? "Search the Scriptures, for they are they that testify of me," chap. v. 39. Is it proper to reason with people on their own principles? "Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me," ver. 46. "Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came; say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?" chap. x. 34—36.

Consider again, the different forms, if I may be allowed to speak so, which Jesus Christ put on to insinuate himself into their minds. Sometimes he addressed them by condescension, submitting to the rights of the law, receiving circumcision, going up to Jerusalem, observing the sabbath, and celebrating their festivals. At other times he exhibited a noble liberty, freeing himself from the rites of the law, travelling on sabbath-days, and neglecting their feasts. Sometimes he conversed familiarly with them, eating and drinking with them, mixing himself in their entertainments, and assisting at their marriage-feasts. At other times he put on the austerity of retirement, fleeing from

their societies, retreating into the deserts, devoting himself for whole nights to meditation and prayer, and for whole weeks to praying and fasting. Sometimes he addressed himself to them by a graceful gentleness: "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Learn of me, for I am meek, and lowly in heart. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Matt. xi. 28, 29; xxiii. 37. At other times he tried them by severity, he drove them from the temple, he denounced the judgments of God against them; he depicted a future day of vengeance, and, showing Jerusalem covered with the carcasses of the slain, the holy mountain flowing with blood, and the temple consuming in flames, he cried, *Wo, wo* to the Pharisees! *Wo* to the scribes! *Wo* to all the doctors of the law! ver. 13, &c.

Jesus Christ, in the whole of his advent, answered the characters by which the prophets had described the Messiah. What characters do you Jews expect in a Messiah, which Jesus Christ doth not bear? Born of your nation,—in your country,—of a virgin,—of the family of David,—of the tribe of Judah,—in Bethlehem,—after the seventy weeks,—at the expiration of your grandeur, and before the departure of your sceptre. On one hand, "despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted; wounded for your transgressions, bruised for your iniquities; brought as a lamb to the slaughter, cut off from the land of the living," as your prophets had foretold, Isa. liii. 3—8. But on the other hand, glorious and magnanimous, "prolonging his days, seeing his seed, the pleasure of the Lord prospering in his hand, justifying many by his knowledge, blessed of God, girding his sword upon his thigh, and riding prosperously on the word of his truth," as the same prophets had taught you to hope, ver. 10, 11, and Psal. xlv. 2, 3. What Messiah, then, do you wait for? If you require another gospel, produce us another law. If you reject Jesus Christ, reject Moses. If you want other accomplishments, show us other prophecies. If you will not receive our apostles, discard your own prophets.

Such was the conduct of Jesus to the Jews. What success had he? What effects were produced by all his labour, and by all his love; by so many conclusive sermons, and so many pressing exhortations; by so much demonstrative evidence, by so many exact characters, and so many shining miracles; by so much submission, and so much elevation; by so much humility, and so much glory; and, so to speak, by so many different forms, which Jesus Christ took to insinuate himself into the minds of this people? You hear in the words of the text; "All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." The malice of this people prevailed over the mercy of God, and mercy was useless except to a few. The ancient Jews were infidels, and most of the modern Jews persist in infidelity. Is not this a prodigy of hardness? Is not this

an eternal reproach and shame to the Jewish nation?

II. But we have pursued the unbelief of the Jews far enough in the first point of view; let us proceed to consider it with a view to what we proposed in the second place. We will show that men's obstinate resistance of the most pressing motives, the most important interests, and the most illustrious examples, is not an unheard-of thing: and we will prove, that all which results from the example of the unbelieving Jews, is a proof of the uniformity of the depravity of mankind; that they who lived in the times of the first planters of Christianity, resembled the greatest part of those who lived before them, and of those who have lived since. Would to God this article were less capable of evidence! But, alas! we are going to conduct you step by step to demonstration.

First, We will take a cursory view of ancient history, and we will show you, that the conduct of the unbelieving Jews presents nothing new, nothing that had not been done before, nothing contrary to the universal practice of mankind from Adam to Jesus Christ.

Secondly, We will go a step farther, and show you a whole community, who, amidst the light of the gospel, reject the doctrines of the gospel, for the same theological reasons for which the Jews rejected it.

Thirdly, We will produce an object yet more astonishing: a multitude of Christians, whom the light of the reformation has freed from the superstition that covered the church, guilty of the very excesses which we lament in the Jews and in superstitious Christians.

Fourthly, We will go farther still, we will suppose this congregation in the place of the ancient Jews, and we will prove, that, had you been in their places, you would have done as they did.

The last is only supposition; we will, therefore, in the fifth place, realize it, and show you, not that you would have acted like the Jews, had you been in their circumstances; but that you really do act so; and we will show you an image of yourselves in the conduct of the ancient Jews.

1. The infidelity of those who heard the sermons of the first heralds of religion, might surprise us, if truth and virtue had always been embraced by the greatest number, and if the multitude had not always taken the side of vice and falsehood. But survey the principal periods of the church from the beginning of the world to that time, and you will see a very different conduct.

When there was only one man and one woman in the world, and when these two, who came from the immediate hand of God, could not question either his existence or his perfections, they both preferred the direction of the devil before that of the Supreme Being, who had just brought them into existence, Gen. iii.

Did God give them a posterity? The children walked in the criminal steps of their parents. The fear and the worship of the true God were confined to the family of Seth, to a small number of believers, whom the Scriptures calls, "sons of God," chap. vi. 2, while "the sons of men," acknowledged no other religion

but their own fancies, no other law but their own lust.

Did mankind multiply? Errors and sins multiplied with them. The Scripture says, "All flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth. The Lord repented that he had made man on the earth," ver. 12, and by a universal deluge exterminated the whole impious race, except "eight persons," 1 Pet. iii. 20.

Were these eight persons freed from the general flood? They peopled a new world with a succession as wicked as that which inhabited the old world, and which was drowned in the flood. They conspired together against God, and left to future ages a monument of their insolent pride, "a tower, the top" of which, they said should "reach to heaven," Gen. xi. 4.

Were these sons of presumption dispersed? Their depravity and their idolatry they carried with them, and with both they infected all the places of their exile. Except Abraham, his family, and a small number of believers, nobody worshipped or knew the true God.

Were the descendants of this patriarch multiplied into a nation, and loaded with the distinguishing blessings of God? They distinguished themselves also by their excesses. Under the most august legislation, and against the clearest evidence, they adopted notions the most absurd, and perpetrated crimes the most unjust. They carried the tabernacle of Moloch in the wilderness; they proposed the stoning of Moses and Aaron; they preferred the slavery of Egypt before the liberty of the sons of God.

Were these people conducted by a train of miracles to the land of promise? The blessings that God bestowed so liberally on them, they generally turned into weapons of war against their benefactor. They shook off the gentle government of that God who had chosen them for his subjects, for the sake of submitting to the iron rods of such tyrants as those who reigned over neighbouring nations.

Did God exceed their requests; did he give them princes, who were willing to support religion? They rebelled against them; they made a scandalous schism, and rendered that supreme worship to images which was due to none but to the supreme God.

2. The people, of whom we have been speaking, lived before the time of Jesus Christ: but I am to show you, in the second place, a whole community, enlightened by the gospel, retaining the same principle which was the chief cause of the infidelity of the Jews; I mean a blind submission to ecclesiastical rulers.

The Jewish doctors, who were contemporary with Jesus Christ, assumed a sovereign power over the people's minds; and the Rabbins, who have succeeded them, have done their utmost to maintain, and to extend it. Hence the superb titles, Wise Man, Father, Prince, King, yea God. Hence the absolute tyranny of decisions of what is true, and what is false, what is venial, and what is unpardonable. Hence the seditious maxims of those of them, who affirm that they, who violate their canons, are worthy of death. Hence those blasphemous declarations, which say, that they have a right of giving what gloss they please to the law, should it be even against the law itself; on



condition, however, of their affirming, that they were assisted by, I know not what supernatural aid, which they call Bath-col, that is "the daughter of a voice."

Now, my brethren, when an ecclesiastic has arrived at a desire of domination over the minds of the people, and when the people are sunk so low as to suffer their ecclesiastics to exercise such a dominion, there is no opinion too fantastic, no prepossession too absurd, no doctrine too monstrous, to become an article of faith. It has been often objected against us, that, to allow every individual the liberty of examining religion for himself, is to open a door to heresy. But if ever recrimination were just, it is proper here. To give fallible men the power of finally determining matters of faith, is to throw open flood-gates to the most palpable errors. Thou eternal truth! thou sovereign Teacher of the church! thou High-priest of the new covenant! thou alone hast a right to claim a tacit submission of reason, an implicit obedience of faith. And thou, sacred book! thou authentic gift of heaven! when my faith and my religion are in question, thou art the only tribunal at which I stand! But as for the doctrine of blind submission, I repeat it again, it will conduct us to the most palpable errors.

With the help of implicit faith, I could prove that a priest has the power of deposing a king, and of transmitting the supreme power to a tyrant.

With this principle, I could prove that a frail man can call down the Saviour of the world at his will, place him on an altar, or confine him in a box.

With this principle, I could prove that what my smell takes for bread is not bread; that what my eyes take for bread is not bread; that what my taste takes for bread is not bread; and so on.

With this principle, I could prove that a body which is whole in one place, is at the same time whole in another place; whole at Rome, and whole at Constantiople; yea more, all entire in one host, and all entire in another host; yea more astonishing still, all entire in one host, and all entire in ten thousand hosts; yea more amazing still, all entire in ten thousand hosts, and all entire in each part of these ten thousand hosts; all entire in the first particle, all entire in the second, and so on without number or end.

With this principle, I could prove that a penitent is obliged to tell me all the secrets of his heart; and that if he conceal any of its recesses from me, he is, on that very account excluded from all the privileges of penitence.

With this principle, I could prove that money given to the church delivers souls from purgatory; and that, according to the Bishop of Meaux, always when the souls in that prison hear the sound of the sums which are given for their freedom, they fly towards heaven.

3. You have seen a whole community professing Christianity, and yet not believing the doctrines of Christ, through the prevalence of the same principle, which render the ancient Jews infidels. We proceed now to show you something more extraordinary still; a multitude of Christians, instructed in the truths of the gospel, freed by the light of the reforma-

tion from the darkness with which superstition had covered the gospel; and yet seducing themselves like the ancient Jews, because their unworthy passions have rendered their seduction necessary.

Recall, my dear fellow-countrymen, the happy days in which you were allowed to make an open profession of your religion in the place of your nativity. Amidst repeated provocations of the divine patience, which, at last, drew down the anger of God on our unhappy churches, there was one virtue, it must be owned, that shone with peculiar glory, I mean, zeal for public worship. Whether mankind have in general more attachment to the exterior than to the inward part of divine worship; or whether the continual fear of the extinction of that light, which we enjoyed, contributed to render it sacred to us; or whatever were the cause, our ancient zeal for the public exterior worship of our religion may be equalled, but it can never be exceeded.

Ye happy inhabitants of these provinces! We are ready to yield to you the pre-eminence in all other virtues: this only we dispute with you. The singing of a psalm was enough to fire that vivacity, which is essential to our nation. Neither distance nor place, nor inclemency of weather, could dispense with our attendance on a religious exercise. Long and wearisome journeys, through frost and snows, we took to come at those churches which were allowed us for public worship. Communion days were triumphant days, which all were determined to share. Our churches were washed with penitential tears: and when, on days of fasting and prayer, a preacher desired to excite extraordinary emotions of grief, he was sure to succeed, if he cried, "God will take away his candlestick from you, God will deprive you of the churches in which ye form only vain designs of conversion."

Suppose, amidst a large concourse of people, assembled to celebrate a solemn feast, a preacher of falsehood had ascended a pulpit of truth, and had affirmed these propositions: "External worship is not essential to salvation. They, who diminish their revenues, or renounce the pleasures of life, for the sake of liberty of conscience, do not rightly understand the spirit of Christianity. The Lord's supper ought not to be neglected, when it can be administered without peril: but we ought not to expose ourselves to danger for the sake of a sacrament, which at most is only a seal of the covenant, but not the covenant itself." In what light would such a preacher have been considered? The whole congregation would have unanimously cried "Away with him! Away with him!" Numb. xxv. Many a Phineas, many an Eleazar, would have been instantly animated with an impetuosity of fervour and zeal, which it would have been necessary to restrain.

O God! what are become of sentiments so pious and so worthy of Christianity! This article is a source of exquisite grief. In sight of these sad objects we cry, "O wall of the daughter of Zion! let tears run down like a river day and night," Lam. ii. 18. Here the sorrowful Rachel mourneth for her children: she utters the "voice of lamentation and bit-

ter weeping, refusing to be comforted for her children, because they are not," Jer. xxxi. 15. Go, go see those degenerate sons of the reformation! Go, try to communicate a brisker motion to that reformed blood, which still creeps slowly in their veins. Arouse them by urging the necessity of that external worship of which they still retain some grand ideas. Alarm their fears with the thundering voice of the Son of God: tell them, "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me. Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven," Matt. x. 33, 37; and what will they say? They will tax you with being an enthusiastic declaimer. The very propositions, which would have been rejected with horror, had they been affirmed in times of liberty, would now be maintained with the utmost zeal. But how comes it to pass, that what was formerly unwarrantable now appears just and true? The pliant artifice of the human mind has wrought the change. The corruption of the heart knows how to fix the attention of the mind on objects which palliate a criminal habit; and most men understand the secret art of seducing themselves, when their passions render a seduction needful.

At first, they required only the liberty of considering the bearing of the storm before the thunder burst the clouds, that if they should be obliged to flee, it might be from real evils, and not from imaginary panics. At length the tempest came crushing and sweeping away all that opposed its progress. When the body must have been exposed for the salvation of the soul, the trial, they said, was severe, their hearts were intimidated, they fainted, and durst not flee. Moreover, till they had amassed enough to support them in that exile, to which they should be instantly condemned, if they owned Jesus Christ; and lest they should leave their innocent children destitute of all support they abjured their religion for the present. Abjuration is always shocking; but if ever it seem to call for patience and pity, it is in such circumstances! when pretences so plausible produce it, and when solemn vows are made to renounce it. When the performance of these vows was required, insurmountable obstacles forbade it, and the same reasons, which had sanctified this hypocrisy at first, required them to persist in it. When vigilant guards were placed on the frontiers of the kingdom, they waited, they said, only for a fair opportunity to escape, and they flattered themselves with fixing certain periods, in which they might safely execute what would be hazardous before to attempt. Sometimes it was the gaining of a battle, and sometimes the conclusion of a peace. As these periods were not attended with the advantages which they had promised themselves, they looked forward and appointed others. Others came. No more guards on the frontiers, no more obstacles, full liberty for all, who had courage to follow Jesus Christ. And whither? Into dens and deserts, exposed to every calamity? No: into delicious gardens; into countries where the gentleness of the governments is alone sufficient to indemnify us for all we leave in our own country. But new times,

new morals. The pretext of the difficulty of following Jesus Christ being taken away, the necessity of it is invalidated. Why, say they, should we abandon a country, in which people may profess what they please? Why not rather endeavour to preserve the seeds of the reformation in a kingdom, from which it would be entirely eradicated, if all they, who adhere to it, were to become voluntary exiles? Why restrain grace to some countries, religion to particular walls? Why should we not content ourselves with worshipping God in our closets, and in our families? The ministers of Jesus Christ have united their endeavours to unravel these sophisms. We have heaped argument upon argument, demonstration upon demonstration. We have represented the utility of public worship. We have shown the possibility, and the probability, of a new period of persecution. We have conjured those, whom sad experience has taught their own weakness, to ask themselves, whether they have obtained strength sufficient to bear such sufferings as those under which they formerly sunk. We have proved that the posterity of those lukewarm Christians will be entirely destitute of religion. In short, we have produced the highest degree of evidence in favour of their flight. All our arguments have been useless; we have reasoned, and written, without success; we have "spent our strength in vain," Lev. xxvi. 20. And, except here and there an elect soul, whom God in his infinite mercy has delivered from all the miseries of such a state, they quietly eat and drink, build and plant, marry and are given in marriage, and die in this fatal stupidity.

Such is the flexible depravity of the human mind, and such was that of the Jews! Such is the ability of our hearts in exercising the fatal art of self-deception, when sinful passions require us to be deceived!

Represent to yourselves the cruel Jews. They expected a Messiah, who would furnish them with means of glutting their revenge by treading the Gentiles beneath their feet, for them they considered as creatures unworthy of the least regard. Jesus Christ came, he preached, and said, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you," Matt. v. 44. Revenge viewed the Messiah in a disadvantageous light. Revenge turned the attention of the Jews to this their favourite maxim, "The Messiah is to humble the enemies of the church," whereas Jesus Christ left them in all their gayety and popery.

Represent to yourselves, those of the Jews who were insatiably desirous of riches. They expected a Messiah, who would lavish his treasures on them, and would so fulfil these expressions of the prophets, "Silver is mine, and gold is mine," Hag. ii. 8. "The kings of Tarsish, and of the isles, shall bring presents," Psal. lxxii. 10. Jesus Christ came, he preached, and said, "Lay not up for yourself treasures upon earth," Matt. vi. 19. Avidity of riches considered the Messiah in a disadvantageous light. Avidity of riches confined the attention of the Jews to this favourite maxim, "The Messiah is to enrich his disciples," whereas Jesus Christ left his followers in indigence and want.

Represent to yourselves the proud and arrogant Jews. They expected a Messiah, who would march at their head, conquer the Romans, who were become the terror of the world, and obtain victories similar to those which their ancestors had obtained over nations recorded in history for their military skill. They fed their ambition with these memorable prophecies: "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost part of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron: thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him, and his enemies shall lick the dust," Psal. ii. 8, 9; and lxxii. 8, 9. Jesus Christ came, he preached and said, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," Matt. v. 10. He marched first at the head of this afflicted host, and finished his mournful life on a cross. Arrogance and pride considered Jesus Christ in a disadvantageous light. Arrogance and pride confined the attention of the Jews to this maxim, "The Messiah is to sit on a throne: whereas Jesus Christ was nailed to a cross. When we know the pliant depravity of the human heart, when we know its ability to deceive itself, when its passions require it to be deceived; can we be astonished that Jesus Christ had so few partisans among the Jews?"

4. But our fourth reflection will remove our astonishment; it regards the presumptuous ideas which we form of our own virtue when it hath not been tried. For this purpose, we are going to put you in the place of the ancient Jews, and to prove, that in the same circumstances you would have acted the same part.

There is a kind of sophistry, which is adapted to all ages, and to all countries; I mean that turn of mind which judgeth those vices in which we have no share. The malice of our hearts seldom goes so far as to love sin for its own sake. When sin presents itself to our view, free from any self-interest in committing it, and when we have the liberty of a cool, calm, and dispassionate sight of it, it seldom fails to inspire us with horror. And, as this disposition of mind prevails, when we think over the atrocious vices of former ages, we generally abhor the sins, and condemn the men who committed them. They appear monsters to us, and nature seems to have produced but a few. We seem to ourselves beings of another kind, and we can hardly suffer the question to be put, whether, in the same circumstances, we should not have pursued the same conduct?

In this disposition we usually judge the ancient Jews. How could they rebel against those deliverers, whom God, if I may speak so, armed with his omnipotence to free them from the bondage of Egypt? How could they possibly practice gross idolatry on the banks of the Red Sea, which had just before been miraculously divided for their passage, and which had just before overwhelmed their enemies? While heaven was every instant lavish-

ing miracles in their favour, how could they possibly place their abominable idols on the throne of the living God? How could their descendants resist the ministry of such men as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and all the other prophets, whose missions appeared so evidently divine?

In the same disposition we judge those Jews, who heard the sermons, and who saw the miracles, of Jesus Christ. Their unbelief appears a greater prodigy than all the other prodigies which we are told they resisted. It seems a phenomenon out of the ordinary course of nature; and we persuade ourselves, that, had we been in similar circumstances, we should have acted in a very different manner.

As I said before, my brethren, this sophistry is not new. When we reason thus in regard to those Jews who lived in the time of Jesus Christ, we only repeat what they themselves said in regard to them who lived in the times of the ancient prophets. Jesus Christ reproaches them with it in these emphatical words: "Wo unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers," Matt. xxiii. 29, 30, 32. Let us not lightly pass over these words. I have read them as they are in the Gospel of St. Matthew. St. Luke has them a little differently, "Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers; for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres," chap. xi. 48. Both express the same thing: The Jews, who were contemporary with Christ, having no interest in the wickedness of their ancestors, considered it in the disposition of which we have been speaking, and were ashamed of it, and condemned it. They considered themselves in contrast with them, and gave themselves the preference. "If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets." Jesus Christ undeceives them, and rends the veil with which they covered the turpitude of their own hearts from themselves. He declares, if they had lived in the days of their fathers, they would have imitated their conduct; because, being in similar circumstances, they actually pursued similar methods. And he assures them, that, if they were judged by their fruits, their zeal in repairing the sepulchres, and in embellishing the monuments of the prophets, proceeded less from a design to honour the memories of the holy men, than from a disposition to imbrue their own sacrilegious hands in their blood, as their ancestors had formerly done.

The duty of my office, and the subject which Providence calls me to-day to explain, oblige me to make an odious, but perhaps a too just, application of these words. When you hear of the unbelief of the Jews, you say, "If we had lived in the times of them, who heard the sermons of Jesus Christ, and who saw his miracles, we would not have been partakers with them in the parricide of the pro-

phets." Alas! my brethren, how little do we know of ourselves! How easy is it to form projects of virtue and holiness, when nothing but the forming of them is in question, and when we are not called to practise and execute them! But what! you, my brethren! would you have believed in Jesus Christ? You would have believed in Jesus Christ; you would have followed Jesus Christ, would you?

Well, then, realize the time of Jesus Christ. Suppose the Hague instead of Jerusalem. Suppose Jesus Christ in the place of one of those insignificant men who preach the gospel to you: suppose this congregation instead of the Jews, to whom Jesus Christ preached, and in whose presence he wrought his miracles. You would have believed in Jesus Christ, would you? You would have followed Jesus Christ, would you?

What! thou idle soul! thou, who art so indolent in every thing connected with religion, that thou sayest, we require too much, when we endeavour to persuade thee to examine the reasons which retain thee in the profession of Christianity, when we exhort thee to consult thy pastors, and to read religious books! What! wouldst thou have renounced thine indifference and sloth, if thou hadst lived in the days of Jesus Christ? Would thy supine soul have aroused itself to examine the evidences of the divinity of his mission, to develop the sophisms with which his enemies opposed him, to assert the prophecies with the actions of his life, in order to determine their accomplishment in his person?

What! thou vain soul! who always takest the upper hand in society, who art incessantly prating about thy birth, thine ancestors, thy rank! Thou who studiest to make thy dress, the tone of thy voice, thine air, thy gait, thine equipage, thy skeleton, thy carcass, thine all, proclaim thee a superior personage! wouldst thou have joined thyself to the populace, who followed Jesus Christ; to the poor fishermen, and to the contemptible publicans, who composed the apostolic school; wouldst thou have followed this Jesus?

What! thou miser! who wallowest in silver and gold; thou who dost idolize thy treasures, and makest thy heart not a temple of the Holy Ghost, but a temple of Mammon; thou, who art able to resist the exhortations and entreaties, the prayers and the tears, of the servants of God; thou who art insensible to every form of address which thy pastors take to move thee not to suffer to die for want of sustenance,—whom? A poor miserable old man, who, sinking under the pains and infirmities of old age, is surrounded with indigence, and even wants bread. Thou! who art so ungenerous, so unnatural, and so barbarous, that thou refuseth the least relief to an object of misery so affecting; wouldst thou have believed in Jesus Christ? Wouldst thou have followed Jesus Christ? Thou! wouldst thou have obeyed this command, "Go, sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and come and follow me?" Matt. xix. 21.

Ah! "Wo unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our

fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets." But with too much propriety may I apply to some of you the following words, "Behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes; and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city; that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel, unto the blood of Zacharias, the son of Barachias," Matt. xxiii. 29. 34, 35. Yea, behold God sends ministers unto you, who preach the same doctrine now that Jesus Christ did in his day. Resist them, as the Jews resisted Jesus Christ; withstand their preaching, as the Jews withstood the preaching of Jesus Christ; ridicule them, as the Jews ridiculed Jesus Christ, call them "gluttons" and "wine-bibbers," Matt. xi. 19, as the Jews called Jesus Christ; contemn the judgments which they denounce, as the Jews contemned the judgments which Jesus Christ foretold; till all the calamitous judgments which are due to the resistance that this nation has made against the gospel ministry, from its beginning to this day, fall upon you. But cease to consider the infidelity and obstinacy of the Jews as an extraordinary phenomenon. Do not infer from their not believing the miracles of Christ, that Jesus Christ wrought no miracles. Do not say, *Religion has but few disciples*, therefore, *the grounds of religion are not very evident*. For you are, the greatest part of you, a refutation of your own sophism. You are witnesses, that there is a kind of infidelity and obstinacy, which resists the most powerful motives, the most plain demonstrations. And these public assemblies, this auditory, this concourse of people, all these demonstrate, that wisdom has but few disciples. This is what we undertook to prove.

5. But all this is only supposition. What will you say, if, by discussing the fifth article, we apply the subject? and if, instead of saying, Had you lived in the days of the ancient Jews, you would have rejected the ministry of Jesus Christ as they rejected it, we should tell you, you actually do reject it as they did? This proposition has nothing hyperbolic in it in regard to a great number of you. Nothing more is necessary to prove it, than a list of the most essential maxims of the morality of the gospel, and a comparison of them with the opposite notions which such Christians form.

For example, it is a maxim of the gospel, that *virtue does not consist in a simple negation, but in something real and positive*. Likewise in regard to the employment of *time*. What duty is more expressly commanded in the gospel? What duty more closely connected with the great end for which God has placed us in this world? Is not the small number of years, are not the few days, which we pass upon earth, given us to prepare for eternity? Does not our eternal destiny depend on the manner in which we spend these few days and years on earth? Yet, to see Christians miserably consume upon *nothings* the most considerable parts of their lives, would tempt one to think, that they had the

absolute disposal of an inexhaustible fund of duration.

The *delaying of conversion* would afford another subject proper to show the miserable art of the greatest part of mankind of shutting their eyes against the clearest truths, and of hardening themselves against the most powerful motives. Have not all casuists, even they who are the most opposite to each other on all other articles, agreed in this? Have they not unanimously endeavoured to free us from this miserable prepossession, that *God will judge us, not according to the manner in which we live, but according to the manner in which we die*? Have they not agreed in representing to us the inability of dying people to meditate with any degree of application; and, in a manner, the impossibility of being entirely renewed on a dying bed; and yet, do not the greatest number of Christians, even of those whose piety seems the most genuine, defer a great part of the work of their salvation to a dying hour? If you think I colour the corruption of the age too strongly, answer me one question: *Whence proceeds our usual fear of sudden death*? Since the last stages of life are in general the most fatiguing; since the reliefs, that are applied then are so disgusting; since parting adieus are so exquisitely painful; since slow agonies of death are so intolerable; why do we not consider sudden death as the most desirable of all advantages? Why is it not the constant object of our wishes? Why does a sudden death terrify a whole city? Is it not because our consciences tell us, that there remains a great deal to be done on our death-beds; and that we have deferred that work to the last period of life, which we ought to have performed in the days of vigour and health? Let us enter into these discussions, and we shall find that it does not belong to us, of all people, to exclaim against the obstinacy and infidelity of the Jews.

I have run this disagreeable parallel, I own, with great reluctance. However, the inference from the whole, I think, is very plain. The multitude ought to be no rule to us. We ought rather to imitate the example of one good Christian, than that of a multitude of idiots, who furiously rush into eternal misery. They, who rebel against the doctrine of Jesus Christ, are idiots: they who submit to them, are wise men. If the first class exceed the last, beyond all comparison in number, they ought to have no influence over our lives. If the smallest be the wisest class, we are bound to imitate them. Thus Jesus Christ reasons: "Whereunto shall I liken the men of this generation? and to what are they like? They are like unto children sitting in the market place, and calling one to another, and saying, we have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept. For John the Baptist came neither eating bread, nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil. The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of all her children," Luke vii. 31, &c.

There were but very few of the Jews, who entered into the spirit of the gospel; as, I own, there are but few of those called Chris-

tians, who enter into it; but they are the wise and rational part of mankind. Jesus Christ himself has determined it. "Wisdom is justified of ALL her children." This is not the opinion of a declaimer; this is the axiom of a philosopher, that carries its proof and demonstration with it.

Who were those Jews, who resisted the powerful exhortations of Jesus Christ, and the clear evidence of his miracles? They were idiots, who imagined God would suffer all the laws of nature to be interrupted to favour falsehood, and to authorize an impostor: idiots, who thought Satan would oppose himself, and would lend his power to a man whose doctrine had no other end than the subversion of his empire; idiots, who annihilated prophecy under a pretence of giving it a sublime meaning; idiots, who knew not the true interest of mankind; who could not perceive, that to put riches and grandeurs into the possession of men, whose dispositions, like theirs, were unrenewed, was to put daggers and death into madmen's hands; idiots, who for a great number of years had lightnings flashing in their eyes, and thunders roaring in their ears; but who coolly endeavoured to shut their eyes, and to stop their ears, till the tempest struck them dead, and reduced them to ashes.

What is the character of a modern infidel, who prefers a system of irreligion before the system of Christianity? He is an idiot; a man who voluntarily shuts his eyes against evidence and truth; a man who, under pretence that all cannot be explained to him, determines to deny what can: a man who cannot digest the difficulties of religion, but can digest those of skepticism: a man who cannot conceive how the world should owe its existence to a Supreme Being, but can easily conceive how it was formed by chance. On the contrary, what is the character of a believer? He is a wise man, a *child of wisdom*; a man who acknowledges the imperfections of his nature: a man who, knowing by experience the inferiority and uncertainty of his own conjectures, applies to revelation: a man who, distrusting his own reason, yields it up to the direction of an infallible Being, and is thus enabled, in some sense, to see with the eyes of God himself.

What is the character of a man who refuses to obey this saying of Jesus Christ, "No man can serve two masters?" Matt. vi. 24. He is an idiot; he is a man who, by endeavouring to unite the joys of heaven with the pleasures of the world, deprives himself of the happiness of both: he is a man, who is always agitated between two opposite parties, that makes his soul a seat of war, where virtue and vice are in continual fight. On the contrary, what is the character of a man who obeys this saying of Jesus Christ? He is a man who after he has applied all the attention of which he is capable, to distinguish the good from the bad, renounces the last, and embraces the first: a man who, having felt the force of virtuous motives, does not suffer himself to be imposed on by sensual sophisms: a man, who judges of truth and error by those infallible marks which characterize both; and not by a circulation of the blood, a flow, or dejection, of animal spirits, and by other similar motives, which, if I may

be allowed to say so, make the whole course of the logic, and the whole stock of the erudition, of the children of this world.

What is the character of the man who refuses to obey this command of Jesus Christ, "Lay not up treasures upon earth; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also?" Matt. vi. 19—21. He is a man who fixes his hopes on a sinking world; a man who forgets that death will spoil him of all his treasures; a man who is blind to the shortness of his life; a man who is insensible to the burden of old age, even while it weighs him down; who never saw the wrinkles that disfigure his countenance; a man who is deaf to the voice of universal nature, to the living, the dying, and the dead, who in concert cry, *Remember thou art mortal!* On the contrary, what is the character of him who obeys this command of Jesus Christ? It is wisdom. The man is one who elevates his hopes above the ruins of a sinking world; a man who clings to the rock of ages; who builds his house on that rock, who sends all his riches before him into eternity; who makes God, the great God, the depository of his happiness; a man, who is the same in every turn of times, because no variation can deprive him of the happiness which he has chosen.

And what are the men who resist our ministry, who hear our sermons, as if they were simple amusements; who, when they depart from their places of worship, return to the dissipations and vices from which they came; who, after they have fasted, and prayed, and received the communion, are always as worldly, always as proud, always as revengeful, always as ready to calumniate, as before? They are really idiots, who know not the days of their visitation; who "despise the riches of the forbearance of God, not knowing that his goodness leadeth to repentance," Rom. ii. 4; they are idiots, who felicitate themselves to-day with worldly pursuits, which to-morrow, will tear their souls asunder on a death-bed, and the sorrowful remembrance of which will torment them through the boundless ages of eternity. And those auditors, who are attentive to our doctrines, and obedient to our precepts; those auditors, who thankfully receive the wise, and patiently bear with the weak in our ministry: what are they? They are wise men, who refer our ministry to its true meaning, who nourish their souls with the truths, and daily advance in practising the virtues of their calling.

How much does a contrast of these characters display the glory of Christianity? Is this religion less the work of wisdom, because idiots reject it? Doth not the honour of a small number of wise disciples indemnify us for all the attacks that a crowd of extravagant people make on it? And were you to choose a pattern for yourselves to-day, my brethren, which of the two examples would make the deepest impressions on you? Would you choose to imitate a small number of wise men, or a multitude of fools? To be reproached for preciseness and singularity is a very powerful temptation, and piety will often expose us to it. What! every body else goes into company; and would you distinguish yourself by living always shut up at home? How! every body allows one part of the day to gaming and pastime; and

would you render yourself remarkable by devoting every moment of the day to religion? What! nobody in the world requires above a day or two to prepare for the sacrament; and would you distinguish yourself by employing whole weeks in preparing for that ceremony? Yes, I would live a singular kind of life! Yes, I would distinguish myself! Yes, though all the Pharisees, though all the doctors of the law, though all the whole synagogue, should unite in rejecting Jesus Christ; I would devote myself to him! World! thou shalt not be my judge. World! it is not thou, who shalt decide what is shameful, and what is glorious. Provided I have the children of wisdom for my companions, angels for my witnesses, my Jesus for my guide, my God for my rewarder, and heaven for my recompense, all the rest signify but little to me! May God inspire us with these sentiments! Amen.

## SERMON XIX.

### CHRISTIANITY NOT SEDITIOUS.

LUKE xxiii. 5.

*He stirreth up the people.*

NEVER was a charge more unjustly brought, never was a charge more fully and nobly retorted, than that of Ahab against Elijah. Elijah was raised up to resist the torrent of corruption and idolatry which overflowed the kingdom of Israel. God, who had appointed him to an office so painful and important, had richly imparted to him the gifts necessary to discharge it: so that when the Scriptures would give us a just notion of the herald of the Messiah, it says, "He shall go in the spirit and power of Elias," Luke i. 17. Sublimity in his ideas, energy in his expressions, grandeur in his sentiments, glory in his miracles, all contributed to elevate this prophet to the highest rank among them who have managed the sword of the spirit with reputation and success. This extraordinary man appears before Ahab, who insults him with this insolent language, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" 1 Kings xviii. 17. Was ever a charge more unjustly brought. Elijah is not terrified with this language. Neither the majesty nor the madness of Ahab, neither the rage of Jezebel nor the remembrance of so many prophets of the true God sacrificed to false gods, nothing terrifies him, nothing affects him. "I have not troubled Israel," replies he; "but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim," ver. 13. Was ever charge retorted with more magnanimity and courage?

My brethren, I invite you to-day to contemplate men more unjust than Ahab, and I invite you to contemplate one more magnanimous than Elijah. Jesus Christ undertook a work, that all the prophets,—what am I saying? he undertook a work which all the angels of heaven united would have undertaken in vain.—He came to reconcile heaven and earth. God, who sent him into the world in this grand business, communicated "the Spirit without measure to him," John iii. 34. Jesus Christ dedi-

cated himself entirely to the office. He made the will of the Father who had charged him with the salvation of mankind, his "meat and drink," chap. iv. 34. By meditation, by retirement, by a holiness formed on the plan of the holiness of God, of whose "glory" he is the "brightness," of whose "person" he is "the express image," Heb. i. 3, he prepared himself for that grand sacrifice, which was designed to extinguish the flames of divine justice, burning to avenge the wickedness of mankind. After a life so truly amiable, he was dragged before judges, and accused before human tribunals of being a firebrand of sedition, who came to set society in a flame. Jesus Christ was not moved with this accusation. Neither the inveteracy of his accusers, nor the partiality of his judge, neither the prospect of death, nor the idea of the cross, on which he knew he was to expire, nothing could make him act unworthy of his character. Always ready to communicate to inquirers the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, of which he was the depository, and to reveal himself to them, as "the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world," John i. 9. On this occasion, he justly discovered his superiority over his accusers, and over his judges, by refusing to gratify the vain desire of Herod, who wished to see him work a miracle, and by leaving, without any other apology, his doctrine to apologize for itself.

These are the grand objects which are proposed to your meditation in the text, and in the seven following verses that are connected with it. The whole period is perhaps the most barren part of the history of the passion: but the most barren parts of this miraculous history are so fruitful in instruction, that I must needs omit many articles, and confine myself to the examination of the first words, which are my text, "he stirreth up the people." It will be necessary, however, briefly to explain the following verses, and, after a short explication of them, we return to the text, the principal matter of this discourse. We will examine the charge of troubling society, which has always been laid against Jesus Christ and his gospel.

O, you! who so often blame religious discourses for troubling that false peace, which you taste in the arms of security, blush to-day to see what unworthy models you imitate! And we, ministers of the living, God, so often intimidated at this odious charge, let us learn to-day courageously to follow the steps of that Jesus who bore so great a "contradiction of sinners against himself!" Heb. xii. 3. May God assist us in this work! Amen.

Jesus Christ had been interrogated by Pilate, and had answered two calumnies that had been objected against him. The conduct of Jesus Christ had always been remarkable for submission to magistracy, and for contempt of human grandeurs. However, he had been accused before Pilate of having forbidden to pay tribute to Cesar, and of having affected royalty. Pilate had examined him on these two articles, and, on both, Jesus Christ had justified his innocence, confounded his accusers, and satisfied his judge.

An upright judge would have acquitted this illustrious prisoner after he had acknowledged

his innocence. Pilate took another method. Whether it were cowardice, or folly, or policy, or all these dispositions together, he seized the first opportunity that offered, to remove a cause into another court, which he thought he could not determine without danger to himself. My brethren, I have known many magistrates of consummate knowledge; I have seen many of incorruptible principles, whose equity was incapable of diversion by those bribes which the Scripture says "blind the eyes of the wise," Exod. xxiii. 8. But how rare are they who have resolution enough, not only to judge with rectitude, but also to support with an undaunted heroism, those suffrages which are the dictates of equity and truth! Pilate instead of discharging Jesus Christ from his persecutors and executioners, in some sort assisted their cruelty. Neither able sufficiently to stifle the dictates of his own conscience to condemn him, nor obedient enough to them to acquit him, he endeavoured to find a judge, either more courageous, who might deliver him, or less scrupulous, who might condemn him to death.

The countrymen of Jesus Christ furnished Pilate with a pretence. "They were the more fierce," says our evangelist, "saying, He stirreth up the people from Galilee to this place." Who were they who brought this accusation against Jesus Christ? Were they only the Roman soldiery and the Jewish populace? No: they were divines and ecclesiastics! . . . let us turn from these horrors. "When Pilate heard of Galilee," adds St. Luke, "he asked whether the man were a Galilean?" Christ was born in Bethlehem, a town in Judea, according to this prophecy of Micah, "And thou, Bethlehem in the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Judah; for out of thee shall come a governor, that shall rule my people Israel," Matt. ii. 6; but his mother was of Nazareth, in Galilee, from whence she came to Jerusalem with Joseph, on account of a command of Augustus, which it is needless to enlarge on here. In Galilee, therefore, and particularly at Nazareth, Jesus Christ passed those thirty years of his life, of which the evangelists gave us no account. We may remark, by the way, that these circumstances brought about the accomplishment of this prophecy, "He shall be called a Nazarene," ver. 23. This prophecy, cited in the New Testament, is not to be found literally in the old: but the prophets very often foretold the contempt that the Jews would pour on Jesus Christ; and his dwelling in Galilee, particularly at Nazareth, was an occasion, as of their contempt, so of the accomplishment of prophecy. The Jews considered Galilee as a country hateful to God; and although Jonah was born there, yet they had a saying, that "no Galilean had ever received the Spirit of God." Hence the Sandhedrim said to Nicodemus, "Search, and look; for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet," John vii. 52. Agreeably to this, when Philip said to Nathaniel, "We have found him of whom Moses and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth," chap. i. 45; the latter replied, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" ver. 46. The Jews were transported to find that Jesus Christ was an inhabitant of this city; because it served them for a pretence to give him a name of contempt;

accordingly, they called him a *Nazarene*. They afterward gave the same despicable name to his disciples. St. Jerome tells us, that in his time they anathematised Christians under the name of Nazarenes. We see also in the book of Acts, that Christians were called Galileans; and by this name they are known in heathen writers.

Let us return. Herod Antipas (son of Herod the Great, the same whom John the Baptist reproved for keeping Herodias, his brother Philip's wife) reigned in Galilee, under the title of Tetrarch, when Jesus Christ was cited before Pilate. This was what engaged the Roman governor to send him to this prince.—Whether Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee, descended from heathen parents, as some affirm; whether he were of Jewish extraction, as others say; or whether he were an Idumean, according to the general opinion, is not very material. It is very certain, that if this prince were not sincerely of the religion of Moses, he pretended to be so; and, as the law required all heads of families to celebrate four grand festivals in the year at the capital of Judea, he had come up to Jerusalem to keep the Passover, at which time the Lord Jesus underwent his passion.

The reputation of our Saviour had reached this prince. The gospel tells us the absurd notion that he had entertained of him. He thought him John the Baptist, whom he had sacrificed, with as much cowardice as cruelty, to the revenge of Herodias. His notion was founded on an opinion of the Jews, who thought, that many prophets, particularly they who had sealed their doctrine with their blood, would rise again at the coming of the Messiah. Herod was glad of an opportunity of informing himself in this article. He flattered himself, that if he should not see such a singular object as a man raised from the dead, at least Jesus Christ would not refuse to conciliate his esteem, by gratifying his curiosity, and by performing some extraordinary work in his presence. But should Providence interrupt the ordinary course of nature to amuse a profane court? Jesus Christ not only would not prostitute his miraculous gifts before Herod, he would not even deign to answer him.

A very little attention to the genius of the great will be sufficient to convince us, that the silence of Jesus Christ, and his refusal to condescend to the caprice of Herod, must naturally expose him to the contempt of this prince, and to that of his courtiers. Accordingly, we are told; that they "set him at nought, and mocked him, and sent him back again to Pilate." Some have inquired a reason why Herod put on him "a white garment;"\* and some

learned men have thought he intended thereby to attest his innocence; and this opinion seems to agree with what Pilate said to the Jews; Neither "I nor Herod have found any fault in this man, touching those things whereof ye accuse him." But they who advance this opinion, ought to prove, that the Jews or the Romans, did put white garments on persons whom they acquitted. I own, though I have taken some pains to look for this custom in the writings of antiquity, I have not been able to find it: however, it doth not follow, that others may not discover it. Nor is it any clearer, in my opinion, that the design of those, who put this habit on Jesus Christ, was the same with that of the soldiers, who put a reed in the form of a sceptre into his hand, to insult him because he said he was a king. I would follow the rule here which seems to me the most sure; that is, I would suspend my judgment on a subject that cannot be explained.

I add but one word more, before I come to the principal object of our meditation. The evangelist remarks, that the circumstances, which he related, I mean the artful address of Pilate to Herod, in sending a culprit of his jurisdiction to his bar; and the similar artifice of Herod to Pilate in sending him back again, occasioned their reconciliation. What could induce them to differ? The sacred history doth not inform us; and we can only conjecture. We are told, that some subjects of Herod Antipas, who probably had made an insurrection against the Romans, had been punished at Jerusalem during the passover by Pilate, Luke xiii. 1, who had mixed their blood with that of the sacrifices, which they intended to offer to God at the feast. But the Scripture does not say, whether this affair occasioned the difference that subsisted between the tetrarch of the Jews and the Roman governor. In general, it was natural for these two men to be at enmity.—On the one hand, the yoke, which the Romans had put on all the nations of the earth, was sufficient to excite the impatience of all, except the natives of Rome; and to stir them up to perplex and to counteract the governors, whom they set over the countries which they had invaded. On the other, it must be acknowledged, that they, who are deputed to govern conquered provinces, and, for a time, to represent the sovereign there, very seldom discharge their offices with mildness and equity. They are instantly infatuated with that shadow of royalty to which they have not been accustomed; and hence come pride and insolence. They imagine, they ought to push their fortune, by making the most of a rank from which they must presently descend; and hence come injustice and extortion. The reconciliation of Herod and Pilate is more surprising than their discord.

We hasten to more important subjects. We will direct all your remaining attention to the

\* Our author follows the reading of the French Bible, *Revestu d'un vestement blanc*; our translation reads it, *Arrayed in a gorgeous robe*; and the original word *λευπεριον* signifies both. A white garment was a gorgeous, a splendid garment, because priests and kings wore white garments. See Esther viii. 15; 2 Chron. v. 12. The heavenly visions, which are recorded in Scripture, and which were intended for the more easy apprehension and instruction of those who were honoured with them, preserve an analogy in their imagery between themselves and the known objects of real life. Hence God, Christ, angels, and the spirits of the just, are represented as clothed in white, Dan. vii. 9; Luke ix. 29; Acts i. 10, and Rev. iii. 4. Herod's design in arraying Christ in white is not

known; and whether we ought, with Casaubon, in the following words to find a *mystery* in it, we will not pretend to say. "Cum igitur vestis candida, apud veteres, regia pariter et sacerdotalis esset; quis *mysterio* factum a providentia divina non agnoscat; quod verus rex, verus sacerdos, a suis irrisoribus candida veste amicitur? Fuit, quidem, istorum animus pessimus: sed hoc veritatis significationem mysticam, neque hic. neque in crucis titulo lædebat." Exerc. in Bar. Annal. S. 73, E. 16.



examination of the text, "He stirreth up the people from Galilee to this place." The doctrine of Jesus Christ has always been accused of troubling society. They, who have preached truth and virtue, have always been accounted disturbers of the peace of society. I would inquire,

In what respects this charge is false: and in what respects it is true.

II. From the nature of those troubles which Jesus Christ, and his ministers, excite, I would derive an apology for Christianity in general, and for a gospel ministry in particular; and prove that the troubling of society ought not to be imputed to those who preach the doctrine of Christ; but to those who hear it.

III. As we are now between two days of solemn devotion, between a fast, which we have observed a few days ago, and a communion, that we shall receive a few days hence: I shall infer from the subject a few rules, by which you may know, whether you have kept the first of these solemnities, or whether you will approach the last with suitable dispositions. Our text, you see, my brethren, will supply us with abundant matter for the remaining part of this exercise.

1. One distinction will explain our first article, and will show us in what respects religion does not disturb society, and in what respects it does. We must distinguish what religion is in itself from the effects which it produces through the dispositions of those to whom it is preached. In regard to the first, Jesus Christ is "the Prince of Peace." This idea the prophets, this idea the angels, who announced his coming, gave of him: "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace:" this is what the prophets said of him, Isa. ix. 6. "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, good-will towards men!" Luke ii. 14. This was the exclamation of the heavenly host, when they appeared to the shepherds. Jesus Christ perfectly answers these descriptions.

Consider the kingdom of this divine Saviour, and you will find, all the maxims are *peace*, all tend to unity and concord: "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another," John xiii. 34. *Peace* is the inheritance he left to his disciples: *peace* "I leave with you, my *peace* I give unto you," chap. xiv. 27. *Peace* between God and man; being justified by faith we have *peace* with God," Rom. v. 1; he has reconciled "all things unto himself, having made *peace* through the blood of his cross," Col. i. 20. *Peace* between Jews and Gentiles; "for he is our *peace*, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us, and came and preached *peace* to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh," Eph. ii. 14, 17. *Peace* in the society of the first disciples; for "all that believed were together, and had all things common," Acts ii. 44. *Peace* in the conscience; for without Jesus Christ trouble and terror surround us. Heaven is armed

with lightnings and thunderbolts, the earth under the curse, a terrible angel, with a flaming sword, forbids our access to the gate of paradise, and the stings of conscience are "the arrows of the Almighty; the poison whereof drinketh up the spirit," Job. vi. 4. But at the approach of Jesus Christ our miseries flee, and we listen to his voice, which cries to us, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and ye shall find rest unto your souls," Matt. ix. 28, 29.

But, if religion, considered in itself, breathes only peace, it actually occasions trouble in society; through the dispositions of those to whom it is preached. According to the general dispositions of mankind, the religion of Jesus Christ must necessarily disgust; and therefore disturb, schools, courts, churches, and families; stirring up one minister against another minister, a confessor against a tyrant, a pastor against a people, a father against his family.

1. *Schools*. There were two celebrated schools in the days of Jesus Christ, the Pagan school, and the Jewish school. The Pagan schools were fountain of errors. They taught erroneous opinions of God, whose excellence they pretended to represent by figures of men, animals, and devils. They taught erroneous opinions of man, of whose origin, obligations, and end, they were totally ignorant. They taught erroneous opinions of morality, which they had adjusted not according to the dictates of conscience, but agreeably to the suggestions of their own vicious hearts.

The Jewish schools, originally directed by a heavenly light, had not fallen into errors so gross: but they were not exempt; they had even embraced some capital mistakes. The fundamental article of the Jewish religion, that on which depended all their hopes and all their joys, I mean the doctrine of the Messiah, was precisely that of which they had entertained the most false ideas. They represented to themselves a Messiah of flesh and blood, one adapted to the relish of human passions. They authorized the most criminal remissness, and violated the most inviolable rights of religion and nature. Revenge, in their opinion, was inseparable from man. Concupiscence was perfectly consistent with purity of heart. Perjury changed its nature, when it was accompanied with certain douceurs. Divorce was a prevention of discord, and one of the domestic rights of a married person.

The Christian religion appears in the world, and in it other ideas of God, of man, of virtue, of the expected Messiah; other notions of concupiscence and revenge, of perjury, and of all the principal points of religion, and morality. Christianity appears in the world. The Lord of the universe is no longer associated with other beings of the same kind. He is no longer an incestuous being, no more a parricide an adulterer. He is a being alone in his essence, independent in his authority, just in his laws, wise in his purposes and irresistible in his performances. Philosophy is folly. Epicurus proves himself an idiot destitute of reason and intelligence, by not discovering the characters of intelligence and reason, that shine throughout all the universe, and by attributing

to a fortuitous concurrence of atoms the effect of wisdom the most profound, and of power infinite and supreme. Pythagoras is a master dreamer, who seems himself to have contracted the stupidity of all the animals, the bodies of which his soul has transmigrated. Zeno is an extravagant creature, who sinks the dignity of man by pretending to assign a false grandeur to him, and makes him meaner than a beast, by affecting to set him a rival with God. The Christian religion appears in the world. The Messiah is not a pompous, formidable conquerer, whose exploits are all in favour of one single nation. Revenge is murder, concupiscence is adultery, and divorces are violations of the prerogatives of God, separating whatever he has joined together, and subverting the order of the world and the church.

In this manner, Christian theology undermined that of the Jewish Rabbins, and that of the philosophers of Paganism. It is easy to judge what their fury must have been when they saw their schools deserted, their pupils removed, their decisive tone reprimanded, their reputation sullied, their learning degenerated into ignorance, and their wisdom into folly. Have you any difficulty in believing this? Judge of what passed in former ages by what passes now. As long as there are Christians in the world, Christianity will be divided into parties; and as long as Christianity is divided into sects and parties, those divines, who resist preachers of erroneous doctrines, will render themselves odious to the followers of the latter. No animals in nature are so furious as an idiot in the habit of a divine, when any offers to instruct him, and a hypocrite, when any attempts to unmask him.

2. Let us pass to our next article, and let us attend the doctrine of Christ to *court*. If the servants of Christ had stirred up no other enemies besides priests and rabbins, they might have left their adversaries to bawl themselves hoarse in their solitary schools; to hurl after the innocent, the anathemas and thunders of synagogues and consistories; and each Christian, despising their ill-directed discipline, might have appealed from the tribunal of such iniquitous judges to that of a sovereign God, and, with a prophet, might have said, "Let them curse, but bless thou: when they arise, let them be ashamed," Psal. cix. 28.

But the grandees of the world have often as false ideas of their grandeur and power, as pedants have of their jurisdiction and learning. Dizzy with the height and brightness of their own elevation, they easily imagine the regal grandeur extend its government over the priestly censor, and gives them an exclusive right of determining articles of religion, and of enslaving those whose parents and protectors they pretend to be. As if false became true, and iniquity just, by proceeding from their mouths, they pretend, that whatever they propose is therefore to be received, because they propose it. They pretend to the right of making maxims of religion, as well as maxims of policy: and, if I may express myself so, of levying proselytes in the church as they levy soldiers for the army, with colours flying at the first word of command of His MAJESTY, for *such is our good pleasure*. They make an extraordi-

nary display of this tyranny, when their consciences accuse them of some notorious crimes which they have committed; and as if they would wash away their sins with the blood of martyrs, they persecute virtue to expiate vice. It has been remarked, that the greatest persecutors of the church have been, in other cases, the least regular, and the most unjust of all mankind. This was observed by Tertullian, who, in his apology, says, "We have never been persecuted, except by princes, whose lives abounded with injustice and uncleanness, with infamous and scandalous practices; by those whose lives ye yourselves have been accustomed to condemn, and whose unjust decisions ye have been obliged to revoke, in order to re-establish the innocent victims of their displeasure.\*" Let us not insult our persecutors; but, after the example of Christ, let us "bless them that curse us;" and "when we are reviled," let us "not revile again," Matt. v. 44; 1 Pet. ii. 23. Perhaps in succeeding ages posterity may make similar reflections on our sufferings; or perhaps some may remark to our descendants what Tertullian remarked to the senate of Rome, on the persecutions of the primitive Christians. I will not enlarge this article, but return to my subject. The religion of Jesus Christ has armed a tyrant against a martyr; a combat worthy of our most profound considerations, in which the tyrant attacks the martyr, and the martyr the tyrant, but with very different arms. The tyrant with cruelty, the martyr with patience; the tyrant with blasphemy, the martyr with prayer; the tyrant with curses, the martyr with blessings; the tyrant with inhuman barbarity, beyond the ferocity of the most fierce and savage animals, the martyr with an unshaken steadiness, that elevates the man above humanity, and fills his mouth with songs of victory and benevolence, amidst the most cruel and barbarous torments.

3. I said, farther, that the religion of Jesus Christ often occasioned troubles in the *church*, and excited the pastor against the flock. The gospel-ministry, I mean, is such that we cannot exercise it, without often applying the fire and the knife to the wounds of some of our hearers. Yes! these ministers of the gospel, these heads of the mystical body of Christ, these fathers, these ambassadors of peace, these shepherds, to whom the Scriptures give the kindest and most tender names; these are sometimes incendiaries and fire-brands, who in imitation of their great master, Jesus Christ, the "shepherd and bishop of souls, come to set fire on earth," 1 Pet. ii. 25; Luke xii. 49.

Two things will make this article very plain; consider our *commission*, and consider *society*. It is our *commission*, that we should suffer no murmuring in your adversities, no arrogance in your prosperities, no revenge under your injuries, no injustice in your dealings, no irregularity in your actions, no intulity in your words, no impropriety in your thoughts.

\* Tertullian, in the chapter from which our author quotes the passage above, remarks, from the Roman historians, that Nero was the first who abused the imperial sword to persecute Christians, that Domitian was the second, and then adds; *Tales semper nobis insecutores, injusti, impii, turpes: quous et ipsi damnare consueverunt, et a quibus damnatos restituere soliti estis.* Apol. cap. v.

*Society*, on the contrary, forms continual obstacles against the execution of this commission. Here, we meet with an admired wit, overflowing with calumny and treachery, and increasing his own fame by committing deprecations on the characters of others. There, we see a superb palace, where the family tread on azure and gold, glittering with magnificence and pomp, and founded on the ruins of the houses of widows and orphans. Yonder we behold hearts closely united; but, alas! united by a criminal tie, a scandalous intelligence.

Suppose now a pastor, not a pastor by trade and profession, but a zealous and religious pastor; who judges of his commission, not by the revenue which belongs to it, but by the duties which it obliges him to perform. What is such a man? A firebrand, an incendiary. He is going to sap the foundations of that house, which subsists only by injustice and rapine; he is going to trouble that false peace, and those unworthy pleasures, which the impure enjoy in their union: and so of the rest.

Among the sinners to whose resentment we expose ourselves, we meet with some whom birth, credit, and fortune, have raised to a superior rank, and who hold our lives and fortunes in their hands. Moses finds a Pharaoh; Elijah an Ahab, and a Jezebel; St. John Baptist a Herod, an Herodias; St. Paul a Felix and a Drusilla; St. Ambrose a Theodosius; St. Chrysostom a Eudoxia, or, to use his own words, "another Herodias, who rageth afresh, and who demandeth the head of John Baptist again." How is it possible to attack such formidable persons without arming society, and without incurring the charge of mutiny? Well may such putrified bodies shrink, when cutting, and burning, and actual cauteries are applied to the mortified parts! Well may the criminal roar when the judgments of God put his conscience on the rack!

4. But censure and reproof belong not only to pastors and leaders of flocks, they are the duties of all Christians; Christianity, therefore, will often excite troubles in *families*. A slight survey of each family will be sufficient to convince us, that each has some prevailing evil habit, some infatuating prejudice, some darling vice. Amidst all these disorders, each Christian is particularly called to censure, and to reprove; and each of our houses ought to be a church, in which the master should alternately execute the offices of a priest and prince, and boldly resist those who oppose his maxims. Christian charity, indeed, requires us to bear with one another's frailties. Charity maintains union, notwithstanding differences on points that are not essential to salvation and conscience. Charity requires us to become "to the Jews as Jews, to them that are without law, as without law, to be made all things to all men," 1 Cor. ix. 20—22. But, after all, charity does not allow us to tolerate the pernicious practices of all those with whom we are connected by natural or social ties, much less does it allow us to follow them down a precipice. And, deceive not yourselves, my brethren, there is a moral as well as a doctrinal denial of Jesus Christ. It is not enough you know, to believe and to respect the truth inwardly; when the mouth is shut, and sen-

timents palliated, religion is denied. In like manner, in society, in regard to morals, it is not enough to know our duty, and to be guilty of reserves in doing it. If virtue be concealed in the heart; if, through timidity or complaisance, people dare not openly profess it, they apostatize from the practical part of religion. Always when you fall in with a company of slanderers, if you content yourself with abhorring the vice, and conceal your abhorrence of it; if you outwardly approve what you inwardly condemn, you are apostates from the law that forbids calumny. When your parents endeavour to inspire you with maxims opposite to the gospel, if you comply with them, you apostatize from the law, that says, "we ought to obey God rather than men," Acts vi. 29.

Such being the duty of a Christian, who does not see the troubles which the religion of Jesus Christ may excite in families? For, I repeat it again, where is the society, where is the family, that has not adopted its peculiar errors and vices? Into what society can you be admitted? With what family can you live? What course of life can you pursue, in which you will not often be obliged to contradict your friend, your superior, your father?

II. The explanation of our first article, has almost been a discussion of the second; and by considering the nature of the troubles which religion occasions, we have, in a manner proved, that they ought not to be imputed to those who teach this religion, but to them who hear and resist it. This is the apology for our gospel, for our reformation, and for our ministry. This is our reply to the objections of ancient and modern Rome.

One of the strongest objections that was made against *primitive Christianity*, was taken from the troubles which it excited in society. "A religion (said some) that kindles a fire on earth; a religion, which withdraws subjects from the allegiance they owe to their sovereign; which requires its votaries to hate father, mother, children; that excites people to quarrel with the gods themselves; a religion of this kind, can it be of heavenly original? Can it proceed from any but the enemy of mankind?" Blasphemy of this kind is still to be seen in a city of Spain,\* where it remains on a column, that was erected by Dioclesian, and on which we read these words: "To Dioclesian, Jovius, and Maximinus, Cesars, for having enlarged the bounds of the empire, and for having exterminated the name of Christians, those disturbers of the public repose."†

The enemies of our *reformation* adopt the sentiment, and speak the language of the ancient Romans. They have always this objection in their mouths: Your reformation was the source of schism and disturbances. It was that which armed the Condes, the Chatillons, the Williams; or, to use the words of a historian,‡ who was educated in a society, where the sincerity necessary to make a faithful historian is seldom acquired: "Nothing was to be seen," says he, in speaking of the wars, which were

\* Cluny.

† Grutery corpus Inscript. tom. I. p. 380.

‡ Father Maimbourg, in his history of Calvinism. Book iv.

excited under the detestable triumvirate,\* "Nothing was to be seen but the vengeance of some, and the crimes of others; nothing but ruins and ashes, blood and carnage, and a thousand frightful images of death: "and these were," adds this venal pen, "these were the fruits of the new gospel, altogether contrary to that of Jesus Christ, who brought peace on earth, and left it at his death with his apostles."

But I am pleased to see my religion attacked with the same weapons with which Jesus Christ and his apostles were formerly attacked? And I rejoice to defend my religion with the same armour, with which the primitive Christians defend it against the first enemies of Christianity. To the gospel, then, or to the cruelty of tyrants, to the inflexible pride of the priesthood, to the superstitious rage of the populace, ought these ravages to be imputed? What did the primitive Christians desire, but liberty to worship the true God, to free themselves from error; to destroy vice, and to make truth and virtue triumph in every place? And we, who glory in following these venerable men, we ask, what treasons have we plotted? Rome! What designs hast thou seen us form? Have we attempted to invade thy property, to conquer thy states, to usurp thy crowns? Have we envied the pomp, which thou displayest with so much parade, and which dazzles thy gazing followers? What other spirit animated us, beside that of following the dictates of our consciences, and of using our learning, and all our qualifications, to purify the Christian world from its errors and vices? If the purity of our hands, if the rectitude of our hearts, if the fervour of our zeal, have provoked thee to lift up thine arm to crush us, and if we have been obliged to oppose thine unjust persecutions by a lawful self-defence; is it to us, is it to our reformation, is it to our reformers, that the discord may be ascribed?

That which makes an apology for the reformation, and for the primitive gospel, makes it also for a *gospel ministry*. It is sufficiently mortifying to us, my brethren, to be obliged to use the same armour against the children of the reformation that we employ against the enemies of it. But this armour, how mortifying soever the necessity may be that obliges us thus to put it on, is an apology for our ministry, and will be our glory before that august tribunal, at which your cause, and ours, will be heard; when the manner in which we have preached the gospel, and the manner in which you have received our preaching, will be examined. How often have you given your pastors the same title which the enemies of our reformation gave the reformers? I mean that

\* The Duke of Guise, the Constable de Montmorenci, and the Marshal de St. Andre. The Jesuit, whose words our author quotes, is speaking of the reign of Henry II. in which the kingdom was governed, or rather disturbed, by the *triumvirate*, mentioned by Mr. Saurin. They, according to the president Thuanus, were governed by Diana of Poitiers, Duchess of Valentinois, the king's mistress; and she by her own violent and capricious passions. *Hæc violenta et acerba regni initia . . . facile ministris tributa sunt; præcipue Dianæ Pictaviensis, sæperbi et impotentis animi feminae; . . . HUIUS FEMINÆ ARBITRIO OMNIA REGBANTUR.* Thuan Hist. lib. 3. These were the *favourites* mentioned in our preface to the 1st vol.

of disturbers of the peace of society. How often have you said of him, who undertook to show you all the light of truth, and make you feel all the rights of virtue, "He stirreth up the people?" But I ask again, Ought the disturbances which are occasioned by the preaching of the gospel, to be imputed to those who foment error, or to them who refute it; to those who censure vice, or to them who eagerly and obstinately commit it? Is the discord to be attributed to those who drown reason in wine, or to them who show the extravagance of drunkenness? Is it to those who retain an unjust gain, or to them who urge the necessity of restoring it? Is it to those who profane our solemn feasts, who are "spots" in our assemblies, as an apostle speaks, Jude 12. and who, in the language of a prophet, "defile our courts with their feet,"<sup>12</sup> or to them who endeavour to reform such abuses? To put these questions is to answer them. I shall, therefore, pass from them to our last article, and shall detain you but a few moments in the discussion of it.

III. We are now between two solemnities; between a fast, which we kept a few days ago, and a communion, that we shall receive a few days hence. I wish you would derive from the words of the text a rule to discover, whether you have attended the first of these solemnities, and whether you will approach the last, with suitable dispositions.

There is an opposition, we have seen, between the maxims of Jesus Christ and the maxims of the world; and, consequently, we have been convinced, that a Christian is called to resist all mankind, to stem a general torrent; and, in that eternal division which separates the kingdom of Jesus Christ from the kingdom of sin in the world, to fight continually against the world, and to cleave to Jesus Christ. Apply this maxim to yourselves, apply it to every circumstance of your lives, in order to obtain a thorough knowledge of yourselves.

Thou! thou art a member of that august body, to which society commits in trust its honour, its property, its peace, its liberty, its life, in a word, its felicity. But with what eye do men of the world elevated to thy rank accustom themselves to consider these trusts? How often do these depositories enter into tacit agreements, reciprocally to pardon sacrifices of public to private interest? How often do they say one to another, *Wink you at my injustice to-day, and I will wink at yours to-morrow*: If thou enter into these iniquitous combinations, yea, if thou wink at those who form them; if thou forbear detecting them, for fear of the resentment of those, whose favour it is thine interest to conciliate, most assuredly thou art a false Christian; most assuredly thy

\* Isaiah i. 12. *Tread my courts.* The French version is better, *que vous fouliez de vos pieds mes parvis.* *Fouler aux pieds, is to trample on by way of contempt.* The prophet meant to show the imperfection of exterior worship; and probably our translators intended to convey the same idea of our phrase, *Wherefore do ye tread my courts?* As if it had been said, "The worship of the mind and heart is essential to the holiness of my festivals; but you only tread my courts; your bodies indeed are present; but your attention and affections are absent; you defile my courts, that is, you celebrate my festivals *unholily.*" See chap. xxix. 13.

fast was a vain ceremony, and thy communion will be as vain as thy fast.

Thou! thou art set over the church. In a body composed of so many different members, it is impossible to avoid finding many enemies of Jesus Christ, some of whom oppose his gospel with erroneous maxims, and others with vices incompatible with Christianity. If thou live in, I know not what, union with thy flock; if thou dare not condemn in public those with whom thou art familiar in private; if thou allow in private what thou condemnest in public; if the fear of passing for an *innovator*, a *broacher of new opinions*, prevent thine opposing abuses which custom has authorized; and if the fear of being reputed, a *reformer of the public*, prevent thy attacking the public licentiousness; if thou say, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace," Ezek. xii. 10; most assuredly thy fast was a vain ceremony, and thy communion will be a ceremony as vain as thy fast.

Thou! thou art a member of a family, and of a society, which doubtless have their portion of the general corruption; for, as I said before, each has its particular vice, and its favourite false maxim: a maxim of pride, interest, arrogance, vanity. If thou be united to thy family, and to thy society, by a corrupt tie; if the fear, lest either should say of thee, *he is a troublesome fellow, he is a morose unsocial soul, he is a mopeish creature*, prevent thy declaring for Jesus Christ: most assuredly thou art a false Christian; most assuredly thy fast was a vain ceremony, and thy communion will be as vain as thy fast.

Too many articles might be added to this enumeration, my brethren. I comprise all in one, *the peace of society*. I do not say that peace, which society ought to cherish; but that peace, after which society aspires. It is a general agreement among mankind, by which they mutually engage themselves to let one another go quietly to hell, and, on no occasion whatever, to obstruct each other in the way. Every man who refuses to accede to this contract (this refusal, however, is our calling,) shall be considered by the world as a disturber of public peace.

Where, then, will be the Christian's peace? Where, then, will the Christian find the peace after which he aspires? In another world, my brethren. This is only a tempestuous ocean, in which we can promise ourselves very little calm, and in which we seem always to lie at the mercy of the wind and the sea. Yes, which way soever I look, I discover only objects of the formidable kind. Nature opens to me scenes of misery. Society, far from alleviating them, seems only to aggravate them. I see enmity, discord, falsehood, treachery, perfidy. Disgusted with the sight of so many miseries, I enter into the sanctuary, I lay hold on the horns of the altar, I embrace religion. I find, indeed, a sincerity in its promises. I find, if there be an enjoyment of happiness in this world, it is to be obtained by a punctual adherence to its maxims. I find, indeed, that the surest way of passing through life with tranquillity and ease, is to throw one's self into the arms of Jesus Christ. Yet, the religion of this Jesus has its crosses, and its pecu-

liar tribulations. It leads me through paths edged with fires and flames. It raises up in anger against me, my fellow-citizens, relations, and friends.

What consequences shall we derive from this principle? He, who is able and willing to reason, may derive very important consequences; consequences with which I would conclude all our discourses, all our sermons, all our pleasures, all our solemnities: consequences, which I would engrave on the walls of our churches, on the walls of your houses, on the frontispieces of your doors, particularly on the tables of your hearts. The consequences are these; That this is not the place of our felicity; that this world is a valley of tears; that man is in a continual warfare on earth; that nature, with all its treasures, society, with all its advantages, religion, with all its excellencies, cannot procure us a perfect felicity on earth. Happy we! if the endless vicissitudes of the present world conduct us to rest in the world to come, according to this expression of the Spirit of God, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them," Rev. xiv. 13. To God be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

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## SERMON XX.

### CHRIST THE KING OF TRUTH.

JOHN xviii. 36—38.

*Jesus said, My kingdom is not of this world.*

*Pilate said unto him, Art thou a king, then?*

*Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king: to this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. Pilate saith unto him, What is truth?*

HAVE you ever considered, my brethren, the plain conclusion that results from the two motives which St. Paul addresses to Timothy? Timothy was the apostle's favourite. The attachment which that young disciple manifested to him entirely gained a heart, which his talents had conciliated before. The apostle took the greatest pleasure in cultivating a genius, which was formed to elevate truth and virtue to their utmost height. Having guarded him against the temptations to which his age, his character, and his circumstances, might expose him; having exhorted him to keep clear of the two rocks, against which so many ecclesiastics had been shipwrecked, ambition and avarice; he adds to his instructions this solemn charge, "I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Jesus Christ, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession, that thou keep this commandment," 1 Tim. vi. 13, 14. God quickens all things. Jesus Christ, before Pontius Pilate, witnessed a good confession. From the union of these two motives arises that conclusion which I would remark to you.

The first may be called the motive of a philosopher: the second may be called the motive of a Christian. A philosopher, I mean a man

of sound reason, who finds himself placed a little while in the world, concludes, from the objects that surround him, that there is a Supreme Being, a "God who quickeneth all things." His mind being penetrated with this truth, he cannot but attach himself to the service of the Supreme Being, whose existence and perfections he is able to demonstrate. He assures himself, that the same Being, whose power and wisdom adorned the firmament with stars, covered the earth with riches, and filled the sea with gifts of beneficence, will reward those, who sacrifice their inclinations to that obedience which his nature requires.

But, let us own, my brethren, the ideas we form of the Creator are, in some sense, confounded, when we attend to the miseries to which he seems to abandon some of his most devoted servants. How can the Great Supreme, "who quickeneth all things," leave those men to languish in obscurity and indigence, who live and move only for the glory of him? In order to remove this objection, which has always formed insuperable difficulties against the belief of a God, and of a Providence, it is necessary to add the motive of a Christian to that of a philosopher. This motive follows, that "God, who quickeneth all things," who disposes all events, who bestows a sceptre, or a crook, as he pleases, has wise reasons for deferring the happiness of his children to another economy; and hence presumption arises; that he will give them a king, whose "kingdom is not of this world." St. Paul joins this second motive to the first. "I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Jesus Christ who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession." What is this good confession? It is that which you have heard in the words of the text, "Verily, I am a king, to this end was I born; but my kingdom is not of this world." The first of these motives, my brethren, you can never study too much. It is a conduct unworthy of a rational soul, to be surrounded with so many wonders, and not to meditate on the author of them. But our present circumstances, the solemnity of this season, and particularly the words of the text, engage us to quit at present the motive of a philosopher, and to reflect wholly on that of a Christian. I exhort you to-day, by that Jesus, who declared himself a king, and who at the same time said, "My kingdom is not of this world," to endeavour to divert your attention from the miseries and felicities of this world, to which the subjects of the Messiah do not belong. This is the chief, this is the only point of view, in which we shall now consider the text. We will omit several questions, which the words have occasioned, which the disputes of learned men have rendered famous, and on which, at other times, we have proposed our sentiments; and we will confine ourselves to three sorts of reflections.

I. We intend to justify the idea which Jesus Christ gives of his kingdom, and to prove this proposition, "My kingdom is not of this world."

II. We will endeavour to convince you, that the kingdom of Jesus Christ is therefore a kingdom of truth, because it is not a kingdom of this world."

III. We will inquire, whether there be any in this assembly, who are of the truth, and who hear the voice of Jesus Christ; whether this king, whose "kingdom is not of this world," has any subjects in this assembly. To these three reflections we shall employ all the moments of attention with which you shall think proper to indulge us.

I. Let us justify the idea, which Jesus Christ gives us of his kingdom, and let us prove the truth of this proposition, "My kingdom is not of this world." To these ends, let us remark the end of this king, his maxims, his exploits, his arms, his courtiers, and his rewards.

1. Remark the end, the design of this king. What is the end of the kingdoms of the world? They are directed to as many different ends as there are different passions, which prevail over the minds of those who are elevated to the government of them. In a Sardanapalus, it is to wallow in sensuality. In a Sennacherib, it is to display pomp and vain glory. In an Alexander, it is to conquer the whole world.

But let us not be ingenious to present society to view by its disagreeable sides. To render a state respectable, to make trade flourish, to establish peace, to conquer in a just war, to procure a life of quiet and tranquillity for the subjects, these are the ends of the kingdoms of this world. Ends worthy of sovereigns, I own. But, after all, what are all these advantages in comparison of the grand sentiments which the Creator has engraven on our souls? What relation do they bear to that unquenchable thirst for happiness, which all intelligent beings feel? What are they when the lightning darts, and the thunder rolls in the air? What are they when conscience awakes? What are they when we meet death, or what is their value when we lie in the tomb? Benevolence, yea, humanity, I grant, should make us wish our successors happy; but strictly speaking, when I die, all dies with me. Whether society enjoys the tranquil warmth of peace, or burns with the rage of faction and war; whether commerce flourish or decline; whether armies conquer their foes, or be led captives themselves: each is the same to me. "The dead know not any thing. Their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is perished: neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is under the sun," Eccles. ix. 5, 6.

The end of the kingdom of Jesus Christ is of another kind. Represent to yourselves the Divine Saviour in the bosom of God, himself "the blessed God." He cast his eyes down on this earth. He saw prejudices blinding the miserable sons of Adam, passions tyrannizing over them, conscience condemning them, divine vengeance pursuing them, death seizing and devouring them, the gulphs of hell yawning to swallow them up. Forth he came, to make prejudices yield to demonstration, darkness to light, passion to reason. He came to calm conscience, to disarm the vengeance of heaven, to "swallow up death in victory," 1 Cor. xv. 54, to close the mouth of the infernal abyss. These are the designs of the king Messiah; designs too noble, too sublime, for earthly kings. "My kingdom is not of this world."

2. The maxims of this kingdom agree with its end. What are the maxims of the kingdoms

of this world! I am ashamed to repeat them; and I am afraid, if I suppress them, of betraying the truth. Ah! why did not the maxims of such as Hobbes and Machiavel vanish with the impure authors of them! Must the Christian world produce partisans and apologists for the policy of hell! These are some of their maxims. "Every way is right that leads to a throne. Sincerity, fidelity, and gratitude, are not the virtues of public men, but of people in private life. The safety of the people is the supreme law. Religion is a bridle to subjects; but kings are free from its restraints. There are some illustrious crimes."

The maxims of Jesus Christ are very different. "Justice and judgment are the bases of a throne. Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's. Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all other things shall be added to you. Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them. Let your communication be yea, yea, and nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil," Psal. lxxx. 14. Matt. xxii. 21. vi. 33. vii. 12. and v. 37.

3. The exploits of the kingdom of Jesus Christ accomplish his designs. He does not employ such artillery as the kings of the earth do to reduce whole cities to ashes. His soldiers are none of those formidable engines of death in his wars, which are called, the final reasons of kings. His forces are strangers to that desperate avidity of conquest, which makes worldly generals aim to attain inaccessible mountains, and to penetrate the climes that have never been trodden by the footsteps of men. His exploits are, neither the forcing of intrenchments, nor the colouring of rivers with blood; not the covering of whole countries with carcases, nor the filling of the world with carnage, and terror and death.

The exploits of the Messiah completely effect the end of his reign. He came, we just now observed, to dissipate prejudice by demonstration, and he has gloriously accomplished his end. Before the coming of Jesus Christ, philosophers were brute beasts: since his coming, brute beasts are become philosophers. Jesus Christ came to conquer our tyrannical passions, and he has entirely effected his design. He renovated disciples, who rose above the appetites of sense, the ties of nature, and the love of self; disciples who, at his word, courageously forsook their property, their parents, and their children, and voluntarily went into exile; disciples, who "crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts." Gal. v. 24; generous disciples, who sacrificed their lives for their brethren, and sometimes for their persecutors; disciples who triumphed over all the horrors, while they suffered all the pains, of gibbets, and racks, and fires. Jesus Christ came to calm conscience, and to disarm divine justice, and his design has been perfectly answered. The church perpetually resounds with "grace, grace unto it," Zech. iv. 7. The penitent is cited before no other tribunal than that of mercy. For thee, converted sinner! there are only declarations of absolution and grace. Jesus Christ came to conquer death, and he has manifestly fulfilled

his purpose. Shall we still fear death, after he has "brought life and immortality to light by the gospel?" 2 Tim. i. 10. Shall we still fear death, after we have seen our Saviour loaded with its spoils? Shall we yet fear death, while he cries to us in our agony, "Fear not, thou worm Jacob; fear not, for I am with thee," Isa. xli. 14. 10.

4. Let us consider the arms, which Jesus Christ has employed to perform his exploits. These arms are his cross, his word, his example, and his Spirit.

The enemies of Jesus Christ considered the day of his crucifixion as a triumphant day.—They had solicited his execution with an infernal virulence. But how much "higher are the ways of God than the ways of men, and his thoughts than their thoughts," Isa. lv. 9. From this profound night, from this hour of darkness, which covered the whole church, arose the most reviving light. Jesus Christ, during his crucifixion, most effectually destroyed the enemies of our salvation. Then, "having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it," Col. ii. 15. Then, he offered to the God of love a sacrifice of love, to which God could refuse nothing. Then, he placed himself as a rampart around sinners, and received in himself the artillery that was discharged against them. Then he demanded of his Father, not only by his cries and tears, but by that blood, which he poured out in the richest profusion of love, the salvation of the whole world of the elect, for whom he became incarnate.

To the power of his cross add that of his word. He had been introduced in the prophecies speaking thus of himself; "he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword, and like a polished shaft," Isa. xlix. 2. And he is elsewhere represented, as having "a sharp two-edged sword," proceeding out of "his mouth," Rev. i. 16. Experience has fully justified the boldness of these figures. Let any human orator be shown, whose eloquence has produced equal effects, either in persuading, or in confounding, in comforting, confirming, or conciliating the hearts of mankind, and in subduing them by its irresistible charms. Had not Jesus Christ, in all these kinds of elocution, an unparalleled success?

The force of his word was corroborated by the purity of his example. He was a model of all the virtues which he exhorted others to observe. He proposed the re-establishment of the empire of order, and he first submitted to it. He preached a detachment from the world, and he "had not were to lay his head." He preached meekness and humility, and he was himself "meek and lowly in heart, making himself of no reputation, and taking upon him the form of a servant." He preached benevolence, and "he went about doing good." He preached patience, and "when he was reviled he reviled not again:" He suffered himself to be "led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth," Matt. viii. 20. ix. 29. Phil. ii. 7. Acts x. 38. and Isa. liii. 7. He preached the cross, and he bore it. What con

quests cannot a preacher make, when he himself walks in that path of virtue in which he exhorts others to go?

Finally, Jesus Christ uses the arms of the Spirit, I mean miracles; and with them he performs the exploits of which we speak. To these powerful arms, Jesus Christ and his disciples teach all-nature to yield; tempests subside; devils submit; diseases appear at a word, and vanish on command; death seizes, or lets fall his pray? Lazarus rises; Elymas is stricken blind; Ananias and Sapphira die sudden and violent deaths. Moreover with these all-conquering arms, he converts unbelieving souls; he plants the gospel; opens the heart; works faith; writes the law in the mind; enlightens the understanding; creates anew; regenerates and sanctifies the souls of men; he exercises that omnipotence over the moral void that he exercised in the first creation over the chaos of natural beings, and raises a new world out of the ruins of the old.

5. Let us attend to the *courtiers* of the king Messiah. Go to the courts of earthly princes; behold the intriguing complaisance, the feigned friendships, the mean adulations, the base arts, by which courtiers rise to the favour of the prince. Jesus Christ has promised his to very different dispositions. And to which of his subjects has he promised the tenderest and most durable union? Hear the excellent reply, which he made to those who told him his mother and his brethren desired to speak with him: "Who is my mother? And who are my brethren?" said he, and stretching forth his hand towards his disciples, he added, "Behold my mother, and my brethren! for whosoever shall do the will of my Father, which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother," Matt. xii. 48—50. Fraternal love, devotedness to the will of God, the most profound humility, are the dispositions that lead to the heart of Jesus Christ. How impossible to arrive at the favour of earthly kings by such dispositions as these!

Finally, The great proof, my brethren, that the "kingdom of Jesus Christ is not of this world," is taken from its *rewards*. Virtue, I grant, sometimes procures temporal prosperity to those who practise it. The sacred authors have proposed this motive, in order to attach men to the laws of Jesus Christ. "Godliness is profitable to all things, having promise of the life that now is, as well as that which is to come," 1 Tim. iv. 8. "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," 1 Pet. iii. 10, 11.

One would suppose St. Peter's thought might be amplified, and that we might add, *Would any man acquire a fortune?* Let him be punctual to his word, just in his gains, and generous in his gifts. *Would any man become popular in his reputation?* Let him be grave, solid and cautious. *Would any man rise to the highest promotions in the army?* Let him be brave, magnanimous, and expert in military skill. *Would any man become prime minister of state?* Let him be affable, incorruptible, and disinterested. But, may I venture to say it? This morality is fit only for a hamlet now-a-days;

it is impracticable on the great theatres of the world, and, so great is the corruption of these times, we must adopt a contrary style. *Who would acquire a fortune?* Let him be treacherous, and unjust, let him be centred in his own interest. *Who would become popular, and have a crowded levee?* Let him be a shallow, intriguing, self-admirer. *Who would occupy the first posts in the army?* Let him flatter, let him excel in the art of substituting protection and favour in the place of real merit.

What conclusion must we draw from all these melancholy truths? The text is the conclusion, "my kingdom is not of this world." No, Christian, by imitating thy Saviour thou wilt acquire neither riches, nor rank: thou wilt meet with contempt and shame, poverty and pain! But peace of conscience, a crown of martyrdom, an eternal "mansion in the Father's house," John xiv. 2, the society of angels, the heavenly Jerusalem, these are the rewards which Jesus Christ himself reaped, and these, he has promised, thou shalt reap!

II. We have proved that the *kingdom* of Jesus Christ "is not of this world," we will proceed now to prove, that it is therefore a *kingdom of truth*. "Thou sayest that I am a king; to this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth."

What is this *truth*? Two ideas may be formed of it. It may be considered, either in regard to the Jews who accused Christ, before Pilate; or in regard to Pilate himself, before whom Jesus Christ was accused.

If we consider it in regard to the Jews, this *truth* will respect the grand question, which was then in dispute between Jesus Christ, and them; that is, whether he were the Messiah whom the prophets had foretold.

If we consider it in regard to Pilate, and to the Pagan societies, to which this Roman governor belonged, a more general notion must be formed of it. The Pagan philosophers pretended to inquire for *truth*; some of them affected to have discovered it, and others affirmed that it could not be discovered, that all was uncertain, that finite minds could not be sure of any thing, except that they were sure of nothing. This was particularly the doctrine of Socrates. Learned men have thought the last was Pilate's system; and by this hypothesis, they explain his reply to Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ said to him, "I came to bear witness to the truth." Pilate answered, "What is truth?" Can frail men distinguish truth from falsehood? How should they know truth?

Whether this be only a conjecture, or not, I affirm, that, let the term *truth* be taken in which of the two senses it will, Jesus Christ came to bear witness to truth, in both senses, and that his is a kingdom of truth, because it is not a kingdom of this world: whence it follows, that there are some truths of which we have infallible evidence.

The *kingdom* of Jesus Christ, "is not of this world," therefore Jesus Christ is the promised Messiah. The Jews meet with nothing in Christianity equal in difficulty to this; and their error on this article, it must be acknowledged, claims our patience and pity.

The prophets have attributed a sceptre to



Jesus Christ, an emblem of the regal authority of temporal kings: "Thou shalt break them with a sceptre of iron."\* They attributed to him a throne, the seat of temporal kings: "thy throne, O God! is for ever and ever; the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre," Ps. xlv. 6. They attributed to him the armies of a temporal king: "Thy people shall be willing in the day when thou shalt assemble thine army in holy pomp," Ps. cx. 3. They attributed to him homages like those which are rendered to a temporal king: "They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust," Ps. lxxi. 9. They attributed to him the subjects of a temporal king: "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession," Ps. ii. 8. They attributed to him the prosperity of a temporal king: "The kings of Tarshish and of the isles, shall bring presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts," Ps. lxxii. 10. They attributed to him the exploits of temporal kings: "He shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath; he shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill the places with the dead bodies, he shall wound the heads over many countries," Ps. cx. 5, 6. They even foretold that the king promised to the Jews should carry the glory of his nation to a higher degree than it had ever attained under its most successful princes.

How could the Jews know our Jesus by these descriptions, for he was only called a king in derision, or at most, only the vile populace seriously called him so? Our Jesus had no other sceptre than a reed, no other crown than a crown of thorns, no other throne than a cross; and the same may be said of the rest. Never was an objection seemingly more unanswerable, my brethren: never was an objection really more capable of a full, entire, and conclusive solution. Attend to the following considerations:—

1. Those predictions, which are most incontestable in the ancient prophecies, are, that the sceptre of the Messiah was to be "a sceptre of righteousness," Ps. xlv. 6, Heb. i. 8; and that they, who would enjoy the felicities of his kingdom, must devote themselves to *virtue*. They must be humble, and "in lowliness of mind, each must esteem another better than himself," Phil. ii. 3. They must be clement towards their enemies, "do good to them that hate them, and pray for them which persecute them," Matt. v. 44. They must subdue the rebellion of the senses, subject them to the empire of reason, and "crucify the flesh with its affections, and lusts," Gal. v. 24. But of all the means that can be used to subjugate us to those virtues, that which we have supposed is the most eligible; I mean, the giving of a

\* Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron. Our author uses the French version, Tu les froisseras avec un sceptre de fer. The Hebrew word *Mish-ang*, is put literally for a common walking stick, Exod. xxi. 19; a rod of correction, Prov. x. 13; the staff, that was carried by the head of a tribe, or by a magistrate, as an ensign of his office, Gen. xlix. 10; the sceptre of a prince, and indeed for a rod, or staff, of any kind. It is put figuratively for support, affliction, power, &c. The epithet iron is added to express a penal exercise of power, as that of golden is to signify a mild use of it.

spiritual and metaphorical sense to the ancient prophecies. What would be the complexion of the kingdom of the Messiah, were it to afford us all those objects which are capable of flattering and of gratifying our passions? Riches would irritate our avarice. Ease would indulge our sloth and indolence. Pomp would produce arrogance and pride. Reputation would excite hatred and revenge. In order to mortify these passions, the objects must be removed by which they are occasioned or fomented. For the purpose of such a mortification, a cross is to be preferred before a bed of down, labour before ease, humiliation before grandeur, poverty before wealth.

2. To give a literal meaning to the prophecies which announce the kingdom of Christ, is to make them *contradict themselves*. Were terrestrial pomp, were riches, and human grandeurs always to attend the Messiah, what would become of those parts of the prophecies which speak with so much energy of his humiliation and sufferings? What would become of the prophecy, which God himself gave to the first man, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head:" but indeed "the serpent shall bruise his heel?" What would become of this prophetic saying of the psalmist, "I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people?" Ps. xxxii. 6. What would become of this prophecy of Isaiah, "He hath no form nor comeliness; when we shall see him, there is no beauty, that we should desire him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not," chap. liii. 2, 3. Whether, to free ourselves from this difficulty, we say, with some Jews, that the prophets speak of two Messiahs? or with others, dispute the sense in which even the traditions of the ancient Rabbins explained these prophecies, and deny that they speak of the Messiah at all: in either case, we plunge ourselves into an ocean of difficulties. It is only the kingdom of our Jesus, that unites the grandeur and the meanness, the glory and the ignominy, the immortality and the death, which, the ancient prophets foretold, would be found in the kingdom, and in the person of the Messiah.

3. The prophets themselves have given the keys of their prophecies concerning the Messiah. "Behold! the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah. I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts," Jer. xxxi. 31. And again, "I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by the Lord their God; and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen," Hos. i. 7. What is that covenant, which engageth to put the divine law in the hearts of them with whom it is made? What is this salvation which is procured "neither by bow nor by sword?" Where is the unprejudiced man, who does not perceive that these passages are clues to the prophecies, in which the Messiah is represented as exercising a temporal dominion on earth?

4. If there be any thing literal in what the prophets have foretold of the eminent degree of temporal glory to which the Messiah was to raise the Jewish nation; if the distinction

of St. Paul, of Israel after the flesh, 1 Cor. x. 18, from "Israel after the Spirit," Rom. ix. 3. 6, be verified in this respect; if the saying of John the Baptist, "God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham," Matt. iii. 9; if, in one word, as we said before, there be any thing literal in those prophecies, we expect a literal accomplishment of them. Yes! we expect a period, in which the king Messiah will elevate the Jewish nation to a more eminent degree of glory, than any to which its most glorious kings have ever elevated it. The heralds of the kingdom of our Messiah, far from contesting the pretensions of the Jews on this article, urged the truth and the equity of them. "I say then (these are the words of St. Paul, writing on the rejection of the Jews,) I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall?" Rom. xi. 11, 12. God forbid! "But rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?"

St. Paul establishes in these words two callings of the Gentiles: a calling which was a reproach to the Jewish nation, and a calling which shall be the glory of that nation. That calling which was a reproach to the Jews, was occasioned by their infidelity; "the fall of them was the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles;" that is to say, the apostles, disgusted at the unbelief of the Jews, preached the gospel to the Pagan world.

But here is a second calling mentioned, which will be glorious to the Jews, and this calling will be occasioned by the return of the Jews to the covenant, and by their embracing the gospel. The Gentiles, to whom the gospel had not been preached before, will be so stricken to see the accomplishment of those prophecies which had foretold it; they will be so affected to see the most cruel enemies of Jesus Christ become his most zealous disciples, that they will be converted through the influence of the example of the Jews. "If the fall of them," if the fall of the Jews, were "the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness?" This is an article of faith in the Christian church.

This furnishes us also with an answer to one of the greatest objections that was ever made against the Christian system, touching the spiritual reign of the Messiah. A very ingenious Jew has urged this objection; I mean the celebrated *Isaac Orobio*. This learned man, through policy, had professed the Catholic religion in Spain: but, after the fear of death had made him declare himself a Christian, in spite of the most cruel tortures that the inquisition could invent, to make him own himself a Jew; at length he came into these provinces to enjoy that amiable toleration which reigns here, and not only professed his own religion, but defended it, as well as he could, against the arguments of Christians. Offended at first with the gross notions which his own people had formed of the kingdom of the Messiah, and mortified at seeing how open they lay to

our objections, he endeavoured to refine them. "We expect (says he) a temporal kingdom of the Messiah, not for the gratifying of our passions, nor for the acquisition of riches, neither for the obtaining of eminent posts, nor for an easy life in this world; but for the glory of the God of Israel, and for the salvation of all the inhabitants of the earth, who, seeing the Jews loaded with so many temporal blessings, will be therefore induced to adore that God, who is the object of their worship." My brethren, apply the reflection, that you just now heard, to this ingenious objection.\*

5. If the glory of the king Messiah does not shine so brightly in the present economy as to answer the ideas which the prophets have given of it, we expect to see it shine with unequalled lustre after this economy ends. When we say that the kingdom of the Messiah "is not of this world," we are very far from imagining that this world is exempted from his dominion. We expect a period, in which our Jesus, sitting on the clouds of heaven in power and great glory, elevated in the presence of men and angels, will appear in tremendous glory to all those "who pierced him," Rev. i. 7, and will enter into a strict scrutiny concerning the most horrible homicide that was ever committed. We expect a period in which the plaintive voices of the "souls under the altar" will be heard, chap. vi. 9; a period, in which they will reign with him, and will experience ineffable transports, in casting their crowns at his feet, in singing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, and in "saying, Alleluia! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth: let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him," chap. xix. 6, 7. And we do not expect these excellent displays, merely because they delight our imaginations, and because we have more credulity than means of conviction, and motives of credibility. No such thing. The miracles which our Jesus has already wrought, are pledges of others which he will hereafter perform. The extensive conquests, that he has obtained over the Pagan world, prove those which he will obtain over the whole universe. The subversion of the natural world, which sealed the divinity of his first advent, demonstrates that which will signalize his second appearance.

The kingdom of the Messiah "is not of this world," therefore it is a kingdom of truth therefore Jesus Christ is the Messiah promised by the prophets. In explaining the prophecies thus, we give them not only the most just, but also the most sublime sense, of which they are capable. To render those happy who should submit to his empire, was the end of

\* This learned Jew was of Seville, in Spain, and, after he had escaped from the prison of the inquisition by pretending to be a Christian, practised physic at Amsterdam. There he professed Judaism, and endeavoured to defend it against Christianity in a dispute with professor Limborch. The passage quoted by Mr. Saurin, is the last of four objections, which he made against the Christian religion. The whole was published by Limborch, under the title, *De veritate religionis Christianae, amica collatio cum crudito Judaico*. Gouda, 4to. 1687. The inquisitors exasperated this celebrated Jew, Limborch confuted him: but neither converted him; for he thought that every one ought to continue in his own religion; and said, if he had been born of parents who worshipped the sun, he should not renounce that worship.

his coming. But let us not forget, every idea of solid happiness must be regulated by the nature of man.

What is man? He is a being divested of his privileges, degraded from his primitive grandeur, and condemned by the supreme order and fitness of things to everlasting misery.

Again, What is man? He is a being, who, from that depth of misery into which his sins have already plunged him, and in sight of that bottomless abyss into which they are about to immerse him for ever, cries "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Rom. vii. 24.

Once more, What is man? He is a being, who, all disfigured and debased as he is by sin, yet feels some sentiments of his primeval dignity, still conceives some boundless wishes, still forms some immortal designs, which time can by no means accomplish.

This is man! Behold his nature! I propose now two comments on the ancient prophecies. The interpretation of the synagogue, and the interpretation of the Christian church: the commentary of the passions, and that of the gospel. I imagine two Messiahs, the one such as the synagogue thought him, the other such as the disciples of Jesus Christ represent him. I place man between these two Messiahs, and I demand, which of these two heroic candidates would a rational man choose for his guide? Which of these two conquerors will conduct him to solid felicity? The first presents objects to him, sensible, carnal, and gross: the second proposes to detach him from the dominion of sense, to elevate him to ideas abstract and spiritual, and, by alluring his soul from the distractions of earthly things, to empower him to soar to celestial objects. The one offers to open as many channels for the passions as their most rapid flow may require: the other to filtrate the passions at the spring, and to keep all in proper bounds, by giving to each its original placid course. The one proposes to march at the head of a victorious people, to animate them by his valour and courage, to enable them to route armies, to take garrisons, to conquer kingdoms: the other offers to disarm divine justice; like David, to go weeping "over the brook Cedron," 2 Sam. xv. 23, John xviii. 1; to ascend Mount Calvary; to "pour out his soul" an offering on the cross, Isa. liii. 12, and, by these means to reconcile heaven and earth. I ask, Who, the Jews, or we, affix the most sublime meaning to the predictions of the prophets? I ask, Whether, if the choice of either of these Messiahs were left to us, the Christian Messiah would not be infinitely preferable to the other? Our Jesus, all dejected and disfigured as he is, all covered as he is with his own blood, is he not a thousand times more conformable to the wishes of a man, who knows, himself, than the Messiah of the Jews, than the Messiah of the passions, with all his power, and with all his pomp?

III. It only remains to examine, my brethren, whether this Jesus, whose "kingdom is not of this world," has many subjects. But, alas! to put this question is to answer it; for where shall I find the subjects of this Jesus, whose "kingdom is not of this world?" I seek them first among the people, to whom "were

committed the oracles of God," Rom. iii. 2, and who grounded all their hopes on the coming of the king Messiah. This nation, I see, pretends to be offended and frightened at the sight of a spiritual king, whose chief aim is to conquer the passions, and to tear the love of the world from the hearts of his subjects. Hark! they cry, "We will not have this man to reign over us? Away with him, away with him! Crucify him, crucify him! His blood be on us and on our children!" Luke xix. 14; John xix. 15; and Matt. xxvii. 25.

I turn to the metropolis of the Christian world: I enter the vatican, the habitation of the pretended successor of this Jesus, whose "kingdom is not of this world;" and lo! I meet with guards, drummers, ensigns, light-horse, cavalcades, pompous equipages in peace, instruments of death in war, habits of silver and keys of gold, a throne and a triple crown, and all the grandeur of an earthly court. I meet with objects far more scandalous than any I have seen in the synagogue.

The synagogue refuses to attribute a spiritual meaning to the gross and sensible emblems of the prophets; but Rome attributes a gross and sensible meaning to the spiritual emblems of the gospel. The prophets had foretold, that the Messiah should hold a sceptre in his hand; and the synagogue rejected a Messiah, who held only a reed. But the gospel tells us, the Messiah held only a reed, and Rome will have a king who holds a sceptre. The prophets had said Christ should be crowned with glory; and the synagogue rejected a king, who was crowned only with thorns. But the gospel represents Jesus Christ crowned with thorns; and Rome will have a Jesus, crowned with glory, and places a triple crown on the head of its pontiff. The first of these errors appears to me more tolerable than the last. "Judah hath justified her sister Samaria," Ezek. xvi. 51, 52. Rome is, on this article, less pardonable than Jerusalem.

Where, then, is the kingdom of our Messiah? I turn towards you, my brethren; I come in search of Christians into this church, the arches of which incessantly resound with pleas against the pretensions of the synagogue, of the passions, and of Rome. But alas! Within these walls, and among a congregation of the children of the reformation, how few disciples do we find of this Jesus, whose "kingdom is not of this world!"

I freely grant, that "a kingdom, which is not of this world," engages us to so much mortification, to so much humility, and to so much patience; and that we are naturally so sensual, so vain, and so passionate, that it is not very astonishing, if in some absent moments of a life, which in general is devoted to Jesus Christ, we should suspend the exercise of those graces. And I grant farther, that when, under the frailties which accompany a Christian life, we are conscious of a sincere desire to be perfect, of making some progress towards the attainment of it, of genuine grief when we do not advance apace in the road that our great example has marked out, when we resist sin, when we endeavour to prevent the world from stealing our hearts from God; we ought not to despair of the truth of our Christianity.

But, after all, "the kingdom of Jesus Christ is not of this world." Some of you pretend to be Christians: and yet you declare coolly and deliberately, in your whole conversation and deportment, for worldly maxims diametrically opposite to the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

"The kingdom of Jesus Christ is not of this world." You pretend to be Christians; and yet you would have us indulge and approve of your conduct, when you endeavour to distinguish yourselves from the rest of the world not by humility, moderation, and benevolence, but by a worldly grandeur, made up of pomp and parade.

"The kingdom of Jesus Christ is not of this world." You pretend to be Christians; and although your most profound application, your most eager wishes, and your utmost anxieties, are all employed in establishing your fortune, and in uniting your heart to the world, yet you would not have us blame your conduct.

"The kingdom of Jesus Christ is not of this world." You pretend to be Christians, and yet you are offended, when we endeavour to convince you by our preaching, that whatever abates your ardour for spiritual blessings, how lawful soever it may be in itself, either the most natural inclination, or the most innocent amusement, or the best intended action, that all become criminal when they produce this effect.

"The kingdom of Jesus Christ is not of this world." You affect to be Christians; and yet you think we talk very absurdly, when we affirm, that whatever contributes to loosen the heart from the world, whether it be the most profound humiliation, poverty the most extreme, or maladies the most violent, any thing that produces this detachment, ought to be accounted a blessing. You murmur when we say, that the state of a man lying on a dung-hill, abandoned by all mankind, living only to suffer; but, amidst all these mortifying circumstances, praying, and praising God, and winding his heart about eternal objects; is incomparably happier than that of a worldly man, living in splendour and pomp, surrounded by servile flatterers, and riding in long processional state.

But open your eyes to your real interests, and learn the extravagance of your pretensions. One, of two things, must be done to satisfy us. Either Jesus Christ must put us in possession of the felicities of the present world, while he enables us to hope for those of the world to come; and then our fondness for the first would cool our affection for the last, and an immoderate love of this life would produce a disrelish for the next; or, Jesus Christ must confine his gifts, and our hopes to the present world, and promise us nothing in the world to come, and then our destiny would be deplorable indeed.

Had we hope only in this life, whither should we flee in those moments, in which our minds, glutted and palled with worldly objects, most clearly discover all the vanity, the emptiness, and the nothingness of them?

Had we hope only in this life whither could we flee when the world shall disappear; when the "heavens shall pass away with a great noise, when the elements shall melt with fervent heat, when the earth, and all its works, shall be burnt up?" 2 Pet. iii. 10.

Had we hope only in this life whither could we flee when the springs of death, which we carry in our bosoms, shall issue forth and overwhelm the powers of life? What would become of us a few days hence, when, compelled to acknowledge the nullity of the present world, we shall exclaim, Vanity of vanities, all is vanity?

Ah! I am hastening to the immortal world, I stretch my hands towards the immortal world, I feel, I grasp the immortal world; I have no need of a Redeemer, who reigns in this present world; I want a Redeemer, who reigns in the immortal world! My finest imaginations, my highest prerogatives, my most exalted wishes, are the beholding of a reigning Redeemer in the world to which I go; the sight of him sitting on the throne of his Father; the seeing of "the four living creatures, and the four-and-twenty elders, falling down before him, and casting their crowns at his feet," Rev. iv. 9, 10: the hearing of the melodious voices of the triumphant hosts, saying, "glory be unto him that sitteth upon the throne," chap. v. 13. The most ravishing object, that can present itself to my eyes in a sick-bed, especially in the agonies of death, when I shall be involved in darkness that may be felt, is my Saviour, looking at me, calling to me, and saying, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne." But what would all this be? Jesus Christ will do more. He will give me power to conquer, and he will crown me when the battle is won. May God grant us these blessings! Amen.

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## SERMON XXI.

### THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST.

PSALM cxviii. 15, 16.

*The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous: the right hand of the Lord doth valiantly. The right hand of the Lord is exalted: the right hand of the Lord doth valiantly.*

"WOMAN, why weepest thou?" John xx. 13. 15, was the language of two angels and of Jesus Christ to Mary. The Lord had been crucified. The infant church was in mourning. The enemies of Christianity were triumphing. The faith of the disciples was tottering. Mary had set out before dawn of day, to give vent to her grief, to bathe the tomb of her master with tears, and to render funeral honours to him. In these sad circumstances, the heavens opened, two angels clothed in white garments descended, and placed themselves on the tomb that enclosed the dear depositum of the love of God to the church. At the fixed moment, they rolled away the stone, and Jesus Christ arose from the grave loaded with the spoils of death. Hither Mary comes to see the dead body, the poor remains of him "who should have redeemed Israel," Luke xxiv. 21, and, finding the tomb empty, abandons her whole soul to grief, and bursts into floods of tears. The heavenly messengers directly address these comfortable words to her,

"Woman, why weepst thou?" Scarcely had she told them the cause of her grief, before Jesus puts the same question to her, "Woman, why weepst thou?" And to this language, which insinuates into her heart, and excites, if I may venture to speak so, from the bottom of her soul, every emotion of tenderness and love of which she is capable, he adds "Mary!"

This is the magnificent, this is the affecting object, on which the eyes of all the church are this day fixed. This is the comfortable language, which heaven to-day proclaims. For several weeks past, you have been in tears.—Your churches have been in mourning. Your eyes have beheld only sad and melancholy objects. On the one hand, you have been examining your consciences, and your minds have been overwhelmed with the sorrowful remembrance of broken resolutions, violated vows, and fruitless communions. On the other, you have seen Jesus, betrayed by one disciple, denied by another, forsaken by all; Jesus delivered by priests to secular powers, and condemned by his judges to die; Jesus, "sweating, as it were, great drops of blood," Luke xxii. 34, praying in Gethsemane, "O my Father! if it be possible, let this cup pass from me," Matt. xxvi. 39, and crying on Mount Calvary, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" chap. xxvii. 46; Jesus, lying in the grave: these have been the mournful objects of your late contemplation. At the hearing of this tragical history, conscience trembles; and the whole church, on seeing the Saviour entombed, weeps as if salvation were buried with him. But take courage thou tremulous conscience! Dry up thy tears, thou church of Jesus Christ! "Loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion!" Isa. lii. 2. Come, my brethren! approach the tomb of your Redeemer, no more to lament his death, no more to embalm his sacred body, which has not been "suffered to see corruption," Acts ii. 27, but to shout for joy at his resurrection. To this the prophet invites us in the text; "The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous: the right hand of the Lord doth valiantly. The right hand of the Lord is exalted: the right hand of the Lord doth valiantly."

I have not questioned, whether, the psalm in general, and the text in particular, regard the Messiah. The ancient Jews understood the psalm of him; and therefore made use of it formerly among their prayers for his advent. We agree with the Jews, and, on this article, we think they are safer guides than many Christians. The whole psalm agrees with Jesus Christ, and is applicable to him as well as to David, particularly the famous words that follow the text: "The stone, which the builders refused, is become the head-stone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes." These words are so unanimously applied to the exaltation, and particularly to the resurrection, of Jesus Christ, in the books of the New Testament, in the gospel of St. Matthew, in that of St. Mark, in that of St. Luke, in the book of Acts, in the epistle to the Romans, and in that to the Ephesians, that it seems needless, methinks, to attempt to prove a matter so fully decided.

The present solemnity demands reflections of another kind, and we will endeavor to show you.

I. The truth of the event of which the text speaks; "The right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord doth valiantly."

II. We will justify the joyful acclamations, which are occasioned by it; "The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous."

I. Let us examine the evidences of the truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Infidelity denies it, and what perhaps may be no less injurious to Christianity, superstition pretends to establish it on falsehood and absurdity. A certain traveller\* pretends, that the inhabitants of the Holy Land still show travellers "the stone which the builders refused," and which became "the head-stone of the corner." In order to guard you against infidelity, we will urge the arguments which prove the truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ: but, to prevent superstition, we will attribute to each argument no more evidence than what actually belongs to it.

In proof of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, we have, 1. Presumptions. 2. Proofs. 3. Demonstrations. The circumstances of his burial afford some presumptions; the testimonies of the apostles furnish us with some arguments; and the descent of the Holy Spirit on the church furnishes us with demonstrations.

1. From the circumstances of the burial of Jesus Christ, I derive some *presumptions* in favour of the doctrine of the resurrection. Jesus Christ died. This is an incontestable principle. Our enemies, far from pretending to question this, charge it on Christianity as a reproach.

The tomb of Jesus Christ was found empty a few days after his death. This is another incontestable principle. For if the enemies of Christianity had retained his body in their possession, they would certainly have produced it for the ruin of the report of his resurrection. Hence arises a presumption that Jesus Christ rose from the dead.

If the body of Jesus Christ was not raised from the dead, it must have been stolen away. But this theft is incredible. Who committed it? The enemies of Jesus Christ? Would they have contributed to his glory, by countenancing a report of his resurrection? Would his disciples? It is probable, they would not; and, it is next to certain, they could not. How could they have undertaken to remove the body? Frail and timorous creatures, people, who fled as soon as they saw him taken into custody; even Peter, the most courageous, trembled at the voice of a servant girl, and three times denied that he knew him; people of this character, would they have dared to resist the authority of the governor? Would they have undertaken to oppose the determination of the Sanhedrim, to force a guard, and to elude, or to overcome, soldiers armed and aware of danger? If Jesus Christ were not risen again (I speak the language of unbelievers,) he had deceived his disciples with vain hopes of his resurrection. How came the disciples

\* Peter Belon. *Observ. lib. ii. cap. 83.* Belon was a countryman of our author, a physician of Le Mans, who travelled from 1546 to 1549. His travels were published 1555.

not to discover the imposture? Would they have hazarded themselves by undertaking an enterprize so perilous, in favour of a man who had so cruelly imposed on their credulity?

But were we to grant that they formed the design of removing the body, how could they have executed it? How could soldiers, armed, and on guard, suffer themselves to be overreached by a few timorous people? "Either (says St. Augustine,\*) they were asleep or awake: if they were awake, why should they suffer the body to be taken away? If asleep, how could they know that the disciples took it away? How dare they then depose that it was stolen? All these, however, are only presumptions.

The testimony of the apostles furnishes us with arguments, and there are eight considerations which give their evidence sufficient weight. Remark the *nature*, and the *number*, of the witnesses: the *facts* they avow, and the *agreement* of their evidence: the *tribunals* before which they stood, and the *time* in which they made their depositions: the *place* where they affirmed the resurrection, and their *motives* for doing so.

1. Consider the *nature of these witnesses*. Had they been men of opulence and credit in the world, we might have thought that their reputation gave a run to the fable. Had they been learned and eloquent men, we might have imagined, that the style in which they told the tale had soothed the souls of the people into a belief of it. But, for my part, when I consider that the apostles were the lowest of mankind, without reputation to impose on people, without authority to compel, and without riches to reward: when I consider, that they were mean, rough, unlearned men, and consequently very unequal to the task of putting a cheat upon others; I cannot conceive, that people of this character could succeed in deceiving the whole church.

2. Consider the *number of these witnesses*. St. Paul enumerates them, and tells us, that Jesus Christ "was seen of Cephas," 1 Cor. xv. 5. &c. This appearance is related by St. Luke, who says, "the Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon," chap. xxiv. 34. The apostle adds, "then he was seen of the twelve:" this is related by St. Mark, who says, "he appeared unto the eleven," chap. xvi. 14; it was the same appearance, for the apostles retained the appellation twelve, although, after Judas had been guilty of suicide, they were reduced to eleven. St. Paul adds farther, "after that he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once:" Jesus Christ promised this appearance to the women. "Go into Galilee, and tell my brethren that they shall see me there," Matt. xxviii. 10. St. Luke tells us, in the first chapter of Acts, that the church consisted of "about a hundred and twenty" members; this was the church at Jerusalem: but the greatest part of the five hundred, of whom St. Paul speaks, were of Galilee, where Jesus Christ had preached his gospel, and where these converts abode after his resurrection. The apostle subjoins, "after that he was seen of James;" this appearance is not related by the evangelists, but

St. Paul knew it by tradition.\* St. Jerome writes, that in a Hebrew gospel, attributed to St. Matthew, called *The Gospel of the Nazarenes*, it was said, "Jesus Christ appeared to St. James;" that this apostle having made a vow neither to eat nor drink till Jesus should rise from the dead, the divine Saviour took bread and broke it, took wine and poured it out and said to him, "Eat and drink, for the Son of Man is risen from the dead."† St. Paul yet adds farther, "Then he was seen of all the apostles; and last of all, of me also, as of one born out of due time." So numerous were the witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus Christ! from this fact we derive a second argument; for, had the witnesses been few, it might have been said, that the base design of deceiving the whole church was formed by one, and propagated by a few more; or that some one had fancied he saw Jesus Christ: but when St. Paul, when the rest of the apostles, when "five hundred brethren," attest the truth of the fact, what room remains for suspicion and doubt?

3. Observe the *facts themselves which they avow*. Had they been metaphysical reasonings, depending on a chain of principles and consequences; had they been periods of chronology, depending on long and difficult calculations; had they been distant events, which could only have been known by the relations of others; their reasonings might have been suspected; but they are facts which are in question, facts which the witnesses declared they had seen with their own eyes, at divers places, and at several times. Had they seen Jesus Christ? Had they touched him? Had they sitten at table and eaten with him? Had they conversed with him? All these are questions of fact: it was impossible they could be deceived in them.

4. Remark the *agreement of their evidence*. They all unanimously deposed, that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. It is very extraordinary, that a gang of five hundred impostors (I speak the language of infidels), a company, in which there must needs be people of different

\* Two of our Lord's apostles were named *James*. The elder of the two, brother of John, was put to death by Herod, Acts xii. 2. The other, who was a first cousin to Jesus Christ, was called the *less*, the *younger* probably, and lived many years after. It is not certain which of the two St. Paul means. If he mean the *first*, he had the account of the appearing of the Lord to him, probably as Mr. Saurin says, by *tradition*: if the *last*, it is likely he had it from James himself; for him he saw at Jerusalem, Gal. i. 19. and he was living in the year 57, when St. Paul wrote this first Epistle to the Corinthians.

† The gospel, of which Mr. Saurin, after St. Jerome, speaks, is now lost. It was probably one of those mangled, interpolated, copies of the true gospel of St. Matthew, which through the avidity of the lower sort of people to know the history of Jesus Christ, had been transcribed, and debased, and was handed about the world. I call it *mangled*; because some parts of the *true* gospel were omitted. I call it *interpolated*; because some things were added from *other gospels*, as the history of the woman caught in adultery, from St. John: Euseb. Eccl. Hist. lib. iii. cap. 39. and *others from report*, as the above passage relative to James, &c. This book was written in Syriac, with Hebrew characters. St. Jerome translated it into Greek and Latin, and divers of the fathers quote it, as Hegeippus. Euseb. E. H. lib. iv. 22. Ignatius Ep. ad Smyrnenes, Edit. Usserii, p. 112. Clement of Alexandria, Stromat. lib. ii. p. 278. Edit. Lugdun. 1616. Origen, St. Jerome, &c. It went by the names of the gospel according to St. *Matthew*, the gospel according to the *Hebrews*, the gospel of the *twelve apostles*, the gospel of the *Nazarenes*. See Luke i. l. 2.

capacities and tempers, the witty and the dull, the timid and the bold: it is very strange, that such a numerous body as this should maintain a unity of evidence. This however is the case of our witnesses. What Christian ever contradicted himself? What Christian ever impeached his accomplices? What Christian ever discovered this pretended imposture?

5. Observe *the tribunals before which they gave evidence*, and the innumerable multitude of people by whom their testimony was examined, by Jews and heathens, by philosophers and Rabbies, and by an infinite number of people, who went annually to Jerusalem. For, my brethren, Providence so ordered those circumstances that the testimony of the apostles might be unsuspected. Providence continued Jerusalem forty years after the resurrection of our Lord, that all the Jews in the world might examine the evidence concerning it, and obtain authentic proof of the truth of Christianity. I repeat it again, then, the apostles maintained the resurrection of Jesus Christ before Jews, before pagans, before philosophers, before Rabbies, before courtiers, before lawyers, before people, expert in examining, and in cross-examining, witnesses, in order to lead them into self-contradiction. Had the apostles borne their testimony in consequence of a preconcerted plot between themselves, is it not morally certain, that, as they were examined before such different and capable men, some one would have discovered the pretended fraud?

6. Consider *the place in which the apostles bore their testimony*. Had they published the resurrection of the Saviour of the world in distant countries, beyond mountains and seas: it might have been supposed, that distance of place, rendering it extremely difficult for their hearers to obtain exact information had facilitated the establishment of the error! But the apostles preached in Jerusalem, in the synagogues, in the pretorium; they unfolded and displayed the banners of their Master's cross, and set up tokens of his victory, on the very spot in which the infamous instrument of his sufferings had been set up.

7. Observe *the time of this testimony*. Had the apostles first published this resurrection several years after the epocha which they assigned for it, unbelief might have availed itself of the delay: but three days after the death of Jesus Christ, they said, he was risen again, and they re-echoed their testimony in a singular manner at Pentecost, when Jerusalem expected the spread of the report, and endeavoured to prevent it; while the eyes of their enemies were yet sparkling with rage and madness, and while Calvary was yet dyed with the blood they had spilt there. Do impostors take such measures? Would not they have waited till the fury of the Jews had been appeased, till judges and public officers, had been changed, and till people had been less attentive to their dispositions?

8. Consider, lastly, *the motives which induced the apostles to publish the resurrection of Jesus Christ*. Survey the face of the world, examine all the impostures that are practised in society; falsehood, imposition, treachery, perjury, abound in society. To every different trade and profession some peculiar deceptions belong.

However, all mankind have one design in deceiving; they all deceive for their own interest. Their interests are infinitely diversified: but it is interest, however, that always animates all deceivers. There is one interest of pride, another of pleasure, a third of profit. In the case before us, the nature of things is subverted, and all our notions of the human heart contradicted. It must be presupposed, that, whereas other men generally sacrifice the interest of their salvation to their temporal interest, the apostles, on the contrary, sacrificed their temporal interest without any inducement from the interest of salvation itself. Suppose they had been craftily led, during the life of Jesus Christ, into the expectation of some temporal advantages, how came it to pass, that, after they saw their hopes blasted, and themselves threatened with the most rigorous punishments, they did not redeem their lives by confessing the imposture? In general, the more wicked a traitor is, the more he trembles, alters, and confesses, at the approach of death. Having betrayed for his own interest the laws of his country, the interests of society, the confidence of his prince, and the credit of religion, he betrays the companions of his imposture, the accomplices of his crimes. Here, on the contrary, the apostles persist in their testimony till death, and sign the truths they have published with the last drops of their blood. These are our arguments.

We proceed now to our *demonstrations*, that is, to the miracles with which the apostles sealed the truth of their testimony. Imagine these venerable men addressing their adversaries on the day of the Christian Pentecost in this language: "You refuse to believe us on our depositions; five hundred of us, you think are enthusiasts, all infected with the same malady, who have carried our absurdity so far as to imagine that we have seen a man whom we have not seen; eaten with a man with whom we have not eaten; conversed with a man with whom we have not conversed: or, perhaps, you think us impostors, or take us for madmen, who intend to suffer ourselves to be imprisoned, and tortured, and crucified for the sake of enjoying the pleasure of deceiving mankind by prevailing upon them to believe a fanciful resurrection: you think we are so stupid as to act a part so extravagant. But bring out your sick; present your demoniacs; fetch hither your dead; confront us with Medes, Parthians, and Elamites; let Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Egypt, Phrygia, Pamphylia, let all nations and people send us some of their inhabitants, we will restore hearing to the deaf, and sight to the blind, we will make the lame walk, we will cast out devils and raise the dead. We, we publicans, we illiterate men, we tent-makers, we fishermen, we will discourse with all the people of the world in their own languages. We will explain prophecies, elucidate the most obscure predictions, develop the most sublime mysteries, teach you notions of God, precepts for the conduct of life, plans of morality and religion, more extensive, more sublime, and more advantageous than those of your priests and philosophers, yea, than those of Moses himself. We will do more still. We will communicate these gifts to you, "the word of

wisdom, the word of knowledge, faith, the gifts of healing, the working of miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, divers kinds of tongues, interpretation of tongues," 1 Cor. xii. 8, &c. all these shall be communicated to you by our ministry."

All these things the apostles professed; all these proofs they gave of the resurrection of Jesus Christ; "this Jesus hath God raised up; and he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear, Acts ii. 32, 33. This consideration furnishes us with an answer to the greatest objection that was ever made to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and, in general, to his whole economy. "How is it," say unbelievers sometimes, "that your Jesus exposed all the circumstances of his abasement to the public eye, and concealed those of his elevation? If he were transfigured on the mount, it was only before Peter, James and John. If he ascended to heaven, none but his disciples saw his ascent. If he rose again from the dead, and appeared, he appeared only to those who were interested in his fame. Why did he not show himself to the synagogue? Why did he not appear to Pilate? Why did he not show himself alive in the streets, and public assemblies of Jerusalem! Had he done so infidelity had been eradicated, and every one would have believed his own eyes: but the secrecy of all these events exposes them to very just suspicions, and gives plausible pretexts to errors, if errors they be." We omit many solid answers to this objection; perhaps we may urge them on future occasions, and at present we content ourselves with observing, that the apostles who attested the resurrection of Jesus Christ, wrought miracles in the presence of all those, before whom, you say, Jesus Christ ought to have produced himself after his resurrection. The apostles wrought miracles; behold Jesus Christ! see his Spirit! behold his resurrection! "God hath raised up Jesus Christ, and he hath shed forth what ye now see and hear." This way of proving the resurrection of Christ was as convincing as the showing of himself to each of his enemies would have been; as the exposure of his wounds before them, or the permitting of them to thrust their hands into his side would have been. Yea, this was a more convincing way than that would have been for which you plead. Had Jesus Christ shown himself, they might have thought him a phantom, or a counterfeit; they might have supposed that a resemblance of features had occasioned an illusion: but what could an unbeliever oppose against the healing of the sick, the raising of the dead, the expulsion of devils, the alteration and subversion of all nature?

It may be said, perhaps all these proofs, if indeed they ever existed, were conclusive to them, who, it is pretended, saw the miracles of the apostles; but they can have no weight with us, who live seventeen centuries after them. We reply, The miracles of the apostles cannot be doubted without giving in to a universal skepticism; without establishing this unwarrantable principle, that we ought to believe nothing but what we see; and without taxing three sorts of people, equally unsuspected, with extravagance on this occasion.

1. They who call themselves *the operators*

*of these miracles*, would be chargeable with extravagance. If they wrought none, they were impostors who endeavoured to deceive mankind. If they were impostors of the least degree of common sense, they would have used some precautions to conceal their imposture. But see how they relate the facts, of the truth of which we pretend to doubt. They specify times, places and circumstances. They say, such and such facts passed in such cities, such public places, such assemblies, in sight of such and such people. Thus St. Paul writes to the Corinthians. He directs to a society of Christians in the city of Corinth. He tells them, that they had received miraculous gifts, and censures them for making a parade of them. He reproves them for striving to display, each his own gifts in their public assemblies. He gives them some rules for the regulation of their conduct in this case: "If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course, and let one interpret. If there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church. Let the prophets speak, two, or three. If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace," 1 Cor. xiv. 27, 28, &c. I ask, with what face could St. Paul have written in this manner to the Corinthians, if all these facts had been false? If the Corinthians had received neither "the gifts of prophecy, nor the discerning of spirits, nor divers kinds of tongues?" What a front had he who wrote in this manner!

2. *The enemies of Christianity* must be taxed with extravagance. Since Christians gloried in the shining miracles that their preachers wrought; and since their preachers gloried in performing them before whole assemblies, it would have been very easy to discover their imposture, had they been impostors. Suppose a modern impostor preaching a new religion and pretending to the glory of confirming it by notable miracles wrought in this place: What method should we take to refute him? Should we affirm that miracles do not prove the truth of a doctrine? Should we have recourse to miracles wrought by others? Should we not exclaim against the fraud? Should we not appeal to our own eyes? Should we want any thing more than the dissembler's own professions to convict him of imposture? Why did not the avowed enemies of Christianity, who endeavoured by their publications to refute it, take these methods? How was it, that Celsus, Porphyry, Zosimus, Julian the apostate, and Hierocles, the greatest antagonist that Christianity ever had, and whose writings are in our hands, never denied the facts; but, allowing the principle, turned all the points of their arguments against the consequences that Christians inferred from them? By supposing the falsehood of the miracles of the apostles, do we not tax the enemies of Christianity with absurdity?

In fine, This supposition charges *the whole multitude of Christians, who embraced the gospel*, with extravagance. The examination of the truth of religion, now depends on a chain of principles and consequences which require a profound attention; and therefore, the number of those who profess such or such a religion, cannot demonstrate the truth of their



religion. But in the days of the apostles the whole depended on a few plain facts. Has Jesus Christ communicated his spirit to his apostles? Do the apostles work miracles? Have they the power of imparting miraculous gifts to those who embrace their doctrine? And yet this religion, the discussion of which was so plain and easy, spread itself far and wide. If the apostles did not work miracles, one of these two suppositions must be made:—either these proselytes did not deign to open their eyes, but sacrificed their prejudices, passions, educations, ease, fortunes, lives and consciences, without condescending to spend one moment on the examination of this question, Do the apostles work miracles? or that, on supposition they did open their eyes, and did find the falsehood of these pretended miracles, they yet sacrificed their prejudices and their passions, their educations, their ease, and their honour, their properties, their consciences, and their lives; to a religion, which wholly turned on this false principle, that its miracles were true.

Collect all these proofs together, my brethren, consider them in one point of view, and see how many extravagant suppositions, must be advanced, if the resurrection of our Saviour be denied. It must be supposed that guards, who had been particularly cautioned by their officers, sat down to sleep, and that however they deserved credit, when they said the body of Jesus Christ was stolen; it must be supposed that men who had been imposed on in the most odious and cruel manner in the world, hazarded their dearest enjoyments for the glory of an impostor. It must be supposed that ignorant and illiterate men, who had neither reputation, fortune nor eloquence, possessed the art of fascinating the eyes of all the church. It must be supposed, either that five hundred persons were all deprived of their senses at a time; or that they were all deceived in the plainest matters of fact; or that this multitude of false witnesses had found out the secret of never contradicting themselves, or one another, and of being always uniform in their testimony. It must be supposed, that the most expert courts of judicature could not find out a shadow of contradiction in a palpable imposture. It must be supposed, that the apostles, sensible men in other cases, chose precisely those places, and those times, which were the most unfavourable to their views. It must be supposed that millions madly suffered imprisonments, tortures and crucifixions, to spread an illusion. It must be supposed, that ten thousand miracles were wrought in favour of falsehood: or all these facts must be denied, and then it must be supposed, that the apostles were idiots, that the enemies of Christianity were idiots, and that all the primitive Christians were idiots.

The arguments, that persuade us of the truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, are so clear and so conclusive, that, if any difficulty remains it arises from the brightness of the evidence itself. Yes, I declare, if any thing has shaken my confidence in it, it has arisen from this consideration. I could not conceive how a truth, attested by so many irreproachable witnesses, and confirmed by so

many notorious miracles, should not make more proselytes, how it could possibly be that all the Jews, and all the heathens, did not yield to this evidence. But this difficulty ought not to weaken our faith. In the folly of mankind its solution lies. Men are capable of any thing to gratify their passions, and to defend their prejudices. The unbelief of the Jews and heathens is not more wonderful than a hundred other phenomena, which, were we not to behold them every day, would equally alarm us. It is not more surprising than the superstitious veneration in which, for many ages, the Christian world held that dark, confused, pagan genius, Aristotle; a veneration, which was carried so far, that when metaphysical questions were disputed in the schools, questions on which every one ought always to have liberty to speak his opinion; when they were examining whether there were a void in nature, whether nature abhorreth a vacuum, whether matter were divisible, whether they were atoms, properly so called: when it could be proved, in disputes of this kind, that Aristotle was of such or such an opinion, his infallibility was allowed, and the dispute was at an end. The unbelief of the ancients is not more surprising than the credulity of the moderns. We see kings, and princes, and a great part of Christendom, submit to a pope, yea, to an inferior priest, often to one who is void of both sense and grace. It is not more astonishing than the implicit faith of Christians, who believe, in an enlightened age, in the days of Des Cartes, Paschal, and Malbranche: what am I saying? Des Cartes, Paschal, and Malbranche themselves believe, that a piece of bread which they reduce to a pulp with their teeth, which they taste, swallow, and digest, is the body of their Redeemer. The ancient unbelief is not more wonderful than yours, protestants! You profess to believe there is a judgment and a hell, and to know that misers, adulterers, and drunkards, must suffer everlasting punishments there; and, although you cannot be ignorant of your being in this fatal list, yet you are as easy about futurity, as if you had read your names in the book of life, and had no reason to entertain the least doubt of your salvation.

II. We have urged the arguments, that prove the resurrection of Christ: I shall detain you only a little longer in justifying the joyful acclamations which it produced. "The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous: the right hand of the Lord doth valiantly. The right hand of the Lord is exalted: the right hand of the Lord doth valiantly."

The three melancholy days that passed between the death of Jesus Christ and his resurrection, were days of triumph for the enemies of the church. Jesus Christ rises again; and the church triumphs in its turn: "The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous. The right hand of the Lord is exalted: the right hand of the Lord doth valiantly."

1. In those melancholy days, *heresy triumphed over truth*. The greatest objection, that was made against the satisfaction of Jesus Christ, was taken from his innocence, which is the

foundation of it. For if Jesus Christ were innocent, where was divine justice, when he was overwhelmed with sufferings, and put to death? Where was it, when he was exposed to the unbridled rage of the populace? This difficulty seems at first indissoluble. Yea, rather let all the guilty perish; rather let all the posterity of Adam be plunged into hell; rather let divine justice destroy every creature that divine goodness has made, than leave so many virtues, so much benevolence, and so much fervour, humility so profound, and zeal so great, without indemnity and reward. But when we see that Jesus Christ, by suffering death, disarmed it, by lying on the tomb took away its sting, by his crucifixion ascended to a throne, the difficulty is diminished, yea, it vanishes away: "The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous. The right hand of the Lord is exalted: the right hand of the Lord doth valiantly." God and man are reconciled; divine justice is satisfied; henceforth we may go "boldly to the throne of grace. There is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again," Heb. iv. 16.

2. In those mournful days *infidelity triumphed over faith*. At the sight of a deceased Jesus the infidel displayed his system by insulting him, who sacrificed his passions to his duty, and by saying, See, see that pale, motionless carcass: "Bless God and die!" All events

\* So the French Bibles render the words, BLESS God and die! our translation has it, CURSE God and die. Job, who best knew his wife, calls this a foolish saying; that is, a saying void of humanity and religion: for so the word foolish signifies in Scripture. It was a cruel, popular sarcasm, frequently cast by skeptics on those who persisted in the belief of a God, and of the perfection and excellence of his providence, even while he suffered them to sink under the most terrible calamities, "Your God is the God of universal nature! He regards the actions of men! He rewards virtue! He punishes vice! On these erroneous principles your adoration of him has been built. This was a pardonable folly in the time of your prosperity: but what an absurdity to persist in it now! If your present sufferings do not undeceive you, no future means can. Your mind is past information. Persevere! Go on in your adoration till you die.

It may seem strange, at first, that the same term should stand for two such opposite ideas as blessing and cursing: but a very plain and natural reason may be assigned for it. The Hebrew word originally signified to bless, benedicere: and, when applied to God, it meant to bless, that is, to praise God by worshipping him. The Talmudists say, that the religious honours which were paid to God, were of four sorts. The prostration of the whole body, was one: The bowing of the head, another: The bending of the upper part of the body towards the knees, a third: and genuflection, the fourth. Megillæ fol. 22. 2. apud Buxtorf. Lex. In these ways was God praised, worshipped, or blessed, and the Hebrew word for blessing was naturally put for genuflection, the expression of blessing, or praising; thus it is rendered Psalm xcv. 6. let us kneel before the Lord: 2 Chron. vi. 13. Solomon knelt down upon his knees. The bending of the knee being a usual token of respect which people paid to one another when they met, the word was transferred to this also, and is properly rendered salute, 2 Kings iv. 29. If thou meet any man, salute him not. The same token of respect being paid at parting, the word was also applied to that: They blessed Rebekah, that is, they bade her farewell, accompanying their good wishes with genuflection. From this known meaning of the word it was applied to a bending of the knee where no blessing could be intended; he made his camels kneel down, Gen. xxiv. 11. It was put sometimes for the respect that was paid to a magistrate, Gen. xli. 43, and sometimes for the respect which idolaters

come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked; to the clean and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth and to him that sacrificeth not; as is the good, so is the sinner, and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath," Eccl. ix. 2. Jesus Christ rises from the dead: "The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous." The system of the infidel sinks: "he errs, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God," Matt. xxii. 29.

In those dismal days, *tyranny triumphed over the perseverance of martyrs*. Innocence was oppressed, and the rewards of virtue seemed to be buried in the tomb of him, who, above all others, had devoted himself to it. Jesus Christ rises again: "the voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous." The designs of the enemies of innocence are all frustrated, and their attempts to disgrace purity serve only to exalt its glory, and to perpetuate its memory. Let the tyrants of the church, then, rage against us; let "the gates of hell," Matt. xvi. 18, consult to destroy us; let the kings "of the earth," more furious often than hell itself, "set themselves against the Lord, and against his anointed," Ps. ii. 2; let them set up gibbets, let them equip galleys, let them kindle fires to burn us, and prepare racks to torture us; they themselves, and all their cruel inventions, shall serve the purposes of the Almighty God. The Assyrian is only "the rod of his anger," Isa. x. 5. Herod and Pilate do only "what his hand and his counsel determined before to be done," Acts iv. 28. God knows how to restrain their fury, and to say to them, as he says to the ocean, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed," Job xxxviii. 2.

4. Finally, in those fatal days, *death triumphed over all human hope of immortal glory*. The destiny of all believers is united to that of Jesus Christ. He had said to his disciples, "Because I live, ye shall live also," John xiv. 19. In like manner, on the same principle, we may say, If he be dead, we are dead also. And how could we have hope to live, if he, who is our life, had not freed himself from the state of the dead? Jesus Christ rises from the dead: "The voice of rejoicing is in the tabernacles of

paid to false gods. But to bow the knee to an idol was to deny the existence of God, to renounce his worship, or, in the Scripture style, to curse God, to blaspheme God, &c. If I beheld the sun or the moon, and my mouth has kissed my hand: I should have denied the God that is above, Job xxxi. 26-28. Only the scope of the place, therefore, can determine the precise meaning of the word. The word must be rendered curse, deny God, or renounce his worship, Job i. 5. 11; and it must be rendered bless, acknowledge, or worship him, in ver. 21. The Septuagint, after a long sarcastic paraphrase, supposed to have been spoken by Job's wife, renders the phrase εἰπον τι ῥημα προς κυριον, και τελευστα. To bring our meaning into a narrow compass. If an ancient Jew had seen a dumb man bend his knee in the tabernacle, or in the temple, he would have said Baruch Adonia, he blessed the Lord.—Had he seen him bend his knee at court, in the presence of Solomon, he would have said Baruch Melch, he blessed, that is, he saluted the king. And had he seen him bend his knee in a house of Baal, or in an idolatrous grove, he would have said, Baruch Aen, he blessed an idol; or, as the embracing of idolatry was the renouncing of the worship of the true God, he would have expressed the same action by Charuch Adonia, he cursed JEHOVAH. We have ventured this conjecture, to prevent any prejudices against the English Bible that may arise from the seemingly uncertain meaning of some Hebrew words.

the righteous." Nature is reinstated in its primeval dignity; "death is swallowed up in victory," 1 Cor. xv. 64; the grave is disarmed of its sting. Let my eyesight decay; let my body bow under the weight of old age; let the organs of my body cease to perform their wonted operations; let all my senses fail; death sweep away the dear relatives of *my bosom*, and my *friends*, "who are as mine own soul," Deut. xiii. 6; let these eyes, all gushing with tears, attended with sobs, and sorrows, and groans, behold *her* expire, who was my company in solitude, my counsel in difficulty, my comfort in disgrace; let me follow to the grave the bones, the carcass, the precious remains of this dear part of myself; my converse is suspended, but is not destroyed: "Lazarus, my friend, sleepeth, but if I believe, I shall see the glory of God." Jesus Christ is "the resurrection and the life," John xi. 2. 40. 25. He is risen from the dead, we, therefore, shall one day rise. Jesus Christ is not a private person, he is a public representative, he is the surety of the church, "the first fruits of them that sleep. If 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," 1 Cor. xv. 20; Rom. viii. 2.

Was ever joy more rational? Was triumph ever more glorious? The triumphant entries of conquerors, the songs that rend the air in praise of their victories, the pyramids on which their exploits are transmitted to posterity, when they have subdued a general, routed an army, humbled the pride, and repressed the rage of a foe; ought not all these to yield to the joys that are occasioned by the event which we celebrate to-day? Ought not all these to yield to the victories of our incomparable Lord, and to his people's expressions of praise? One part of the gratitude, which is due to beneficial events, is to know their value, and to be affected with the benefits which they procure. Let us celebrate the praise of the Author of our redemption, my brethren; let us call heaven and earth to witness our gratitude. Let an increase of zeal accompany this part of our engagements. Let a double portion of fire from heaven kindle our sacrifice; and with a heart penetrated with the liveliest gratitude, and with the most ardent love, let each Christian exclaim, "Blessed be the God and Father of my Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten me again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead," 1 Pet. i. 3. Let him join his voice to that of angels, and, in concert with the celestial intelligences, let him sing, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory," Isa. vi. 3. Let "the tabernacles of the righteous" resound with the text, "the right hand of the Lord doth valiantly: the right hand of the Lord doth valiantly."

But what melancholy thoughts are these, which interrupt the pleasures of this day? Whose *tabernacles* are these? The tabernacles of the *righteous*? Ah! my brethren! we be to you, if, under pretence that the *righteous* ought to rejoice to-day, you rejoice by adding sin to sin! The resurrection of the Saviour of the world perfectly assorts with the other parts of

his economy. It is a spring flowing with motives to holiness. God has left nothing undone in the work of your salvation. The great work is finished. Jesus Christ completed it, when he rose from the tomb. The Son has paid the ransom. The Father has accepted it. The Holy Spirit has published it, and, by innumerable prodigies, has confirmed it. None but yourselves can condemn you. Nothing can deprive you of this grace, but your own contempt of it.

But the more precious this grace is, the more criminal, and the more affronting to God, will your contempt of it be. The more joy, with which the glory of a risen Jesus ought to inspire you, if you believe in him, the more terror ought you to feel, if you attempt to disobey him. He, who "declared him the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead," put "a sceptre of iron" into his hand, that he might *break* his enemies, and "dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel," Rom. i. 4; Ps. ii. 9. Dost thou enter into these reflections? Dost thou approach the table of Jesus Christ with determinations to live a new life? I believe so. But the grand fault of our communions, and solemn festivals, does not lie in the precise time of our communions and solemnities. The representation of Jesus Christ in the Lord's supper; certain reflections, that move conscience; an extraordinary attention to the noblest objects in religion; the solemnities that belong to our public festivals; inspire us with a kind of devotion: but how often does this devotion vanish with the objects that produced it? These august symbols should follow thee into thy warfare in the world. A voice should sound in thine ears amidst the tumult of the world; amidst the dissipating scenes that besiege thy mind; amidst the pleasures that fascinate thine eyes, amidst the grandeur and glory which thou causest to blaze around thee, and with which thou thyself, although, alas! always mortal, always a worm of the earth, always dust and ashes, art the first to be dazzled; a voice should sound in thine ears, Remember thy vows, Remember thine oaths, Remember thy joys.

My brethren, if you be not to-morrow, and till the next Lord's-supper-day, what you are to-day, we recall all the congratulations, all the benedictions, and all the declarations of joy, which we have addressed to you. Instead of congratulating you on your happiness in being permitted to approach God in your devotions, we will deplore your wickedness in adding perjury and perjury to all your other crimes. Instead of benedictions and vows, we will cry, "Anathema Maranatha; if any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema," 1 Cor. xvi. 22. If any man who has kissed the Saviour betray him, let him be Anathema. If any man defile the mysteries of our holy religion, let him be Anathema. If any man "tread under foot the Son of God, and count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, let him be Anathema," Heb. x. 29. Instead of inviting thee to celebrate the praise of the Author of our being, we forbid thee the practice, for it is "comely only for the upright," Ps. xxxiii. 1. God, by our ministry, saith to thee, "Thou wicked man! What hast thou to do

to take my covenant in thy mouth?" Ps. 1. 16. Why does that mouth now bless my name, and then blaspheme it: now praise me, thy Creator, and then defame my creatures: now publish my gospel, and then profane it?

If, on the contrary, you live agreeably to the engagements into which you have entered to-day; what a day, what a day, my brethren, is this day! A day, in which you have performed the great work for which God formed you, and which is all that deserves the attention of an immortal soul. A day in which many impurities, many calumnies, many passionate actions, many perjuries, and many oaths, have been buried in everlasting silence. It is a day in which you have been washed in the blood of the Lamb; in which you have entered into fellowship with God; in which you have heard these triumphant shouts in the church, "Grace, grace unto it," Zech. iv. 7. A day in which you have been "raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," Eph. ii. 6. A day, the pleasing remembrance of which will follow you to your death-bed, and will enable your pastors to open the gates of heaven to you, to commit your souls into the hands of the Redeemer, who ransomed it, and to say to you, Remember, on such a day your sins were effaced; remember, on such a day Jesus Christ disarmed death; remember, on such a day the gate of heaven was opened to you.

O day! which the Lord has made, let me for ever rejoice in thy light! O day of designs, resolutions, and promises, may I never forget thee! O day of consolation and grace, may a rich effusion of the peace of God on this auditory preserve thy memorial through a thousand generations!

Receive this peace, my dear brethren. I spread over you hands washed in the innocent blood of my Redeemer; and as our risen Lord Jesus Christ, when he appeared to his disciples, said to them, "Peace, peace be unto you;" so we, by his command, while we celebrate the memorable history of his resurrection, say to you, "Peace, peace be unto you. As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God," John xx. 19. 21; Gal. vi. 16. To him be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

## SERMON XXII.

### THE EFFUSION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

ACTS ii. 37.

*Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter, and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?*

"Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation. They will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me: yet thou shalt speak unto them, and tell them, Thus saith the Lord God; whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, and they shall know that there hath been a prophet among them," Ezek. ii. 3. 5; iii. 7. 11. Thus God formerly forearmed Ezekiel against the greatest discouragement that

he was to meet with in his mission, I mean the unsuccessfulness of his ministry. For, my brethren, they are not only your ministers, who are disappointed in the exercise of the ministry: the Isaiahs, the Jeremiahs, the Ezekiels, are often as unsuccessful as we. In such melancholy cases, we must endeavour to surmount the obstacles which the obduracy of sinners opposes against the dispensations of grace. We must shed tears of compassion over an ungrateful Jerusalem; and if, after we have used every possible mean, we find the corruption of our hearers invincible, we must be satisfied with the peace of a good conscience, we must learn to say with the prophet, or rather with Jesus Christ, "I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God," Isa. xlix. 4. We must content ourselves with this thought, if our hearers have not been sanctified, they have been left without excuse; if God has not been glorified in their conversion, he will be glorious in their destruction.

But how sad is this consolation! how melancholy is this encouragement! By consecrating our ministry to a particular society, we unite ourselves to the members of it by the tenderest ties, and whatever idea we have of the happiness which God reserves for us in a future state, we know not how to persuade ourselves that we can be perfectly happy, when those Christians, whom we consider as our brethren, and our children, are plunged in a gulf of everlasting wo. "If the angels of God rejoice over one sinner that repenteth," Luke xv. 10, what pleasure must he feel, who has reason to hope that in this valley of tears he has had the honour of opening the gate of heaven to a multitude of sinners, that he has "saved himself, and them that heard him," 1 Tim. iv. 16.

This pure joy God gave on the day of Pentecost to St. Peter. When he entered the ministerial course, he entered on a course of tribulations. When he was invested with the apostleship he was invested with martyrdom. He who said to him, "Feed my sheep, feed my lambs," said also to him, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, when thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldst: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not," John xvi. 15, 16, 18. In order to animate him against a world of contradicting opposers, and to sweeten the bitterness which were to accompany his preaching, Jesus Christ gave him the most delicious pleasure that a Christian preacher can taste. He caused, at the sound of his voice, those fortresses to fall which were erected to oppose the establishment of the gospel. The first experiment of St. Peter is a miracle; his first sermon astonishes, alarms, transforms, and obtains, three thousand conquests to Jesus Christ.

This marvellous event the primitive church saw, and this while we celebrate, we wish to see again to-day. Too long, alas! we have had no other encouragement in the exercise of our ministry than that which God formerly gave to the prophet Ezekiel: shall we never enjoy that which he gave to St. Peter? too

long, alas! we have received that command from God, "Thou shalt speak unto them, and tell them, Thus saith the Lord, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, for they are a rebellious house." Almighty God! pour out that benediction on this sermon, which will excite compunction in the hearts, and put these words in the mouths of converts, "Men and brethren what shall we do?" Add new members "to thy church," Acts ii. 47; not only to the visible, but also to the invisible church, which is "thy peculiar treasure," Exod. xix. 5, the object of thy tenderest love. Amen.

"When they heard this they were pricked in their heart." They of whom the sacred historian speaks were a part of those Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea and Cappadocia, in Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, and Egypt, ver. 9, 10, who had travelled to Jerusalem to keep the feast of Pentecost. When these men heard this, that is, when they heard the sermon of St. Peter, "they were pricked in their heart, and said, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" In order to understand the happy effect, we must endeavour to understand the cause. In order to comprehend what passed in the auditory, we must understand the sermon of the preacher. There are five remarkable things in the sermon, and there are five correspondent dispositions in the hearers.

I. I see in the sermon a noble freedom of speech; and in the souls of the hearers those deep impressions, which a subject generally makes, when the preacher himself is deeply affected with its excellence, and emboldened by the justice of his cause.

II. There is in the sermon a miracle which gives dignity and weight to the subject: and there is in the souls of the auditors that deference, which cannot be withheld from a man to whose ministry God puts his seal.

III. I see in the sermon of the preacher an invincible power of reasoning; and in the souls of the audience that conviction which carries along with it the consent of the will.

IV. There are in the sermon stinging reproofs; and in the souls of the hearers painful remorse and regrets.

V. I observe in the sermon threatenings of approaching judgments; and in the souls of the hearers a horror, that seizes all their powers for fear of the judgments of a *consuming* God, Heb. xii. 29. These are five sources of reflections, my brethren; five comments on the words of the text.

I. We have remarked in the sermon of St. Peter, that *noble freedom of speech* which so well becomes a Christian preacher, and is so well adapted to strike his hearers. How much soever we now admire this beautiful part of pulpit eloquence, it is very difficult to imitate it. Sometimes a weakness of faith, which attends your best established preachers; sometimes worldly prudence; sometimes a timidity, that proceeds from a modest consciousness of the insufficiency of their talents; sometimes a fear, too well grounded, alas! of the retorting of those censures which people, always ready to murmur against them, who reprove their vices, are eager to make; sometimes a fear of

those persecutions, which the world always raises against all whom heaven qualifies to destroy the empire of sin: all these considerations damp the courage of the preacher and deprive him of freedom of speech. If in the silent study, when the mind is filled with an apprehension of the tremendous majesty of God, we resolve to attack vice, how eminent soever the seat of its dominion may be, I own, my brethren, we are apt to be intimidated in a public assembly, when in surveying the members of whom it is composed, we see some hearers, whom a multitude of reasons ought to render very respectable to us.

But none of these considerations had any weight with our apostle. And, indeed, why should any of them affect him? Should the weakness of his faith? He had conversed with Jesus Christ himself; he had accompanied him on the holy mount, he had "heard a voice from the excellent glory," saying, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased," 2 Pet. i. 17. Moreover, he had seen him after his resurrection loaden with the spoils of death and hell, ascending to heaven in a cloud, received into the bosom of God amidst the acclamations of angels, shouting for joy, and crying, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates! ye everlasting doors! the King of glory shall come in," Ps. xxiv. 7. Could he distrust his talents? The prince of the kingdom, "the author and finisher of faith," Heb. xii. 2, had told him, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church," Matt. xvi. 18. Should he dread reproaches and recriminations? The purity of his intentions, and the sanctity of his life, confound them. Should he pretend to keep fair with the world? But what finesse is to be used, when eternal misery is to be denounced, and eternal happiness proposed? Should he shrink back from the sufferings that superstition and cruelty were preparing for Christians? His timidity would have cost him too dear; it would have cost him sighs too deep, tears too many. Persecuting tyrants could invent no punishments so severe as those which his own conscience had inflicted on him for his former fall: at all adventures, if he must be a martyr, he chooses rather to die for religion than for apostasy.

Philosophers talk of certain invisible bands that unite mankind to one another. A man animated with any passion, has in the features of his face, and in the tone of his voice, a something, that partly communicates his sentiments to his hearers. Error proposed in a lively manner, by a man, who is affected with it himself, may seduce unguarded people.—Fictions, which we know are fictions, exhibited in this manner, move and affect us for a moment. But what a dominion over the heart does that speaker obtain who delivers truths, and who is affected himself with the truths which he delivers? To this part of the eloquence of St. Peter, we must attribute the emotions of his hearers; "they were pricked in their heart." They said to the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"—Such are the impressions which a man deeply affected with the excellence of his subject, and emboldened by the justice of his cause, makes on his hearers.

II. A second thing which gave weight and dignity to the sermon of St. Peter was the *miracle* that preceded his preaching, I mean the gifts of tongues, which had been communicated to all the apostles. This prodigy had three characteristic marks of a genuine miracle. What is a true, genuine, authentic miracle? In my opinion, one of the principal causes of the fruitlessness of all our inquiries on this article is the pretending to examine it philosophically. This rock we should cautiously endeavour to avoid. Mankind know so little of the powers of nature, that it is very difficult, if not impossible to determine strictly and philosophically, whether an action, which seems to us a real miracle, be really such; or whether it be not our ignorance that causes it to appear so to us. We are so unacquainted with the faculties of unembodied spirits, and of others which are united to some portion of matter by laws different from those that unite our bodies and souls, that we cannot determine whether an event, which seems to us an immediate work of the omnipotence of God, be not operated by an inferior power, though subordinate to his will.

But the more reason a philosopher has for mortification, when he pretends thoroughly to elucidate abstruse questions, in order to gratify curiosity, the more helps has a Christian to satisfy himself, when he investigates them with the laudable design of knowing all that is necessary to be known, in order to salvation. Let us abridge the matter. The prodigy, that accompanied the sermon of St. Peter, had three characteristic marks of a real miracle.

I. *It was above human power.* Every pretended miracle, that has not this first character, ought to be suspected by us. The want of this has prevented our astonishment at several prodigies that have been played off against the reformation, and will always prevent their making any impression on our minds. No; should a hundred statues of the blessed virgin move before us; should the images of all the saints walk; should a thousand phantoms appear;\* should voices in the air be heard against Calvin and Luther; we should infer only one conclusion from all these artifices; that is, that they who use them, distrusting the justice of their cause, supply the want of truth with tricks; that, as they despair of obtaining rational converts, they may, at least, proselyte simple souls.

But the prodigy in question was evidently superior to human power. Of all sciences in the world, that of languages is the least capable of an instantaneous acquisition. Certain natural talents, a certain superiority of genius, sometimes produce in some men the same effects which long and painful industry can scarcely ever produce in others. We have sometimes seen people, whom nature seems to have designedly formed, in an instant become courageous captains, profound geometricians, admirable orators: but tongues are acquired by study and time. The acquisition of languages is like the knowledge of history. It is not a

superior genius, it is not a great capacity, that can discover to any man what passed in the world ten or twelve ages ago. The monuments of antiquity must be consulted, huge folios must be read, and an immense number of volumes must be understood, arranged, and digested. In like manner, the knowledge of languages is a knowledge of experience, and no man can ever derive it from his own innate fund of ability. Yet the apostles, and apostolical men, men who were known to be men of no education, all on a sudden knew the arbitrary signs, by which different nations had agreed to express their thoughts. Terms, which had no natural connexion with their ideas, were all on a sudden arranged in their minds. Those things, which other men can only acquire by disgusting labour, those particularly, which belong to the most difficult branches of knowledge, they understood, without making the least attempt to learn them. They even offered to communicate those gifts to them, who believed their doctrine, and thereby prevented the suspicions that might have been formed of them, of having affected ignorance all their lives, in order to astonish all the world at last with a display of literature, and by that to cover the black design of imposing on the church.

2. But perhaps these miracles may not be the more respectable on account of their superiority to human power. Perhaps, if they be not human, they may be devilish? No, my brethren, a little attention to their second character will convince you that they are divine. "Their end was to incline men, not to renounce natural and revealed religion, but to respect and to follow both: not to render an attentive examination unnecessary, but to allure men to it."

It is impossible that God should divide an intelligent soul between evidence and evidence; between the evidence of falsehood in an absurd proposition, and the evidence of truth that results from a miracle wrought in favour of that proposition. I have evident proofs in favour of this proposition, *The whole is greater than a part*: were God to work a miracle in favour of the opposite proposition, *The whole is less than a part*, he would divide my mind between evidence and evidence, between the evidence of my proposition, and the evidence that resulted from the miracle wrought in favour of the opposite proposition: he would require me to believe one truth, that could not be established without the renouncing of another truth.

In like manner, were God to work a miracle to authorize a doctrine opposite to any one of those which are demonstrated by natural or revealed religion, God would be contrary to himself; he would establish that by natural and revealed religion which he would destroy by a miracle, and he would establish by a miracle what he would destroy by natural and revealed religion.

The end of the prodigy of the preaching of St. Peter, the end of all the miracles of the apostles, was to render men attentive to natural and revealed religion. When they addressed themselves to Pagans, you know, they exhorted them to avail themselves of the light

\* See a great number of examples of this kind in Lavater's *Trait des Spectres*.

of nature in order to understand their need of revelation: and in this chapter the apostle exhorts the Jews to compare the miracle that was just now wrought with their own prophecies, that from both there might arise proof of the divine mission of that Messiah whom he preached to them.

3. The prodigy that accompanied the preaching of St. Peter had the third character of a true miracle. *It was wrought in the presence of those who had the greatest interest in knowing the truth of it.* Without this, how could this miracle have inclined them to embrace the religion in favour of which it was wrought? On this article there has been, and there will be, an eternal dispute between us and the members of that communion, with which it is far more desirable for us to have a unity of faith than an open war. It is a maxim, which the church of Rome has constituted an article of faith, that the presence of a heretic suspends a miracle. How unjust is this maxim!

We dispute with you the essential characters of the true church. You pretend that one indelible character is the power of working miracles; and, you add, this power resides with you in all its glory. We require you to produce evidence. We promise to be open to conviction. We engage to allow the argument, which you derive from the power of working miracles, all the weight that religion will suffer us to give it. But you keep out of sight. You choose for your theatres cloisters and monasteries, and your own partisans and disciples are your only spectators.

The apostles observed a different conduct. Very far from adopting your maxim, that the presence of a heretic suspends a miracle, they affirmed the direct contrary. St. Paul expressly says, "Tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not," 1 Cor. xiv. 22. This is a very remarkable passage. Some of the primitive Christians made an indiscreet parade of their miraculous gifts in religious assemblies. St. Paul reproves their vanity; but at the same time tells the Corinthians, that in some cases they might produce those gifts in their assemblies, they might exercise them when *unbelievers* were present; that is, when persons were in their assemblies who were not convinced of the truth of the gospel.

Read the history of the apostles. Where did Philip the evangelist heal a great number of demoniacs? Was this miracle performed in the cell of a monastery? In the presence of partial and interested persons? No: it was in Samaria; in the presence of that celebrated magician, who, not being able to deny, or to discredit, the miracles of the apostle, offered to purchase the power of working them, Acts viii. 7. 9. 18, &c. Where did the Holy Spirit descend on Cornelius, the centurion, and on all those who were with him? chap. x. In a dark chamber of a convent? Not in the presence of suspected persons? Behold! it was in Cesarea, a city full of Jews, a city, in which the Roman governors held their courts, and where a considerable garrison of Roman soldiers was always stationed. In what place was the imagination of the populace so stricken with the miracles that were wrought by St.

Paul in the course of two years, that they carried "unto the sick handkerchiefs and aprons," at the touching of which, "diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them?" Acts xix. 12. Was it in a nunnery? Was it not in the presence of suspected persons? Behold! it was at Ephesus, another metropolis, where a great number of Jews resided, and where they had a famous synagogue. And not to wander any farther from my principal subject, where did the apostles exercise those gifts which they had received from the Holy Ghost? In a conclave? No. In the presence of suspected persons? Yea: in the presence of Medes, Parthians, and Elamites, before dwellers in Mesopotamia, in Pontus, in Asia, in Phrygia, and in Egypt, in Pamphylia, in Libya, and in Rome. They exercised their gifts in Jerusalem itself, in the very city where Jesus Christ had been crucified. The prodigy, that accompanied the preaching of St. Peter, had all the characters then of a true, real, genuine miracle.

The miracle being granted, I affirm, that the *compunction of heart*, of which my text speaks, was an effect of that attention which could not be refused to such an extraordinary event, and of that *deference*, which could not be withheld from a man, to whose ministry God had set his seal.—Such prodigies might well give dignity and weight to the language of those who wrought them, and prepare the minds of spectators to attend to the evidence of their argumentation. Modern preachers sometimes borrow the innocent artifices of eloquence, to engage you to hear those truths which you ought to hear for their own sakes. They endeavour sometimes to obtain, by a choice of words, a tour of thought, an harmonious cadence, that attention which you would often withhold from their subjects were they content with proposing them in a manner simple and unadorned. But how great were the advantages of the first heralds of the gospel over modern preachers! The resurrection of a dead body; what a fine exordium! the sudden death of an Ananias and a Sapphira; what an alarming conclusion! The expressive eloquence of a familiar supernatural knowledge of the least known, and the best sounding, tongues; how irresistibly striking! Accordingly, three thousand of the hearers of St. Peter, yielded to the power of his speech. They instantly, and entirely, surrendered themselves to men, who addressed them in a manner so extraordinary, "they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter, and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

III. We remark, in the discourse of the apostle, an *invincible power of reasoning*, and, in the souls of his hearers, *that conviction which carries along with it the consent of the will.* Of all methods of reasoning with an adversary, none is more close and conclusive than that which is taken from his own principles. It has this advantage above others, the opponent is obliged, according to strict rules of reasoning, to admit the argument, although it be sophistical and false. For by what rule can he reject my proposition, if it have an equal degree of probability with another proposition, which he receives as evident and demonstrative? But

when the principles of an adversary are well grounded; and when we are able to prove that his principles produce our conclusions, our reasoning becomes demonstrative to a rational opponent, and he cannot deny it.

Christianity, it is remarkable, is defensible both ways. The first may be successfully employed against Pagans; the second more successfully against the Jews. It is easy to convince a heathen, that he can have no right to exclaim against the mysteries of the gospel; because, if he have any reason to exclaim against the mysteries of Christianity, he has infinitely more to exclaim against those of Paganism. "Doth it become you," said Justin Martyr to the heathens, in his second apology for Christianity, "Doth it become you to disallow our mysteries; that the Word was the only-begotten Son of God, that he was crucified, that he rose from the dead, that he ascended to heaven? We affirm nothing but what has been taught and believed by you.—For the authors, ye know, whom ye admire, say that Jupiter had many children; that Mercury is the word, the interpreter, the teacher of all; that Æsculapius, after he had been stricken with thunder, ascended to heaven, and so on."<sup>\*</sup>

The second way was employed more successfully by the apostles against the Jews. They demonstrated, that all the reasons, which obliged them to be Jews, ought to have induced them to become Christians: that every argument, which obliged them to acknowledge the divine legislation of Moses, ought to have engaged them to believe in Jesus Christ. St. Peter made use of this method. All the apostles used it. Put together all those valuable fragments of their sermons which the Holy Spirit has preserved, and you will easily see, that these holy men took the Jews on their own principles, and endeavoured to convince them, as we just now said, that whatever engaged them to adhere to Judaism ought to have engaged them to embrace Christianity, that what induced them to be Jews ought to have induced them to become Christians.

What argument can you allege for your religion, said they to the Jews, which does not establish that which we preach? Do you allege the privileges of your legislator? Your argument is demonstrative: Moses had access to God on the holy mountain; he did converse with him as a man speaks to his friend. But this argument concludes for us. The Christian legislator had more glorious privileges still. "God raised him up, having loosed the pains of death," Acts ii. 24, &c. he suffered not his Holy One to see corruption, he has caused him "to sit on his throne, he hath made him both Lord and Christ."

Do you allege the purity of the morality of your religion? Your argument is demonstrative. The manifest design of your religion is to reclaim men to God, to prevent idolatry, and to inspire them with piety, benevolence, and zeal. — But this argument concludes for us. What do we preach to you but these very articles? To what would we engage you, except

to "repent" of your sins, to receive "the promise" which was made "unto you and to your children," and "to save yourselves from this untoward generation?" ver. 39. Do we require any thing of you beside that spirit of benevolence, which unites the hearts of mankind, and which makes us "have all things common, sell our possessions, part them to all men as every man hath need, and continue daily in the temple with one accord?" ver. 44.

Do you allege the miracles that were wrought to prove the truth of your religion? Your argument is demonstrative. But this argument establishes the truth of our religion. Behold the miraculous gifts, which have been already communicated to those who have believed, and which are ready to be communicated to those who shall yet believe. Behold each of us working miracles, which have never been wrought by any, except by a few of the divine men who are so justly venerable in your esteem. See, the Holy Ghost is "poured out upon all flesh; our sons and our daughters prophesy, our young men see visions, and our old men dream dreams, our servants and our hand-maidens" are honoured with miraculous gifts, ver. 17.

What, then, are the prejudices that still engage you to continue in the profession of Judaism? Are they derived from the prophecies? Your principles are demonstrative: but, in the person of our Jesus, we show you to-day all the grand characters, which your own prophets said, would be found in the Messiah. In the person of our Jesus is accomplished that famous prophecy in the sixteenth Psalm, which some of you apply to David, and, to support a misrepresentation, propagate a ridiculous tradition, that he never died, although his tomb is among you: "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption," ver. 10. In the person of Jesus is accomplished the celebrated prediction of the Psalmist, "Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool," Ps. cx. 1. Such were the arguments of St. Peter.

Close reasoning ought to be the soul of all discourses. I compare it in regard to eloquence with benevolence in regard to religion. Without benevolence we may maintain a show of religion, but we cannot possess the substance of it. "Speak with the tongues of angels, have the gifts of prophecy, understand all mysteries, have all faith, so that ye could remove mountains, bestow all your goods to feed the poor, and give your bodies to be burned," if you have not benevolence, you are "nothing," 1 Cor. xiii. 1, &c. if you be destitute of benevolence, all your virtue is nothing but a noise, it is only as "sounding brass, or as a tinkling cymbal." In like manner in regard to eloquence; speak with authority, display treasures of erudition, let the liveliest and most sublime imagination wing it away, turn all your periods till they make music in the most delicate ear, what will all your discourses be, if void of argumentation? a noise, "sounding brass, a tinkling cymbal." You may surprise; but you cannot convince: you may dazzle; but you cannot instruct: you may, indeed, please; but you can neither change, sanctify, nor transform.

IV. There are, in the sermon of St. Peter, *stinging reproofs*; and, in the souls of the hear-

\* Justin Martyr. Apol. 2 pro Christian. p. 66, 67, edit. Paris, 1636.



ers, a pungent remorse. The apostle reproves the Jews in these words, "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles, and wonders, and signs, him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain," ver. 22. This single reproof excited the most shocking ideas that can alarm the mind. And who can express the agitations which were produced in the souls of the audience? What pencil can describe the state of their consciences? They had committed this crime "through ignorance," Acts iii. 17. They had congratulated one another on having destroyed the chief enemy of their religion, and on having freed the church from a monster who had risen up to devour it. They had lifted up their bloody hands towards heaven, and, to the rewarder of virtue, had prayed for a recompense for parricide. They had insolently displayed the spoils of Jesus, as trophies after a victory are displayed. The same principle which excited them to commit the crime, prevented their discovery of its enormity, after they had committed it. The same veils, which they had thrown over the glorious virtue of Jesus Christ, during his humiliation, they still continued to throw over it, in his exaltation. St. Peter tore these fatal veils asunder. He showed these madmen their own conduct in its true point of light; and discovered their parricide in all its horror: "Ye have taken, and crucified, Jesus, who was approved of God." I think I see the history, or, shall I say the fable of a Theban king acting over again. Educated far from the place of his nativity, he knew not his parents. His magnanimity seemed to indicate, if not the grandeur of his birth, at least the lustre of his future life. The quelling of the most outrageous disturbers of society, and the destroying of monsters were his favourite employments. Nothing seemed impossible to his courage. In one of his expeditions, without knowing him, he killed his father. Some time after, he encountered a monster, that terrified the whole kingdom, and for his reward obtained his own mother in marriage. At length he found out the fatal mystery of his origin, and the tragical murder of his own father. Shocked at his wretchedness; it is not right, exclaimed he, that the perpetrator of such crimes should enjoy his sight, and he tore out his own eyes.

This image is too faint to express the agonies of the Jews. The ignorance of *Œdipus* was invincible: that of the Jews was voluntary. St. Peter dissipated this ignorance. "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." This charge excited ideas of a thousand distressing truths. The apostle reminded them of the holy rules of righteousness which Jesus Christ had preached and exemplified, and the holiness of him whom they had crucified, filled them with a sense of their own depravity.

He reminded them of the benefits which Jesus Christ had bountifully bestowed on their nation, of the preference which he had given them above all other people in the world, and of the exercise of his ministry among "the lost sheep of the house of Israel," Matt. xv. 24,

and his profusion of these blessings discovered their black ingratitude.

He reminded them of the grandeur of Jesus Christ. He showed them, that the Jesus, who had appeared so very contemptible to them, "upheld all things by the word of his power; that the angels of God worshipped him; that God had given him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow," Heb. i. 3. 6.

He reminded them of their unworthy treatment of Jesus Christ; of their eager outcries for his death; of their repeated shoutings, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him," Luke xxiii. 18. 21; of their barbarous insults, "He saved others, let him save himself," ver. 35; of the crown of thorns, the scarlet robe, the ridiculous sceptre, and all other cruel circumstances of his sufferings and death; and the whole taught them the guilt of their parricide. The whole was an ocean of terror, and each reflection a wave, that overwhelmed, distorted, and distressed their souls.

V. In fine, we may remark in the sermon of St. Peter, *denunciations of divine vengeance*.—The most effectual mean for the conversion of sinners, that which St. Paul so successfully employed, is terror, 2 Cor. v. 11. St. Peter was too well acquainted with the obduracy of his auditors not to avail himself of this motive. People, who had imbrued their hands in the blood of a personage so august, wanted this mean. In order to attack them with any probability of success, it was necessary to shoot "the arrows of the Almighty" at them, and to "set the terrors of God in array against them," Job vi. 4. St. Peter described to these murderers "that great and notable day of the Lord," ver. 21, so famous among their prophets, "that day," in which God would avenge the death of his Son, punish the greatest of all crimes with the greatest of all miseries, and execute that sentence which the Jews had denounced on themselves, "His blood be on us and on our children," Matt. xxvii. 25.

St. Peter quoted a prophecy of Joel, which foretold that fatal day, and the prophecy was the more terrible, because one part of it was accomplished; because the remarkable events that were to precede it were actually come to pass; for the Spirit of God had begun to "pour out" his miraculous influences "upon all flesh, young men had seen visions, and old men had dreamed dreams;" and the formidable preparations of approaching judgments were then before their eyes. Herod the Great had already put those to a cruel death who had raised a sedition on account of his placing the Roman eagle on the gate of the temple. Already Pilate had set up the Roman standard in Jerusalem, had threatened all who opposed it with death, and had made a dreadful havoc among them who refused to agree to his making an aqueduct in that city. Twenty thousand Jews had been already massacred in Cesarea, thirteen thousand in Scythopolis, and fifty thousand in Alexandria. Cestius Gallus had already overwhelmed Judea with a formidable army.\* Terrible harbingers of "that great

\* Joseph. Antiq. lib. xvii. cap. 6. p. 766. Oxon. 1720  
Ibid. lib. xviii. p. 797. De Bell. Jud. lib. ii. cap. 19.  
p. 1095.

and notable day of the Lord!" Just grounds of fear and terror! The auditors of St. Peter, on hearing these predictions, and on perceiving their fulfilment, "were pricked in their heart, and said," to all the members of the apostolical college, "Men and brethren, What shall we do?"

Such was the power of the sermon of St. Peter over the souls of his hearers! Human eloquence has sometimes done wonders worthy of immortal memory. Some of the ancient orators have governed the souls of the most invincible hearers, and the life of Cicero affords us an example. Ligarius had the audacity to make war on Cesar. Cesar was determined to make the rash adventurer a victim to his revenge. The friends of Ligarius durst not interpose, and Ligarius was on the point, either of being justly punished for his offence, or of being sacrificed to the unjust ambition of his enemy. What force could control the power of Cesar? But Cesar had an adversary, whose power was superior to his own. This adversary pleads for Ligarius against Cesar, and Cesar, all invincible as he is, yields to the eloquence of Cicero. Cicero pleads, Cesar feels; in spite of himself, his wrath subsides, his hatred diminishes, his vengeance disappears. The fatal list of the crimes of Ligarius, which he is about to produce to the judges, falls from his hands, and he actually absolves him at the close of the oration, whom, when he entered the court, he meant to condemn. But yield, ye orators of Athens and Rome! Yield to our fishermen and tent-makers. O how powerful is the sword of the Spirit in the hands of our apostles! See the executioners of Jesus Christ, yet foaming with rage and madness against him. See! they are as ready to shed the blood of the disciples, as they were to murder their Master. But the voice of St. Peter quells all their rage, turns the current of it, and causes those to bow to the yoke of Jesus Christ who had just before put him to death.

Allow, my brethren, that you cannot recollect the sermon of St. Peter without envying those happy primitive Christians, who enjoyed the precious advantage of hearing such a preacher; or without saying to yourselves, such exhortations would have found the way to our hearts, they would have aroused us from our security, touched our consciences, and produced effects which the modern way of preaching is incapable of producing.

But, my brethren, will you permit us to ask you one question? Would you choose to hear the apostles, and ministers like the apostles? Would you attend their sermons? or, to say all in one word, do you wish St. Peter was now in this pulpit? Think a little, before you answer this question. Compare the taste of this auditory with the genius of the preacher; your delicacy with that liberty of speech with which he reprov'd the vices of his own times. For our parts, we, who think we know you, we are persuaded, that no preacher would be less agreeable to you than St. Peter. Of all the sermons that could be addressed to you, there could be none that would be received less favourably than those which should be

composed on the plan of that which this apostle preached at Jerusalem.

One wants to find something new in every sermon; and under pretence of satisfying his laudable desire of improvement in knowledge, would divert our attention from well-known vices, that deserved to be censured. Another desires to be pleased, and would have us adorn our discourses, not that we may obtain an easier access to his heart; not that we may, by the innocent artifice of availing ourselves of his love of pleasure, oppose the love of pleasure itself; but that we may flatter a kind of concupiscence, which is content to sport with a religious exercise, till, when divine service ends, it can plunge into more sensual joy. Almost all require to be lulled asleep in sin: and, although nobody is so gross as to say, Flatter my wicked inclinations, stupify my conscience, praise my crimes, yet almost every body "loves to have it so," Jer. v. 31. A principle of, I know not what, refined security makes us desire to be censured to a certain degree, so that the slight emotions which we receive may serve for a presumption that we repent, and may produce an assurance, which we could not enjoy under an apology for our sins. We consent to the touching of the wound, but we refuse to suffer any one to probe it. Lenitives may be applied, but the fire and the knife must not go to the bottom of the putrefaction to make a sound cure.

Ah! how disagreeable to you would the sermons of the apostles have been! Realize them. Imagine one of those venerable men ascending this pulpit, after he had been in the public places of your resort, after he had been familiarly acquainted with your domestic economy, after he had seen through the flimsy veils that cover some criminal intrigues, after he had been informed of certain secrets which I dare not even hint, and of some barefaced crimes that are committed in the sight of the sun: would the venerable man, think you, gratify your taste for preaching? Would he submit to the laws that your profound wisdom tyrannically imposes on your preachers? Would he gratify your curiosity, think you, with nice discussions? Do you believe he would spend all his time and pains in conjuring you not to despair? Would he content himself, think you, with coolly informing you, in a vague and superficial manner, that you *must be virtuous*? Would he finish his sermon with a pathetic exhortation to you not to entertain the least doubt about your salvation?

Ah! my brethren, I think I hear the holy man, I think I hear the preacher animated with the same spirit, that made him boldly tell the murderers of Jesus Christ; "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles, and wonders, and signs, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." I think I see St. Peter, the man who was so extremely affected with the sinful state of his auditors; the preacher who exhibited the objects that he exposed in his sermon, in that point of view which was most likely to discover to his auditors the enormity of their actions: I think I see him tearing the miserable veils with which men conceal the turpitude

of their crimes, after they have committed them.—I think I hear him enumerating the various excesses of this nation, and saying, You! you are void of all sensibility, when we tell you of the miseries of the church, when we describe those bloody scenes, that are made up of dungeons, galleys, apostates, and martyrs. You! you have silently stood by, and suffered religion to be attacked; and have favoured the publication of those execrable books which plead for a system of impiety and atheism, and which are professedly written to render virtue contemptible, and the perfections of God doubtful. You! you have spent twenty, thirty, forty years, in a criminal neglect of religion, without once examining whether the doctrines of God, of heaven, and of hell, be fables, or facts. I think I hear him exhort each of you to “save himself from this untoward generation,” Acts ii. 40.

Let us throw ourselves at the feet of the apostle, or rather, let us prostrate ourselves at the foot of the throne of that Jesus, whom we have insulted; and who, in spite of all the insults that we have offered him, still calls, and still invites us to repent. Let each of us say to him, as the convinced Saul said to him on the road to Damascus, “Lord! what wilt thou have me to do?” Acts ix. 6. O! may emotions of heart as rapid as words, and holy actions as rapid as emotions of heart; may all we are, and all we have, may all form one grand flow of repentance; and may “the day of salvation, the day of the gladness of the heart, succeed that great and notable day of the Lord,” Isa. lxi. 8. Cant. iii. 2; the distant prospect of which terrifies us, and the coming of which will involve the impenitent in hopeless destruction. May God himself form these dispositions within us! To him be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

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## SERMON XXIII.

### THE SUFFICIENCY OF REVELATION.

LUKE xvii. 27—31.

*The rich man said, I pray thee, father Abraham, that thou wouldest send Lazarus to my father's house; for I have five brethren, that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.*

“LET no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.” Thus speaks St. James in the first chapter of his general epistle, ver. 13. The apostle proposes in general to humble his readers under a sense of their sins, and in particular to oppose that monstrous error, which taxes God with injustice by making him the author of sin. This seems at first view quite needless, at least, in regard to us. God the author of sin! Odious supposition! So contrary to our surest ideas of the Supreme Being, so opposite to his

law, so incompatible with the purity of those “eyes, which cannot look on iniquity,” Hab. i. 13; that it seems impossible it should enter the mind of man; or, if there were any in the time of St. James who entertained such an opinion, they must have been monsters, who were stifled in their birth, and who have no followers in these latter ages.

Alas! my brethren, let us learn to know ourselves. Although this notion seems repugnant to our reason at first, yet it is but too true, we secretly adopt it; we revolve it in our minds; and we even avail ourselves of it to excuse our corruption and ignorance. As the study of truth requires leisure and labour, man, naturally indolent in matters of religion, usually avoids both; and, being at the same time inclined to evade a charge of guilt, and to justify his conduct, seeks the cause of his disorder in heaven, taxes God himself, and accuses him of having thrown such an impenetrable veil over truth, that it cannot be discovered; and of having placed virtue on the top of an eminence, so lofty and so craggy, that it cannot be attained. It is, therefore necessary to oppose that doctrine against modern infidels, which the apostles opposed against ancient heretics; to publish, and to establish, in our auditories, the maxim of St. James, “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.”

To this important end we intend to direct our meditation to-day; and to this the Saviour of the world directed the parable, the conclusion of which we have just now read to you. Our Saviour describes a man in misery, who, by soliciting Abraham to employ a new mean for the conversion of his brethren, tacitly exculpates himself, and seems to tax Providence with having formerly used only imperfect and improper means for his conversion. Abraham reprimands his audacity, and attests the sufficiency of the ordinary means of grace. Thus speaks our evangelist; “The rich man said, I pray thee, father Abraham, that thou wouldest send Lazarus to my father's house; for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.”

Before we enter into a particular discussion of the subject, we will make two general observations, which are the ground of the whole discourse. The passage we have read to you seems at first an unnatural association of heterogeneous ideas: a disembodied, wicked man, in flames! ver. 24; a conversation between a miserable man in hell, and Abraham amidst angels in glory! compassion in a damned soul, revolving in the horrors of hell! The combination of these ideas does not appear natural, and therefore they necessarily put us on inquiring, Is this a bare history? Is it the relation of an event that actually came to pass, but coloured with borrowed imagery, which Jesus Christ, according to his usual custom,

employed to convey to his hearers some important truth?

We shall enter no further at present into a discussion of these articles than the subject before us requires. Whether the Lord narrate a real history, as some pretend, because Lazarus is named, and because a circumstantial detail agrees better with real facts than with fiction: or whether the whole be a parable, which seems not unlikely, especially if, as some critics affirm,\* some ancient manuscripts introduce the passage with these words, *JESUS SPAKE A PARABLE, SAYING, "There was a certain rich man,"* and so on: or whether, as in many other cases, it be a mixture of real history, coloured with parabolical simile: which of these opinions soever we embrace (and, by the way, it is not of any great consequence to determine which is the true one,) our text, it is certain, cannot be taken in a strict literal sense. It cannot be said, either that the rich man in hell conversed with Abraham in heaven, or that he discovered any tenderness for his brethren. No, there is no communication, my brethren, between glorified saints and the prisoners whom the vengeance of God confines in hell. The great gulf that is fixed between them, prevents their approach to one another, and deprives them of all converse together. Moreover, death which separates us from all the living, and from all the objects of our passions, effaces them from our memories, and detaches them from our hearts. And although the benevolence of the glorified saints may incline them to interest themselves in the state of the militant church, yet the torments of the damned exclude all concern from their minds, except that of their own tormenting horrors.

Our next observation is on the answer of Abraham; "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." What a paradox! Who would not be affected and converted, on seeing one return from the other world to attest the truth of the gospel? Could the tyrants of our days see the places where Nero, Dioclesian, and Decius, expiated their cruelties to the primitive Christians, would they persist in their barbarities? Were that proud son, who wastes in so much luxury the wealth that his father accumulated by his extortions, to behold his parent in devouring fire, would he dare to abandon himself to his stupid pleasures, and to retain a patrimony which was acquired with a curse? This difficulty is the more considerable, because Jesus Christ speaks to Jews. The Jews were less acquainted with the state of souls after death than Christians are. It should seem, the rising of a person from the dead, by increasing their knowledge on that article, would have been a much stronger motive to piety than all their ordinary means of revelation.

My brethren, this is one of those undeniable truths which, although some particular exception may be made to them, are yet strictly verified in the ordinary course of things. The precise meaning of our Saviour, if I mistake not, may be included in two propositions, of

which, the one regards infidels, and the other libertines.

First, The revelation that God addresses to us has evidence of its truth sufficient to convince every reasonable creature who will take the pains to examine it.

Secondly, God has founded the gospel exhortations to virtue on motives the most proper to procure obedience.

From these two propositions it follows, that men have no right to require either a clearer revelation, or stronger motives to obey it: and that, were God to indulge the unjust pretensions of sinners; were he even to condescend to send persons from the dead, to attest the truth of the gospel, and to address us by new motives, it is probable, not to say certain, that the new prodigy would neither effect the conviction of unbelievers, nor the conversion of libertines. My text is an apology for religion, and such I intend this sermon to be. An apology for Christianity against the difficulties of infidels, and an apology for Christianity against the subtleties of libertines. Let us endeavour to convince both, that he, who resists Moses and the prophets, or rather, Jesus Christ, the apostles, and the gospel (for we preach to a Christian auditory,) would not yield to any evidence that might arise from the testimony of a person raised from the dead. If the obscurity of revelation under the Mosaic economy seems to render the proposition in the text less evident in regard to the Jews, we will endeavour to remove this difficulty at the close of this discourse.

I. We begin with unbelievers, and we reduce them to five classes. The first consists of stupid infidels; the next of negligent infidels; the third of witty infidels; the fourth is made up of those who are interested in infidelity; and the last we call philosophical infidels. We affirm that the proposition of Jesus Christ in the text, that it would not be just, that, in general, it would be useless, to evoke the dead to attest the truth of revelation, is true in regard to these five classes of unbelievers.

1. We place the *stupid infidel* in the first rank. By a stupid infidel we mean a person, whose genius is so small, that he is incapable of entering into the easiest arguments, and of comprehending the plainest discussions; whose dark and disordered mind perplexes and enslaves reason; and whom God seems to have placed in society chiefly for the sake of rendering the capacities of others more conspicuous. Unbelievers of this kind attend to the mysteries of Christianity with an incapacity equal to that which they discover in the ordinary affairs of life, and they refuse to believe, because they are incapable of perceiving motives of credibility. Have these people, you will ask, no right to require a revelation more proportional to their capacities; and may God, agreeably to exact rules of justice and goodness, refer them to the present revelation? To this we have two things to answer.

First, There would be some ground for this pretence, were God to exact of dull capacities a faith as great as that which he requires of great, lively, and capable minds. But the

\* See Dr. Mill's Greek Testament.

scriptures attest a truth that perfectly agrees with the perfections of God; that is, that *the number of talents*, which God gives to mankind, will regulate the account which he will require of them in that great day when he will come to judge the world. "As many as have sinned without law," Rom. ii. 12; (remember these maxims, you faint and trembling consciences; you whose minds are fruitful in doubts and fears, and who, after you have made a thousand laborious researches, tremble lest you should have taken the semblance of truth for truth itself.) "As many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law;" that is to say, without being judged by any law, which they have not received. "That servant, which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with more stripes, than he who knew it not. It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon than for the cities in which Jesus Christ himself preached his Gospel," Luke xii. 47; Matt. xi. 22. If it were granted, then, that such a prodigy as the appearance of one risen from the dead would strike a stupid infidel, God is not obliged to raise one; because he will regulate his judgment, not only by the nature of that revelation which was addressed to him, but also by that portion of capacity which was given him to comprehend it. I would impress this observation on those savage souls, who act as if they were commissioned to dispense the treasures of divine justice, and who are as liberal of the judgments of God as he is of his eternal mercy. No, my brethren, these are not "the saints who shall judge the world," 1 Cor. vi. 2; these are the "wicked and slothful servants," who accuse their master of "reaping where he hath not sown," Matt. xxv. 24. The blessed God, who is less inclined to punish than to pardon, will never impute to his creatures the errors of an invincible ignorance. Without this consideration, I own, although I am confirmed in believing my religion by the clearest evidence, yet my conscience would be racked with continual fears, and the innumerable experiences I have had of the imperfection of my knowledge would fill me with horror and terror, even while in the sincerest manner I should apply my utmost attention to my salvation.

We affirm, in the second place, that *the fundamental truths of religion lie within the reach of people of the meanest capacities, if they will take the pains to examine them.* This is one of the bases of our reformation. Happy protestants! (by the way) were you always to act consistently with your own principles, if, either by an obstinate heresy, or by an orthodoxy too scholastic, you were not almost always falling into one of these two extremes, either into that of renouncing Christianity, by explaining away its fundamental truths; or, if I may venture to speak so, into that of sinking it, by overloading it with the embarrassing disputes of the schools.

We say, then, that the fundamental points of Christianity lie within the reach of the narrowest capacities. The Christian religion teaches us, that God created the world. Does not this truth, which philosophy has established on so many abstract and metaphysical proofs, demonstrate itself to our minds, to our eyes,

and to all our senses? Do not the innumerable objects of sense, which surround us, most emphatically announce the existence and the glory of the Creator? The Christian religion commands us to live holily. Does not this truth also demonstrate itself? Is not the voice of conscience in concert with that of religion; does it not give evidence in favour of the laws which religion prescribes? The Christian religion teaches us, that Jesus Christ came into the world, that he lived among men, that he died, that he rose again, that he gave the Holy Spirit to the first heralds of the gospel; these are facts, and we maintain that these facts are supported by proofs, so clear, and so easy, that men must be entirely destitute of every degree of impartial reason not to perceive their evidence.

Farther. Take the controversies that now subsist among Christians, and it will appear that a man of a very moderate degree of sense may distinguish truth from error on these articles. For, my brethren, we ought not to be intimidated, either at the authority, or at the characters, of those who start difficulties. The greatest geniuses have often maintained the greatest absurdities. It has been affirmed that there is no motion in nature. Some philosophers, and philosophers of name, have ventured to maintain that there is no matter; and others have doubted of their own existence. If you determine to admit no propositions, that have been denied or disputed, you will never admit any. Consider modern controversies with a cool impartiality; and you will acknowledge, that an ordinary capacity may discern the true from the false in the contested points. A man of an ordinary capacity may easily perceive, in reading the holy Scriptures, that the author of that book neither intended to teach us the worship of images, nor the invocation of saints, nor transubstantiation, nor purgatory. A moderate capacity may conclude, that the Scriptures, by attributing to Jesus Christ the names, the perfections, the works, and the worship of God, mean to teach us that he is God. A moderate capacity is capable of discovering, that the same Scriptures, by comparing us to the deaf, the blind, the dead, the "things which are not," 1 Cor. i. 28, intend to teach us that we have need of grace, and that it is impossible to be saved without its assistance. Men, who have not genius and penetration enough to comprehend these truths, would not be capable of determining whether the attestation of one sent from the dead were inconclusive or demonstrative. But infidels are rarely found among people of the stupid class; their fault is, in general, the believing too much, and not the crediting too little. Let us pass, then, to the next article.

2. We have put into a second class *negligent infidels*; those who refuse to believe, because they will not take the pains to examine. Let us prove the truth of the proposition in the text in regard to them; and let us show, that if they resist ordinary evidence, "neither would they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

Careless people are extremely rash, if they require new proofs of the truths of Christianity. If, indeed, they had made laborious researches; if they had weighed our arguments; if they had

examined our systems; if, after all their inquiries, they had not been able to discover any thing satisfactory on the side of religion; if our gospel were destitute of proof; if, notwithstanding this defect, God would condemn them for not believing, and, instead of proposing new arguments, would insist on their yielding to arguments, which neither persuaded the judgment, nor affected the heart; they would have reason to complain. But how astonishing is the injustice and ingratitude of mankind! God has revealed himself to them in the most tender and affectionate manner. He has announced those truths, in which they are the most deeply interested, a hell, a heaven, a solemn alternative of endless felicity, or eternal misery. He has accompanied these truths with a thousand plain proofs; proofs of fact, proofs of reason, proofs of sentiment. He has omitted nothing that is adapted to the purposes of convincing and persuading us. Careless unbelievers will not deign to look at these arguments; they will not condescend to dig the field, in which God has hid his treasure; they choose rather to wander after a thousand vain and useless objects, and to be a burden to themselves through the fatigues of idleness, than to confine themselves to the study of religion; and, at length, they complain that religion is obscure. They, who attest the truth to you, are venerable persons. They tell you they have read, weighed, and examined the matter, and they offer to explain, to prove, to demonstrate it to you. All this does not signify, you will not honour them with your attention. They exhort you, and assure you, that salvation, that your souls, that eternal felicity, are articles of the utmost importance, and require a serious attention. It does not signify, none of these considerations move you; and, as we said just now, you choose rather to attach yourselves to trite and trifling affairs; you choose rather to spend your time in tedious and insipid talk; you choose rather to exhaust your strength in the insupportable languors of idleness, than to devote one year, one month, one day, of your lives to the examination of religion; and after you have gone this perpetual round of negligence, you complain of God; it is he who conducts you through valleys of darkness; it is he who leads you into inextricable labyrinths of illusions and doubts! Ought the Deity, then, to regulate his economy by your caprices; ought he to humour your wild fancies and to reveal himself exactly in the way, and punctually at the time, which you shall think proper to prescribe to him?

This is not all. It is certain, were God to grant persons of this character that indulgence which the wicked rich man required; were God actually to evoke the dead from the other world to reveal what was doing there; it is very plain, they would receive no conviction; and the same fund of negligence, which prevents their adherence to religion now, would continue an invincible obstacle to their faith, even after it had been confirmed in a new and extraordinary manner. This is not a paradox, it is a demonstration. The apparition in question would require a chain of principles and consequences. It would be liable to a great number of difficulties, and difficulties greater

than those which are now objected against religion. It must be inquired, first, whether he, who saw the apparition, were free from all disorder of mind when he saw it; or whether it were not the effect of a momentary insanity, or of a profound reverie. It must be examined farther, whether the apparition really came from the other world, or whether it were not exhibited by the craft of some head of a party, like those which are seen in monasteries, like those which were rumoured about at the reformation to impose on the credulity of the populace; many instances of which may be seen in a *treatise on spectres*, written by one of our divines.\* On supposition that it were a dead person sent from the other world, it would be necessary to examine, whether he were sent by God, or by the enemy of our salvation, who, under a pretence of reforming us, was setting snares for our innocence, and creating scruples in our minds. If it were proved that the vision came from God, it must still be inquired, whether it were an effect of the judgment of that God, who judicially hardens some, by "sending them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie, because they received not the love of the truth," 2 Thess. ii. 2; or whether it were an effect of his grace condescending to smooth the path of religion. All these questions, and a thousand more of the same kind, which naturally belong to this matter, would require time, and study, and pains. They would require the merchant to suspend his commercial business, the libertine to lay aside his pleasures, the soldier to quit for a while his profession of arms, and to devote himself to retirement and meditation. They would require them to consult reason, Scripture, and history. The same fund of carelessness, that now causes the obstinacy of our infidel, would cause it then; and would prevent his undertaking that examination, which would be absolutely necessary in order to determine whether the apparition proved the truth of that religion which it attested, and whether all the difficulties that attended it could be removed. We may then say in regard to idle infidels, "they have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

3. The same observations which we have just now made, in regard to negligent people, are equally applicable to a third order of persons, whom we have called *witty infidels*, and we class them by themselves, only on account of their rank in the world, and of the ascendancy which they know how to obtain over the hearts of mankind. We denominate those witty infidels, who agreeably to the taste of the last age, have not cultivated their geniuses with a sound and rational philosophy; but have made an ample collection of all the tinsel of the sciences (pardon this expression,) and have polished, and enriched their fancies at the expense of their judgments. They are quick at repartee, smart in answering; their wit sparkles, and their raileries bite; and, being infatuated with a conceit of their own superiority, they dispense with those rules of examination, in

\* Lavater.

their own favour, to which the rest of mankind are confined, and study only to excel in substituting jests for solid arguments. Dispute as long as we will with a man of this character, we can never obtain an exact answer. His first reply is a bit of historical erudition. Next he will quote one line from Horace, and two from Juvenal, and, by eluding in this manner our arguments and objections, he will think himself the victor, because he knew how to avoid the combat, and he will, therefore, think himself authorized to persist in infidelity.

The same reflections which regard the negligent infidel, are applicable to him, whom we oppose in this article. It is neither agreeable to the justice, nor to the wisdom of God, to employ new evidence in his favour. Not to his justice; for how can a man who is profane by profession, a man who, for the sake of rendering himself agreeable to his companions, and of procuring the reputation of ingenuity, ridicules the most grave and serious truths, declares open war with God, and jests with the most sacred things; how can a man of this character be an object of the love of God? Why should God alter the economy of his Spirit and grace in his favour? Neither is it agreeable to his wisdom: but, as what we have said on the foregoing article may be applied to this, we pass to the fourth class of unbelievers, whom we have denominated *interested infidels*; infidels, the gratifications of whose passions render the destruction of Christianity necessary to them.

4. *Infidels through depraved passions*, it must be granted, are very numerous. I cannot help asking, why, on every other article but that of religion, our infidels content themselves with a certain degree of evidence, whereas on this they cannot see in the clearest light? The more we examine, the clearer we perceive, that the reason originates in the passions; other subjects either very little, or not at all, interest their passions: these they see; religion aways the passions; to religion therefore they are blind. Whether the sun revolve around the earth to illuminate it; or whether the earth revolve around the sun, to beg, as it were, light and influence from it: whether matter be infinitely divisible; or whether there be atoms, properly so called: whether there be a vacuum in nature, or whether nature abhor a void: take which side we will of these questions, we may continue covetous or ambitious, imperious, oppressive, and proud. Pastors may be negligent, parents careless, children disobedient, friends faithless. But whether there be a God; whether "he hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness," Acts xvii. 31; whether an eye, an invisible eye, watch all our actions, and discover all our secret thoughts: these are questions which shock our prejudices, attack our passions, thwart and disconcert the whole of our system of cupidity.

Unbelievers, whose passions are interested in infidelity, are affected in this manner; and nothing can be easier to prove than that the resurrection of a dead person would produce no conviction of truth in them. Enter into your own hearts, my brethren; the proof of our proposition may be found there. The sentiments

of the heart have a close connexion with the ideas of the mind, and our passions resemble prisms, which divide every ray, and colour every object with an artificial hue.

For example: employ a sensible Christian to reconcile two enemies, and you will admire the wise and equitable manner in which he would refute every sophism that passion could invent. If the ground of complaint should be exaggerated, he would instantly hold the balance of equity, and retrench what anger may have added to truth. If the offended should say, he has received a grievous injury, he would instantly answer, that between two jarring Christians, it is immaterial to inquire, in this case, the degree of iniquity and irrationality in the offence; the immediate business, he would say, is the reasonableness of forgiveness. If the offended should allege, that he has often forgiven, he would reply, this is exactly the case between the Judge of the world and his offending creatures, and yet, he would add, the insulting of a thousand perfections, the forgetting of a thousand favours, the falsifying of a thousand oaths, the violating of a thousand resolutions, do not prevent God from opening the treasures of his mercy to us. If the complainant should have recourse to the ordinary subterfuge, and should protest that he had no animosity in his heart, only he is resolved to have no future intimacy with a man so odious, he would dissipate the gross illusion, by urging the example of a merciful God, who does not content himself with merely forgiving us, but, in spite of all our most enormous crimes, unites himself to us by the tenderest relations. Lovely morality, my brethren! Admirable effort of a mind, contemplating truth without prejudice and passion! But place this Arbitrator, who preaches such a morality, in different circumstances. Instead of a referee, make him a party; instead of a mediator between contending parties, put him in place of one of them. Employ his own arguments to convince him, and, astonishing! he will consider each as a sophism, for all his arguments now stand at the tribunal of a heart full of wrath and revenge. So true it is, that our passions alter our ideas; and that the clearest arguments are divested of all their evidence, when they appear before an interested man.

Do you seriously think, that the divines of the church of Rome, when they dispute with us, for example, on the doctrines of indulgences and purgatory, do you really think they require proofs and arguments of us? Not they. The more clearly we reason against them, the more furiously are they irritated against us. I think I see them calculating the profits of their doctrines to themselves, consulting that scandalous book, in which the price of every crime is rated, so much for a murder, so much for assassination, so much for incest; and finding on each part of the inexhaustible revenue of the sins of mankind, arguments to establish their belief.\* Thus our interested infidels re-

\* Mr. Saurin means the *tax-book of the Roman chancery*, which we have mentioned in the preface to the 1st vol. p. 7. This scandalous book was first printed at Rome in 1514, then at Cologne in 1515, at Paris in 1520, and often at other places since. It is entitled, *Regule, Constitutiones, Reservationis Cancellarie S. Domini nostri Leonis Pape decimi*, &c.

ject the clearest arguments. It is a fixed point with them, that the religion which indulges their passions is the best religion, and that which restrains them most, the worst. This is the rule, this is the touchstone, by which they examine all things. The more proofs we produce for religion, the more we prejudice them against religion; because the more forcible our arguments are, the more effectually we oppose their passions; the more we oppose their passions, the more we alienate them from that religion which opposes them.

I appeal to experience. The Scripture affords us a plain example, and a full comment, in the behaviour of the unbelieving Jews who lived in the time of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ preached; he condemned the prejudices of the synagogue; he subverted the favourite carnal systems of the Jews; he attacked the vices of their superiors; he preached against the irregularity of their morals; he unmasked the hypocritical Pharisees. These attacks were sufficient to excite their rage and madness; and they, being disposed to gratify their anger, examined the doctrine of Jesus Christ only for the sake of finding fault with it. Jesus Christ must be destroyed; for this purpose, snares must be laid for his innocence, his doctrine must be condemned, and he must be proved, if possible, a false Messiah. They interrogate him on articles of religion and policy; but Jesus Christ gives satisfactory answers to all their questions. They examine his morals; but every step of his life appears wise and good. They sift his conversation; but every expression "is always with grace seasoned with salt," Collos. iv. 6. None of these schemes will effectuate their designs. The man, say they, preaches a new doctrine; if he were sent of God, he would produce some proof of his mission: Moses and the prophets wrought miracles, Jesus Christ performs miracles; he heals the sick, raises the dead, calms the winds and the waves, and alters all the laws of nature. He operates more than enough to persuade impartial minds. But their passions suggest answers. "This fellow doth not cast out devils," say they, "but by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils," Matt. xii. 24. But Lazarus, who was raised from the dead, and who is now living among you, speaks in favour of Jesus Christ; Lazarus must be made away with; he must be a second time laid in the tomb; all the traces of the glory of Jesus Christ must be taken away; and that light which is already too clear, and which will hereafter be still clearer, must be extinguished lest it should discover, expose, and perplex us.

There we meet with such articles as these:—

Absolution for killing one's father or mother, 1 ducat—v carlins.

Ditto, For all the acts of lewdness committed by a clerk—with a dispensation to be capable of taking orders, and to hold ecclesiastical benefits, &c.

36 tourn. 3 duc.

Ditto, For one who shall keep a concubine, with a dispensation to take orders, &c.—21. tour. 5 duc. 9 carl.

As if this traffic were not scandalous enough of itself, it is added, "Et nota diligenter," &c. Take notice particularly, that such graces and dispensations are not granted to the poor; for, not having wherewith to pay they cannot be comforted.

The zeal of the reformers against the church of Rome ceases to appear intertemperate in my eye, when I consider these detestable enormities.

This is a natural image of a passionate infidel. Passion blinds him to the most evident truths. It is impossible to convince a man, who is determined not to be convinced. One disposition, essential to the knowing of truth, is a sincere love to it: "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him," Ps. xxv. 14. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself," John vii. 17. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil," chap. iii. 19.

5. We come, finally, to the *philosophical infidel*; to him, who, if we believe him, is neither blinded by prejudices, nor prevented by negligence, nor infatuated by his imagination, nor beguiled by irregular passions. Hear him. He assures you the only wish, that animates him, is that of knowing the truth, and that he is resolved to obey it, find it where he will: but after he has agitated a thousand questions, after he has undertaken a thousand investigations, and consulted a thousand volumes, he has found nothing satisfactory in proof of Christianity; in short, he says he is an unbeliever only because he cannot meet with any motives of belief. Can it be said to such a man, "neither wilt thou be persuaded though one rose from the dead?"

We will reply presently. But allow us first to ask a previous question. Are there any infidels of this kind? Is the man, whom we have described, a real, or an imaginary being? What a question! say you. What! can a man, who devotes his whole life to meditation and study, a man, who has searched all the writings of antiquity, who has disentangled and elucidated the most dark and difficult passages, who has racked his invention to find solutions and proofs, who is nourished and kept alive, if the expression may be used, with the discovery of truth; a man, besides, who seems to have renounced the company of the living, and has not the least relish for even the innocent pleasures of society, so far is he from running into the grossest diversions; can such a man be supposed to be an unbeliever for any other reason than because he thinks it his duty to be so? Can any, but rational motives, induce him to disbelieve?

Undoubtedly; and it would discover but little knowledge of the human heart, were we to imagine, either that such an infidel was under the dominion of gross sensual passions, or that he was free from the government of other, and more refined passions. A desire of being distinguished, a love of fame, the glory of passing for a superior genius, for one who has freed himself from vulgar errors; these are, in general, powerful and vigorous passions, and these are usually the grand springs of a pretended philosophical infidelity. One undeniable proof of the truth of my assertion is his eagerness in publishing and propagating infidelity. Now this can proceed from nothing but from a principle of vain glory. For why should his opinion be spread? For our parts, when we publish our systems, whether we publish truth or error, we have weighty reasons for publication. Our duty, we think, engages us to propagate what we believe. In our opinion,



they who are ignorant of our doctrine are doomed to endless misery. Is not this sufficient to make us lift up our voices? But you, who believe neither God, nor judgment, nor heaven, nor hell; what madness inspires you to publish your sentiments? It is, say you, a desire of freeing society from the slavery that religion imposes on them. Miserable freedom! a freedom from imaginary errors, that plunges us into an ocean of real miseries, that saps all the bases of society, that sows divisions in families, and excites rebellions in states; that deprives virtue of all its motives, all its inducements, all its supports. And what, pray, but religion, can comfort us under the sad catastrophes to which all are subject, and from which the highest human grandeur is not exempt? What, but religion, can conciliate our minds to the numberless afflictions which necessarily attend human frailty? Can any thing but religion calm our consciences under their agitations and troubles? Above all, what can relieve us in dying illnesses, when lying on a sick-bed between present and real evils, and the frightful gloom of a dark futurity? Ah! if religion, which produces such real effects, be a deception, leave me in possession of my deception; I desire to be deceived, and I take him for my most cruel enemy who offers to open my eyes.

But let us give a more direct answer. You are a philosopher. You have examined religion. You find nothing that convinces you. Difficulties and doubts arise from every part; the prophecies are obscure; the doctrines are contradictory; the precepts are ambiguous; the miracles are uncertain. You require some new prodigy, and, in order to your full persuasion of the truth of immortality, you wish some one would come from the dead and attest it. I answer, if you reason consequentially, the motive would be useless, and, having resisted ordinary proofs, you ought, if you reason consequentially, to refuse to believe the very evidence which you require. Let us confine ourselves to some one article to convince you; suppose the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The apostles bore witness that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. This is our argument. To you it appears jejune and futile, and your undetermined mind floats between two opinions; either the apostles, you think, were deceived; or they deceived others. These are your objections. Now, if either of these objections be well grounded, I affirm you ought not to believe, "though one rose from the dead" to persuade you.

The apostles were deceived, you say. But this objection, if well-grounded, lies against not only one, but twelve apostles; not only against twelve apostles, but against more than "five hundred brethren;" not only against more than "five hundred brethren," 1 Cor. xv. 6, but against all who attested the miracles wrought in favour of the resurrection of Christ: all these persons, who in other cases were rational, must have been insane, had they thought they had seen what they had not seen, heard what they had not heard, conversed with a man with whom they had not conversed, wrought miracles which they had not wrought. They must be supposed to have persisted in these extravagances, not only for an hour, or

a day, but for forty days, yea, for the whole course of their lives. Now, I demand, since an illusion produced a persuasion so clear and full, how could you assure yourself that you was not deceived in examining that new evidence which you require? If so many different persons may be justly taxed with absence of mind, or insanity, what assurance would you have that you was not thrown into a disordered state of mind at the sight of an apparition?

Let us reason in a similar manner on your second supposition. If the apostles were impostors, there must have been in the world men so contrary to all the rest of their species, as to suffer imprisonment, punishment, and death, for the support of a falsehood. This absurdity must have intoxicated not only one person, but all the thousands who sealed the gospel with their blood. The apostles must have been destitute of every degree of common sense, if intending to deceive the world, they had acted in a manner the least likely of any to abuse it; marking places, times, witnesses, and all other circumstances, the most proper to discover their imposture. Moreover, their enemies must have conspired with them in the illusion. Jews, Gentiles, and Christians, divided on every other article, must have all agreed in this, because no one ever confuted: What am I saying? No one ever accused our sacred authors of imposture, although nothing could have been easier, if they had been impostors. In one word, a thousand strange suppositions must be made. But I demand again, if those suppositions have any likelihood, if God have given to falsehood so many characters of truth, if Satan be allowed to act his part so dexterously to seduce us, how can you assure yourself that God will not permit the father of falsehood to seduce you also by an apparition? How could you assure yourself afterward that he had not done it? Let us conclude, then, in regard to unbelievers of every kind, that if the ordinary means of grace be inadequate to the production of faith, extraordinary prodigies would be so too.

Let us proceed now, in brief, to prove, that motives to virtue are sufficient to induce men to be virtuous, as we have proved that motives of credibility are sufficient to confound the objections of infidels.

We believe, say you, the truths of religion: but a thousand snares are set for our innocence, and we are betrayed into immorality and guilt. Our minds seduce us. Examples hurry us away. The propensities of our own hearts pervert us. A new miracle would awake us from our indolence, and would reanimate our zeal. We have two things to answer.

1. We deny the effect which you expect from this apparition. This miracle will be wrought either seldom, or frequently. If it were wrought every day, it would, on that very account, lose all its efficacy; and as the Israelites, through a long habit of seeing miracles, were familiarized to them till they received no impressions from them, so it would be with you. One while they saw "waters turned into blood," another they beheld the "first-born of Egypt smitten;" now the sea

divided to open a passage for them, and then the heavens rained bread, and rivers flowed from a rock; "yet they tempted and provoked the most high God, and kept not his testimonies," Ps. lxxviii. 44. 51. 56. You yourselves every day see the heavens and the earth, the works of nature, and the properties of its elementary parts, a rich variety of divine workmanship, which, by proving the existence of the Creator, demand the homage that you ought to render to him; and as you see them without emotions of virtue, so would you narden your hearts against the remonstrances of the dead, were they frequently to rise, and exhort you to repentance.

Were the miracle wrought now and then, what you experience on other occasions would infallibly come to pass on this. You would be affected for a moment, but the impressions would wear off, and you would fall back into your former sins. The proofs of this conjecture are seen every day. People who have been often touched and penetrated at the sight of certain objects, have as often returned to their old habits when the power of the charm has abated. Have you never read the heart of an old miser at the funeral of one of his own age? Methinks I hear the old man's soliloquy: "I am full fourscore years of age, I have outlived the time which God usually allots to mankind, and I am now a pall-bearer at a funeral. The melancholy torches are lighted; the attendants are all in mourning, the grave yawns for its prey. For whom is all this funeral pomp? What part am I acting in this tragedy? Shall I ever attend another funeral, or is my own already preparing? Alas! if a few remains of life and motion tell me I live, the burying of my old friend assures me I must soon die. The wrinkles which disfigure my face; the weight of years that makes me stoop; the infirmities which impair my strength; the tottering of my enfeebled carcase; all second the voice of my deceased friend, and warn me of my approaching dissolution. Yet, what am I about? I am building houses, I am amassing money, I am pleasing myself with the hopes of adding to my capital this year, and of increasing my income the next. O fatal blindness! folly of a heart, which avarice has rendered insatiable! Henceforth I will think only about dying. I will go and order my funeral, put on my shroud, lie in my coffin, and render myself insensible to every care except that of "dying the death of the righteous," Numb. xxiii. 10. Thus talks the old man to himself, as he goes to the grave, and you think, perhaps, his life will resemble his reflections, and that he is going to become charitable, liberal, and disinterested. No, no, all his reflections will vanish with the objects that produced them, and as soon as he returns from the funeral, he will forget he is mortal. In like manner, the return of one from the dead would perhaps affect you on the spot; you would make many fine reflections, and form a thousand new resolutions: but, when the phantom had disappeared, your depravity would take its old course, and all your reflections would evaporate. This is our first answer.

2. We add, secondly. A man persuaded of the divinity of religion, a man who, not-

withstanding that persuasion, persists in impenitence, a man of this character has carried obduracy to so high a pitch, that it is not conceivable any new motives would alter him. He is already so guilty, that far from having any right to demand extraordinary means, he ought rather to expect to be deprived of the ordinary means, which he has both received and resisted. Let us dive into the conscience of this sinner; let us for a moment fathom the depth of the human heart; let us hear his detestable purposes. "I believe the truth of religion; I believe there is a God: God, I believe, sees all my actions, and from his penetration none of my thoughts are hid; I believe he holds the thunder in his hand, and one act of his will is sufficient to strike me dead; I believe these truths, and they are so solemn, that I ought to be influenced to my duty by them. However, it does not signify, I will sin, although I am in his immediate presence; I will "provoke the Lord to jealousy," as if I were "stronger than he," 1 Cor. x. 22, and the sword that hangs over my head, and hangs only by a single thread, shall convey no terror into my mind. I believe the truth of religion; God has for me, I think, "a love which passeth knowledge;" I believe he gave me my existence, and to him I owe my hands, my eyes, my motion, my life, my light; moreover, I believe he gave me his Son, his blood, his tenderest mercy and love. All these affecting objects ought indeed to change my heart, to make me blush for my ingratitude, and to induce me to render him love for love, life for life. But no; I will resist all these innumerable motives, I will affront my benefactor, I will wound that heart that is filled with pity for me, I will "crucify the Lord of glory afresh," Heb. vi. 6. If his love trouble me, I will forget it. If my conscience reproach me, I will stifle it, and sin with boldness. I believe the truth of religion; there is, I believe, a heaven, a presence of God in which there "is a fulness of joy and pleasure for evermore," Ps. xvi. 2. The idea of felicity consummate in glory ought, I must own, to make me superior to worldly pleasures, and I ought to prefer "the fountain of living waters" before my own "broken cisterns that can hold no water," Jer. ii. 13, but it does not signify, I will sacrifice "the things that are not seen to the things that are seen," 2 Cor. iv. 18, the glorious delights of virtue to "the pleasures of sin," and the "exceeding and eternal weight of glory," Heb. xi. 25; 2 Cor. iv. 17, to momentary temporal pursuits. I believe the truth of religion; there is, I believe, a hell for the impenitent, there are "chains of darkness, a worm that dieth not, a fire that is never quenched," 2 Pet. ii. 4; Mark ix. 44. In hell, I believe, there are pains far more excruciating than the most violent agonies here, worse than the gout and the stone, less tolerable than the sufferings of a galley-slave, the breaking of a criminal on the wheel, or the tearing asunder of a martyr with red-hot pincers of iron. I believe these things; and I am, I know, in the case of them, against whom these punishments are denounced: freedom from all these is set before me, and I may, if I will, avoid "the bottomless abyss," Rev. ix. 1, but, no matter, I will

precipitate myself headlong into the horrible gulf. A small pittance of reputation, a very little glory, an inconsiderable sum of money, a few empty and deceitful pleasures, will serve to conceal those perils, the bare ideas of which would terrify my imagination, and subvert my designs. Devouring worm! chains of darkness! everlasting burnings! infernal spirits! fire! sulphur! smoke! remorse! rage! madness! despair! idea, frightful idea of a thousand years, of ten thousand years, of ten millions of years, of endless revolutions of absorbing eternity! You shall make no impressions on my mind. It shall be my fortitude to dare you, my glory to affront you."

Thus reasons the sinner who believes, but who lives in impenitence. This is the heart that wants a new miracle to affect it. But, I demand, can you conceive any prodigy that can soften a soul so hard? I ask, If so many motives be useless, can you conceive any others more effectual? Would you have God attempt to gain an ascendancy over you by means more influential? Would you have him give you more than immortality, more than his Son, more than heaven? Would you have him present objects to you more frightful than hell and eternity?

We know what you will reply. You will say, We talk fancifully, and fight with shadows of our own creation. If the sinner, say you, would but think of these things, they would certainly convert him; but he forgets them, and therefore he is more to be pitied for his distraction, than to be blamed for his insensibility. Were a person to rise from the dead, to recall, and to fix his attention, he would awake from his stupor. Idle sophism! As if distraction, amidst numberless objects that demand his attention, were not the highest degree of insensibility itself. But why do I speak of distraction? I have now before me clear, full, and decisive evidence, that even while sinners have all those objects in full view, they derive no sanctifying influence from them. Yes, I have made the experiment, and consequently my evidence is undeniable. I see that all the motives of love, fear, and horror, united, are too weak to convert one obstinate sinner. My evidences, my brethren, will you believe it? are yourselves. Contradict me, refute me. Am I not now presenting all these motives to you? Do not speak of distraction, for I look at you, and you hear me. I present all these motives to you: this God, the witness, and judge of your hearts; these treasures of mercy, which he opens in your favour; this Jesus, who, amid the most excruciating agonies, expired for you. To you we open the kingdom of heaven, and draw back all the veils that hide futurity from you. To you, to you we present the devils with their rage, hell with its torments, eternity with its horrors. We conjure you this moment, by the solemnity of all these motives, to return to God. I repeat it again, you cannot pretend distraction now, you cannot pretend forgetfulness now, nor can you avoid today, either the glory of conversion, or the shame of an impenitence that resists the most solemn and pathetic objects. But is it not true that none of these motives touch you? I

mean, they do not reform you. For it does not argue any piety, if, after we have meditated on a subject, chosen our sentiments and our expressions, and, with an assemblage of Scripture-imagery, covered the pleasures of paradise, and the horrors of hell, with colouring the best adapted to exhibit their nature, and to affect yours; I say, it requires no pity to feel a moving of the animal spirits, a slight emotion of the heart. You are just as much affected with a representation, which, you know, is fiction, and exhibited by actors in borrowed guise; and you do us very little honour, by giving us what you bestow on theatrical declaimers. But is any one of you so affected with these motives, as to go, without delay, to make restitution of ill-gotten gain, to break off an impure connexion? I ask again, Can you contradict me? Can you refute me? Alas! we know what a sermon can do, and we have reason for affirming, that no known motives will change some of our hearts, although we do attend to them; and for inferring this just consequence, a thousand new motives would be as useless as the rest.

In this manner we establish the truth, thus we prove the sufficiency of the Christian religion, thus we justify Providence against the unjust reproaches of infidel and impenitent sinners, and thus, in spite of ourselves, we trace out our own condemnation. For, since we continue some of us in unbelief, and others of us in impenitence, we are driven either to tax God with employing means inadequate to the ends of instruction and conversion, or to charge the guilt of not improving them on ourselves. We have seen that our disorders do not flow from the first; but that they actually do proceed from the last of these causes. Unto thee, then, "O Lord! belongeth righteousness; but unto us confusion of faces this day," Dan. ix. 7.

Here we would finish this discourse, had we not engaged at first to answer a difficult question, which naturally arises from our text, and from the manner in which we have discussed it. Could the Jews, to whom the state of the soul after death was very little known, be numbered among those who would "not be persuaded though one rose from the dead?" We have two answers to this seeming difficulty.

1. We could deny that notion which creates this difficulty, and affirm, that the state of the soul after death was much better understood by the Jews than you suppose. We could quote many passages from the Old Testament, where the doctrines of heaven and of hell, of judgment and of the resurrection, are revealed; and we could show, that the Jews were so persuaded of the truth of these doctrines, that they considered the Sadducees, who doubted of them, as sectaries distinguished from the rest of the nation.

But as our strait limits will not allow us to do justice to these articles by fully discussing them, we will take another method of answering the objection.

2. The Jews had as good evidence of the divine inspiration of the Old Testament as Christians have of the New. So that it might as truly be said to a Jew, as to a Christian, If thou resist the ordinary evidence of the truth of revelation, "neither wouldest thou be

persuaded though one rose from the dead" to attest it.

It is questionable, whether the Jewish revelation explained the state of souls after death so clearly that Jesus Christ had sufficient grounds for his proposition. But were we to grant what this question implies; were we to suppose, that the state of souls after death was as much unknown as our querist pretends; it would be still true, that it was incongruous with the justice and wisdom of God to employ new means of conversion in favour of a Jew, who resisted Moses and the prophets. Our proof follows.

Moses and the prophets taught sublime notions of God. They represented him as a Being supremely wise, and supremely powerful. Moreover, Moses and the prophets expressly declared, that God, of whom they gave some sublime ideas, would display his power, and his wisdom, to render those completely happy who obeyed his laws, and them completely miserable who durst affront his authority. A Jew, who was persuaded on the one hand, that Moses and the prophets spoke on the part of God; and, on the other, that Moses and the prophets, whose mission was unsuspected, declared that God would render those completely happy who obeyed his laws, and them completely miserable who durst affront his authority; a Jew, who, in spite of this persuasion, persisted in impenitence, was so obdurate, that his conversion, by means of any new motives, was inconceivable; at least, he was so culpable, that he could not equitably require God to employ new means for his conversion.

What does the gospel say more on the punishments which God will inflict on the wicked, than Moses and the prophets said (I speak on the supposition of those who deny any particular explications of the doctrine of immortality in the Old Testament.) What did Jesus Christ teach more than Moses and the prophets taught? He entered into a more particular detail; he told his hearers, there was "weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth; a worm that died not, and a fire that was not quenched." But the general thesis, that God would display his attributes in punishing the wicked, and in rewarding the good, this general thesis was as well known to the Jews as it is to Christians; and this general thesis is a sufficient ground for the words of the text.

The most that can be concluded from this objection is, not that the proposition of Jesus Christ was not verified in regard to the Jews, but that it is much more verified in regard to Christians; not that the Jews, who resisted Moses and the prophets, were not very guilty, but that Christians, who resist the gospel, are much more guilty. We are fully convinced of the truth of this assertion. We wish your minds were duly affected with it. To this purpose we proceed to the application.

First, We address ourselves to infidels: O that you would for once seriously enter into the reasonable disposition of desiring to know and to obey the truth! At least, examine, and see. If, after all your pains, you can find nothing credible in the Christian religion, we own we are strangers to the human heart, and we must give you up, as belonging to a species of

beings different from ours. But what irritates us is to see, that among the many infidels, who are endeavouring to destroy the vitals of religion, there is scarcely one to be found whose erroneous principles do not originate in a bad heart. It is the heart that disbelieves; it is the heart which must be attacked; it is the heart that must be convinced.

People doubt because they will doubt.—Dreadful disposition! Can nothing discover thine enormity? What is infidelity good for? By what charm does it lull the soul into a willing ignorance of its origin and end? If, during the short space of a mortal life, the love of independence tempt us to please ourselves with joining his monstrous party, how dear will the union cost us when we come to die!

O! were my tongue dipped in the gall of celestial displeasure, I would describe to you the state of a man expiring in the cruel uncertainties of unbelief; who sees, in spite of himself, yea, in spite of himself, the truth of that religion, which he has endeavoured to no purpose to eradicate from his heart. Ah! see! every thing contributes to trouble him now. "I am dying—I despair of recovering—physicians have given me over—the sighs and tears of my friends are useless; yet they have nothing else to bestow—medicines take no effect—consultations come to nothing—alas! not you—not my little fortune—the whole world cannot cure me—I must die—It is not a preacher—it is not a religious book—it is not a trifling disclaimer—it is death itself that preaches to me—I feel, I know not what, shivering cold in my blood—I am in a dying sweat—my feet, my hands, every part of my body is wasted—I am more like a corpse than a living body—I am rather dead than alive—I must die—Whither am I going? What will become of me? What will become of my body? My God! what a frightful spectacle! I see it! The horrid torches—the dismal shroud—the coffin—the pall—the tolling bell—the subterranean abode—carcases—worms—putrefaction—What will become of my soul? I am ignorant of its destiny—I am tumbling headlong into eternal night—my infidelity tells me my soul is nothing but a portion of subtle matter—another world a vision—immortality a fancy—But yet, I feel, I know not what that troubles my infidelity—annihilation, terrible as it is, would appear tolerable to me, were not the ideas of heaven and hell to present themselves to me, in spite of myself—But I see that heaven, that immortal mansion of glory shut against me—I see it at an immense distance—I see it at a place, which my crimes forbid me to enter—I see hell—hell, which I have ridiculed—it opens under my feet—I hear the horrible groans of the damned—the smoke of the bottomless pit chokes my words, and wraps my thoughts in suffocating darkness."

Such is the infidel on a dying bed. This is not an imaginary fight; it is not an arbitrary invention, it is a description of what we see every day in the fatal visits, to which our ministry engages us, and to which God seems to call us to be sorrowful witnesses of his displeasure and vengeance. This is what infidelity comes to. This is what infidelity is good for. Thus most skeptics die, although, while they live, they pretend to free themselves from

vulgar errors. I ask again, What charms are there in a state that has such dreadful consequences? How is it possible for men, rational men, to carry their madness to such an excess?

Without doubt, it would excite many murmurs in this auditory; certainly we should be taxed with strangely exceeding the matter, were we to venture to say, that many of our hearers are capable of carrying their corruption to as great a length as I have described. Well! we will not say so. We know your delicacy too well. But allow us to give you a task. We propose a problem to the examination of each of you.

Who, of two men, appears most odious to you? One resolves to refuse nothing to his senses, to gratify all his wishes without restraint, and to procure all the pleasures that a worldly life can afford. Only one thought disturbs him, the thought of religion. The idea of an offended Benefactor, of an angry Supreme Judge, of eternal salvation neglected, of hell contemned; each of these ideas poisons the pleasures which he wishes to pursue. In order to conciliate his desires with his remorse, he determines to try to get rid of the thought of religion. Thus he becomes an obstinate atheist, for the sake of becoming a peaceable libertine, and he cannot sin quietly till he has flattered himself into a belief that religion is chimerical. This is the case of the first man.

The second man resolves to refuse nothing to his sensual appetites, to gratify all his wishes without restraint, and to procure all the pleasures that a worldly life can afford. The same thought agitates him, the thought of religion. The idea of an offended Benefactor, of an angry Supreme Judge, of an eternal salvation neglected, of hell contemned, each of these ideas poisons the pleasures which he wishes to pursue. He takes a different method of conciliating his desires with his remorse. He does not persuade himself that there is no benefactor; but he renders himself insensible to his benefits.—He does not flatter himself into the disbelief of a Supreme Judge; but he dares his majestic authority. He does not think salvation a chimeric; but he hardens his heart against its attractive charms. He does not question whether there be a hell; but he ridicules its torments. This is the case of the second man. The task, which we take the liberty to assign you, is to examine, but to examine coolly and deliberately, which of these two men is the most guilty.

Would to God our hearers had no other interest in the examination of this question than what compassion for the misery of others gave them! May the many false Christians, who live in impenitence, and who felicitate themselves for not living in infidelity, be sincerely affected, dismayed, and ashamed of giving occasion for the question, whether they be not more odious themselves than those whom they account the most odious of mankind, I mean skeptics and atheists! May each of us be enabled to improve the means which God has employed to save us! May our faith and obedience be crowned! and may we be admitted with Lazarus into the bosom of the Father of the faithful! The Lord hear our

prayers! To him be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

## SERMON XXIV.

### THE ADVANTAGES OF REVELATION.

1 COR. i. 21.

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

It is a celebrated saying of Tertullian, my brethren, that every mechanic among Christians knew God, and could make him known to others. Tertullian spoke thus by way of contrast to the conduct of the philosopher Thales towards Cræsus the king. Cræsus asked this philosopher, What is God? Thales (by the way, some relate the same story of Simonides,) required one day to consider the matter, before he gave his answer. When one day was gone, Cræsus asked him again, What is God? Thales entreated two days to consider. When two days were expired, the question was proposed to him again; he besought the king to grant him four days. After four days he required eight: after eight, sixteen; and in this manner he continued to procrastinate so long, that the king, impatient at his delay, desired to know the reason of it. O king! said Thales, be not astonished that I defer my answer. It is a question in which my insufficient reason is lost. The oftener I ask myself, What is God? the more incapable I find myself of answering. New difficulties arise every moment, and my knowledge diminishes as my inquiries increase.

Tertullian hereupon takes an occasion to triumph over the philosophers of paganism, and to make an eulogium on Christianity. Thales, the chief of the wise men of Greece; Thales, who has added the cruidion of Egypt to the wisdom of Greece; Thales cannot inform the king what God is! The meanest Christian knows more than he. "What man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of a man which is in him: even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God," 1 Cor. ii. 11. The Christian has "more understanding than all his teachers," according to the Psalmist, Ps. cxix. 99; for, as far as the light of revelation is above that of nature, so far is the meanest Christian above the wisest heathen philosopher.

Of this superiority of knowledge we intend to treat to-day. This St. Paul had in view in the first chapters of this epistle, and particularly in the text. But in order to a thorough knowledge of the apostle's meaning, we must explain his terms, and mark the occasion of them. With this explication we begin.

Greece, of which Corinth was a considerable city, was one of those countries which honoured the sciences, and which the sciences honoured in return. It was the opinion there, that the prosperity of a state depended as much on the culture of reason, and on the establishment of literature, as on a well disciplined army, or an advantageous trade; and

that neither opulence nor grandeur were of any value in the hands of men who were destitute of learning and good sense. In this they were worthy of emulation and praise. At the same time, it was very deplorable that their love of learning should often be an occasion of their ignorance. Nothing is more common in academies and universities (indeed it is an imperfection almost inseparable from them) than to see each science alternately in vogue; each branch of literature becomes fashionable in its turn, and some doctor presides over reason and good sense, so that sense and reason are nothing without his approbation. In St. Paul's time, philosophy was in fashion in Greece; not a sound chaste philosophy, that always took reason for its guide (a kind of science, which has made greater progress in our times than in all preceding ages;) but a philosophy full of prejudices, subject to the authority of the heads of a sect which was then most in vogue, expressed politely, and to use the language of St. Paul, proposed "with the words which man's wisdom teacheth," 1 Cor. ii. 13. Without this philosophy, and this eloquence, people were despised by the Greeks. The apostles were very little versed in these sciences. The gospel they preached was formed upon another plan; and they who preached it were destitute of these ornaments: accordingly they were treated by the far greater part with contempt. The want of these was a great offence to the Corinthians. They could not comprehend, that a doctrine, which came from heaven, could be inferior to human sciences. St. Paul intended in this epistle to guard the Corinthians against this objection, and to make an apology for the gospel, and for his ministry. The text is an abridgment of his apology.

The occasion of the words of the text is a key to the sense of each expression; it explains those terms of the apostle which need explanation, as well as the meaning of the whole proposition: "After that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe."

The *wisdom*, or the *learning*, of which St. Paul speaks, is philosophy. This, I think, is incontestable. The first Epistle to the Corinthians, I grant, was written to two sorts of Christians, to some who came from the profession of Judaism, and to others who came from the profession of paganism. Some commentators doubt whether, by the *wise*, of whom St. Paul often speaks in this chapter, we are to understand Jews or pagan philosophers: whether by *wisdom*, we are to understand the system of the synagogue, or the system of the porch. They are inclined to take the words in the former sense, because the Jews usually called their divines and philosophers, *wise men*, and gave the name of *wisdom* to every branch of knowledge. Theology they called, *wisdom concerning God*; natural philosophy they called, *wisdom concerning nature*; astronomy they called, *wisdom concerning the stars*; and so of the rest. But, although we grant the truth of this remark, we deny the application of it here. It seems very clear to us, that St. Paul, throughout this chapter, gave the Pagan philosophers the appellation *wise*, which they affected.—

The verse, that follows the text, makes this very plain: "the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom:" that is to say, the Greeks are as earnestly desirous of philosophy, as the Jews of miracles. By *wisdom*, in the text, then, we are to understand philosophy. But the more fully to comprehend the meaning of St. Paul, we must define this philosophy agreeably to his ideas. Philosophy, then, "is that science of God, and of the chief good, which is grounded, not on the testimony of any superior intelligence, but on the speculations and discoveries of our own reason."

There are two more expressions in our text, that need explaining; "the foolishness of preaching," and "them that believe:" "after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." *They who believe*, are a class of people, who take a method of knowing God, opposite to that of philosophers. Philosophers determine to derive all their notions of God, and of the chief good, from their own speculations. Believers, on the contrary, convinced of the imperfection of their reason, and of the narrow limits of their knowledge, derive their religious ideas from the testimony of a superior intelligence. The superior intelligence, whom they take for their guide, is JESUS CHRIST; and the testimony, to which they submit, is the gospel. Our meaning will be clearly conveyed by a remarkable passage of Tertullian, who shows the difference between him, whom St. Paul calls *wise*, and him whom he calls a *believer*. On the famous words of St. Paul to the Colossians, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit," chap. ii. 8, says this father; "St. Paul had seen at Athens that human wisdom, which curtaileth and disguiseth the truth. He had seen, that some heretics, endeavoured to mix that wisdom with the gospel. But what communion hath Jerusalem with Athens? the church with the academy? heretics with true Christians? Solomon's porch is our porch. We have no need of speculation, and discussion, after we have known Jesus Christ and his gospel. When we believe we ask nothing more; for it is an article of our faith, that he who believes, needs no other ground of his faith than the gospel." Thus speaks Tertullian.

But why does St. Paul call the gospel, "the foolishness of preaching?" "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." Besides, he calls it, "the foolishness of God: the foolishness of God is wiser than men," ver. 25. And he adds, ver. 27, "God hath chosen the foolish thing of the world to confound the wise."

It is usual with St. Paul, and the style is not peculiar to him, to call an object not by a name descriptive of its real nature, but by a name expressive of the notions that are formed of it in the world, and of the effects that are produced by it. Now, the gospel being considered by Jews and heathens as a foolish system, St. Paul calls it, *foolishness*. That this was the apostle's meaning two passages prove. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are *FOOLISHNESS UNTO HIM*," chap. ii. 14. You see, then, in

what sense the gospel is *foolishness*; it is so called, because it appears so to a *natural man*. Again, "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the GREEKS FOOLISHNESS." You see in what sense the gospel is called *foolishness*; it is because the doctrine of Jesus Christ crucified, which is the great doctrine of the gospel, was treated as *foolishness*. The history of the preaching of the apostles fully justifies our comment. The doctrines of the gospel, in general, and that of a God-man crucified, in particular, were reputed foolish. "We are accounted *fools*," says Justin Martyr, "for giving such an eminent rank to a crucified man."\* "The wise men of the world," says St. Augustine, "insult us, and ask, Where is your reason and intelligence, when you worship a man who was crucified?"†

These two words, *wisdom* and *foolishness* being thus explained, I think we may easily understand the whole text. "After that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe." To *know God* is a short phrase, expressive of an idea of the virtues necessary to salvation; it is equal to the term *theology*, that is, science concerning God; a body of doctrine, containing all the truths which are necessary to salvation. Agreeably to this, St. Paul explains the phrase to *know God*, by the expression, *to be saved*.—"After that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe;" and, a little lower, what he had called "knowing God," he calls "knowing the mind of the Lord," chap. ii. 16, that is, knowing that plan of salvation which God has formed in regard to man.

When therefore the apostle said, "The world by wisdom knew not God," he meant, that the heathens had not derived from the light of nature all the help necessary to enable them to form adequate notions of God, and of a worship suited to his perfections. Above all, he meant to teach us, that it was impossible for the greatest philosophers to discover by the light of nature all the truths that compose the system of the gospel, and particularly the doctrine of a crucified Redeemer. The accomplishment of the great mystery of redemption depended on the pure will of God, and, consequently, it could be known only by revelation. With this view, he calls the mystery of revelation "things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, but which God hath revealed by his Spirit," ver. 9, 10.

The apostle says, "After the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God to save believers by the foolishness of preaching." That is to say, since the mere systems of reason were eventually insufficient for the salvation of mankind, and since it was impossible that their speculations should obtain the true knowledge of God, God took another way to instruct them: he revealed by preaching the gospel, what the light of nature could not discover, so that the system of Jesus Christ, and

his apostles, supplied all that was wanting in the systems of the ancient philosophers.

But it is not in relation to the ancient philosophers only that we mean to consider the proposition in our text; we will examine it also in reference to modern philosophy. Our philosophers know more than all those of Greece knew; but their science, which is of unspeakable advantage, while it contains itself within its proper sphere, becomes a source of errors when it is extended beyond it. Human reason now lodges itself in new intrenchments, when it refuses to submit to the faith. It even puts on new armour to attack it, after it has invented new methods of self-defence. Under pretence that natural science has made greater progress, revelation is despised. Under pretence that modern notions of God the Creator are purer than those of the ancients, the yoke of God the Redeemer is shaken off. We are going to employ the remaining part of this discourse in justifying the proposition of St. Paul in the sense that we have given it: we are going to endeavour to prove, that revealed religion has advantages infinitely superior to natural religion: that the greatest geniuses are incapable of discovering by their own reason all the truths necessary to salvation: and that it displays the goodness of God, not to abandon us to the uncertainties of our own wisdom, but to make us the rich present of revelation.

We will enter into this discussion by placing on the one side, a philosopher, contemplating the works of nature; on the other, a disciple of Jesus Christ, receiving the doctrines of revelation. To each we will give four subjects to examine: the attributes of God; the nature of man; the means of appeasing the remorse of conscience; and a future state. From their judgments on each of these subjects, evidence will arise of the superior worth of that revelation, which some minute philosophers affect to despise, and above which they prefer that rough draught which they sketch out by their own learned speculations.

I. Let us consider a disciple of natural religion, and a disciple of revealed religion, meditating on the *attributes of God*. When the disciple of natural religion considers the symmetry of this universe; when he observes that admirable uniformity, which appears in the succession of seasons, and in the constant rotation of night and day; when he remarks the exact motions of the heavenly bodies; the flux and reflux of the sea, so ordered that billows, which swell into mountains, and seem to threaten the world with a universal deluge, break away on the shore, and respect on the beach the command of the Creator, who *said* to the sea, "hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed," Job xxxviii. 11; when he attends to all these marvellous works, he will readily conclude, that the Author of nature is a being powerful and wise. But when he observes winds, tempests and earthquakes, which seem to threaten the reduction of nature to its primitive chaos; when he sees the sea overflow its banks, and burst the enormous moles, that the industry of mankind had raised; his speculations will be perplexed, he will imagine he sees characters

\* Apol. Secund.

† Sermon. viii. de verbo Apost.

of imperfection among so many proofs of creative perfection and power.

When he thinks that God, having enriched the habitable world with innumerable productions of infinite worth to the inhabitant, has placed man here as a sovereign in a superb palace; when he considers how admirably God has proportioned the divers parts of the creation to the construction of the human body, the air to the lungs, aliments to the different humours of the body, the medium by which objects are rendered visible to the eyes, that by which sounds are communicated to the ears; when he remarks how God has connected man with his own species, and not with animals of another kind; how he has distributed talents, so that some requiring the assistance of others, all should be mutually united together; how he has bound men together by visible ties, so that one cannot see another in pain without a sympathy that inclines him to relieve him: when the disciple of natural religion meditates on these grand subjects, he concludes that the Author of nature is a beneficent being. But when he sees the innumerable miseries to which men are subject; when he finds that every creature which contributes to support, contributes at the same time to destroy us; when he thinks that the air, which assists respiration, conveys epidemical diseases, and imperceptible poisons; that aliments which nourish us are often our bane; that the animals that serve us often turn savage against us; when he observes the perfidiousness of society, the mutual industry of mankind in tormenting each other; the arts which they invent to deprive one another of life; when he attempts to reckon up the innumerable maladies that consume us; when he considers death, which bows the loftiest heads, dissolves the firmest cements, and subverts the best founded fortunes: when he makes these reflections, he will be apt to doubt, whether it be goodness, or the contrary attribute, that inclines the Author of our being to give us existence. When the disciple of natural religion reads those reverses of fortune of which history furnishes a great many examples; when he sees tyrants fall from a pinnacle of grandeur; wicked men often punished by their own wickedness; the avaricious punished by the objects of their avarice; the ambitious by those of their ambition; the voluptuous by those of their voluptuousness; when he perceives that the laws of virtue are so essential to public happiness, that without them society would become a banditti, at least, that society is more or less happy or miserable, according to its looser or closer attachment to virtue; when he considers all these cases, he will probably conclude, that the Author of this universe is a just and holy Being. But, when he sees tyranny established, vice enthroned, humility in confusion, pride wearing a crown, and love to holiness sometimes exposing people to many and intolerable calamities; he will not be able to justify God, amidst the darkness in which his equity is involved in the government of the world.

But, of all these mysteries, can one be proposed which the gospel does not unfold; or, at least, is there one on which it does not give us some principles which are sufficient to concili-

ate it with the perfections of the Creator, how opposite soever it may seem?

Do the disorders of the world puzzle the disciple of natural religion, and produce difficulties in his mind? With the principles of the gospel I can solve them all. When it is remembered, that this world has been defiled by the sin of man, and that he is therefore an object of divine displeasure; when the principle is admitted, that the world is not now what it was when it came out of the hands of God; and that, in comparison with its pristine state, it is only a heap of ruins, the truly magnificent, but actually ruinous heap of an edifice of incomparable beauty, the rubbish of which is far more proper to excite our grief for the loss of its primitive grandeur, than to suit our present wants. When these reflections are made, can we find any objections, in the disorders of the world, against the wisdom of our Creator?

Are the miseries of man, and is the fatal necessity of death, in contemplation? With the principles of the gospel I solve the difficulties which these sad objects produce in the mind of the disciple of natural religion. If the principles of Christianity be admitted, if we allow that the afflictions of good men are profitable to them, and that, in many cases, prosperity would be fatal to them: if we grant, that the present is a transitory state, and that this momentary life will be succeeded by an immortal state; if we recollect the many similar truths which the gospel abundantly declares; can we find, in human miseries, and in the necessity of dying, objections against the goodness of the Creator?

Do the prosperities of bad men, and the adversities of the good, confuse our ideas of God? With the principles of the gospel I can remove all the difficulties which these different conditions produce in the mind of the disciple of natural religion. If the principles of the gospel be admitted, if we be persuaded that the tyrant, whose prosperity astonishes us, fulfils the counsel of God; if ecclesiastical history assures us that Herods and Pilates themselves contributed to the establishment of that very Christianity which they meant to destroy; especially, if we admit a state of future rewards and punishments; can the obscurity in which Providence has been pleased to wrap up some of its designs, raise doubts about the justice of the Creator?

In regard then to the first object of contemplation, the perfection of the nature of God, revealed religion is infinitely superior to natural religion; the disciple of the first religion is infinitely wiser than the pupil of the last.

II. Let us consider these two disciples examining *the nature of man* and endeavouring to know themselves. The disciple of natural religion cannot know mankind: he cannot perfectly understand the nature, the obligations, the duration of man.

1. The disciple of natural religion can only imperfectly know the *nature* of man, the difference of the two substances of which he is composed. His reason, indeed, may speculate the matter, and he may perceive that there is no relation between motion and thought, between the dissolution of a few fibres and violent sensations of pain, between an agita-



tion of humours and profound reflections; he may infer from two different effects, that there ought to be two different causes, a cause of motion, and a cause of sensation, a cause of agitating humours, and a cause of reflecting, that there is a body, and that there is a spirit.

But, in my opinion, those philosophers, who are best acquainted with the nature of man, cannot account for two difficulties, that are proposed to them, when, on the mere principles of reason, they affirm, that man is composed of the two substances of matter and mind. I ask, first, Do you so well understand matter, are your ideas of it so complete, that you can affirm, for certain, it is capable of nothing more than this, or that? Are you sure it implies a contradiction to affirm, it has one property which has escaped your observation? and, consequently, can you actually demonstrate, that the essence of matter is incompatible with thought? Since, when you cannot discover the union of an attribute with a subject, you instantly conclude, that two attributes, which seem to you to have no relation, suppose two different subjects: and, since you conclude, that extension and thought compose two different subjects, body and soul, because you can discover no natural relation between extent and thought: if I discover a third attribute, which appears to me entirely unconnected with both extent and thought, I shall have a right, in my turn, to admit three subjects in man; matter, which is the subject of extent; mind, which is the subject of thought; and a third subject, which belongs to the attribute that seems to me to have no relation to either matter or mind. Now I do know such an attribute; but I do not know to which of your two subjects I ought to refer it: I mean sensation. I find it in my nature, and I experience it every hour; but I am altogether at a loss whether I ought to attribute it to body or to spirit. I perceive no more natural and necessary relation between sensation and motion, than between sensation and thought. There are, then, on your principle, three substances in man: one, the substratum, which is the subject of extension; another, which is the subject of thought; and a third, which is the subject of sensation: or rather, I suspect there is only one substance in man, which is known to me very imperfectly, to which all these attributes belong, and which are united together, although I am not able to discover their relation.

Revealed religion removes these difficulties, and decides the question. It tells us that there are two beings in man, and, if I may express myself so, two different men, the material man, and the immaterial man. The Scriptures speak on these principles thus: "The dust shall return to the earth as it was;" this is the material man: "The spirit shall return to God who gave it," Eccl. xii. 7; this is the immaterial man. "Fear not them which kill the body," that is to say, the material man: "fear him which is able to destroy the soul," Matt. x. 28, that is the immaterial man. "We are willing to be absent from the body," that is, from the material man; and to be present with the Lord," 2 Cor. v. 8, that is to say, to have the immaterial man disembodied.

"They stoned Stephen," that is, the material man: "calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," Acts vii. 59, that is to say, receive the immaterial man.

2. The disciple of natural religion can obtain only an imperfect knowledge of the obligations, or duties of man. Natural religion may indeed conduct him to a certain point, and tell him that he ought to love his benefactor, and various similar maxims. But is natural religion, think you, sufficient to account for that contrariety, of which every man is conscious, that opposition between inclination and obligation? A very solid argument, I grant, in favour of moral rectitude, arises from observing, that to whatever degree a man may carry his sin, whatever efforts he may make to eradicate those seeds of virtue from his heart which nature has sown there, he cannot forbear venerating virtue, and recoiling at vice. This is certainly a proof that the Author of our being meant to forbid vice, and to enjoin virtue. But is there no room for complaint? Is there nothing specious in the following objections? As, in spite of all my endeavours to destroy virtuous dispositions, I cannot help respecting virtue; you infer, that the Author of my being intended I should be virtuous: so, as in spite of all my endeavours to eradicate vice, I cannot help loving vice, have I not reason for inferring, in my turn, that the Author of my being designed I should be vicious; or, at least, that he cannot justly impute guilt to me for performing those actions which proceed from some principles that were born with me? Is there no show of reason in this famous sophism? Reconcile the God of nature with the God of religion. Explain how the God of religion can forbid what the God of nature inspires; and how he who follows those dictates, which the God of nature inspires, can be punished for so doing by the God of religion.

The gospel unfolds this mystery. It attributes this seed of corruption to the depravity of nature. It attributes the respect we feel for virtue to the remains of the image of God in which we were formed, and which can never be entirely effaced. Because we were born in sin, the gospel concludes that we ought to apply all our attentive endeavours to eradicate the seeds of corruption. And, because the image of the Creator is partly erased from our hearts, the gospel concludes that we ought to give ourselves wholly to the retracing of it, and so to answer the excellence of our extraction.

3. A disciple of natural religion can obtain only an imperfect knowledge of the duration of man, whether his soul be immortal, or whether it be involved in the ruin of matter. Reason, I allow, advances some solid arguments in proof of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. For what necessity is there for supposing that the soul, which is a spiritual, indivisible, and immaterial being, that constitutes a whole, and is a distinct being, although united to a portion of matter, should cease to exist when its union with the body is dissolved? A positive act of the Creator is necessary to the annihilation of a substance. The annihilating of a being that

subsists, requires an act of power similar to that which gave it existence at first. Now, far from having any ground to believe that God will cause his power to intervene to annihilate our souls, every thing that we know persuades us, that he himself has engraven characters of immortality on them, and that he will preserve them for ever. Enter into thy heart, frail creature! see, feel, consider those grand ideas, those immortal designs, that thirst for existing, which a thousand ages cannot quench, and in these lines and points behold the finger of the Creator writing a promise of immortality to thee. But, how solid soever these arguments may be, however evident in themselves, and striking to a philosopher, they are objectionable, because they are not popular, but above vulgar minds, to whom the bare terms, spirituality and existence, are entirely barbarous, and convey no meaning at all.

Moreover, the union between the operations of the soul, and those of the body, is so close, that all the philosophers in the world cannot certainly determine, whether the operations of the body ceasing, the operations of the soul do not cease with them. I see a body in perfect health, the mind therefore is sound. The same body is disordered, and the mind is disconcerted with it. The brain is filled, and the soul is instantly confused. The brisker the circulation of the blood is, the quicker the ideas of the mind are, and the more extensive its knowledge. At length death comes, and dissolves all the parts of the body; and how difficult is it to persuade one's self that the soul, which was affected with every former motion of the body, will not be dissipated by its entire dissolution!

Are they the vulgar only to whom the philosophical arguments of the immortality of the soul appear deficient in evidence? Do not superior geniuses require, at least an explanation of what rank you assign to beasts, on the principle that nothing capable of ideas and conceptions can be involved in a dissolution of matter? Nobody would venture to affirm now, in an assembly of philosophers, what was some time ago maintained with great warmth, that beasts are mere self-moving machines. Experience seems to demonstrate the falsity of the metaphysical reasonings which have been proposed in favour of this opinion; and we cannot observe the actions of beasts without being inclined to infer one of these two consequences: either the spirit of man is mortal, like his body, or the souls of beasts are immortal like those of mankind.

Revelation dissipates all our obscurities, and teaches us clearly, and without any may-be, that God wills our immortality. It carries our thoughts forward to a future state, as to a fixed period, whither the greatest part of the promises of God tend. It commands us, indeed, to consider all the blessings of this life, the ailments that nourish us, the rays which enlighten us, the air we breathe, sceptres, crowns, and kingdoms, as effects of the liberality of God, and as grounds of our gratitude. But, at the same time, it requires us to surmount the most magnificent earthly objects. It commands us to consider light, air, and ali-

ments, crowns, sceptres and kingdoms, as unfit to constitute the felicity of a soul created in the image of the blessed God, 1 Tim. i. 11, and with whom the blessed God has formed a close and intimate union. It assures us, that an age of life cannot fill the wish of duration, which it is the noble prerogative of an immortal soul to form. It does not ground the doctrine of immortality on metaphysical speculations, nor on complex arguments, uninvestigable by the greatest part of mankind, and which always leave some doubts in the minds of the ablest philosophers. The gospel grounds the doctrine on the only principle that can support the weight with which it is encumbered. The principle which I mean is the will of the Creator, who having created our souls at first by an act of his will, can either eternally preserve them, or absolutely annihilate them, whether they be material or spiritual, mortal or immortal, by nature. Thus the disciple of revealed religion does not float between doubt and assurance, hope and fear, as the disciple of nature does. He is not obliged to leave the most interesting question that poor mortals can agitate undecided; whether their souls perish with their bodies, or survive their ruins. He does not say, as Cyrus said to his children: "I know not how to persuade myself that the soul lives in this mortal body, and ceases to be when the body expires, I am more inclined to think, that it acquires after death more penetration and purity."\* He does not say, as Socrates said to his judges: "And now we are going, I to suffer death, and you to enjoy life. God only knows which is best."† He does not say, as Cicero said, speaking on this important article: "I do not pretend to say, that what I affirm is as infallible as the Pythian oracle, I speak only by conjecture."‡ The disciple of revelation, authorized by the testimony of Jesus Christ, who "hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel," 2 Tim. i. 10, boldly affirms, "Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. We, that are in this tabernacle, do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him, against that day," 2 Cor. iv. 16; v. 4; and 2 Tim. i. 12.

III. We are next to consider the disciple of natural religion, and the disciple of revealed religion, *at the tribunal of God as penitents soliciting for pardon.* The former cannot find, even by *feeling after it*, in natural religion, according to the language of St. Paul, Acts xvii. 27, the grand mean of reconciliation, which God has given to the Church; I mean the sacrifice of the cross. Reason, indeed, discovers that man is guilty; as the confessions and acknowledgments which the heathens made of their crimes prove. It discerns that a sinner deserves punishment, as the remorse and fear with which their consciences were often excruciated, demonstrate. It presumes, indeed,

\* Xenophon. Cyrop.

† Platon. Apol. Socrat. ad fin.

‡ Cicero. Tusc. Quæst. lib. i.

that God will yield to the entreaties of his creatures, as their prayers, and temples, and altars testify. It even goes so far as to perceive the necessity of satisfying divine justice; this their sacrifices, this their burnt-offerings, this their human victims, this the rivers of blood that flowed on their altars, show.

But how likely soever all these speculations may be, they form only a systematic body without a head; for no positive promise of pardon from God himself belongs to them. The mystery of the cross is entirely invisible; for only God could reveal that, because only God could plan, and only he could execute that profound relief. How could human reason, alone, and unassisted, have discovered the mystery of redemption, when, alas! after an infallible God had revealed it, reason is absorbed in its depth, and needs all its submission to receive it as an article of faith?

But, that which natural religion cannot attain, revealed religion clearly discovers. Revelation exhibits a God-man, dying for the sins of mankind, and setting grace before every penitent sinner; grace for all mankind. The schools have often agitated the questions, and sometimes very indiscreetly, Whether Jesus Christ died for all mankind, or only for a small number? Whether his blood were shed for all who hear the gospel, or for those only who believe it? We will not dispute these points now; but we will venture to affirm, that there is not an individual of all our hearers, who has not a right to say to himself, If I believe, I shall be saved; I shall believe, if I endeavour to believe. Consequently every individual has a right to apply the benefits of the death of Christ to himself. The gospel reveals grace, which pardons the most atrocious crimes, those that have the most fatal influences. Although you have denied Christ with Peter, betrayed him with Judas, persecuted him with Saul; yet the blood of a God-man is sufficient to obtain your pardon, if you be in the covenant of redemption: Grace, which is accessible at all times, at every instant of life. Wo be to you, my brethren; wo be to you, if abusing this reflection, you delay your return to God till the last moments of your lives, when your repentance will be difficult, not to say impracticable and impossible! But it is always certain that God every instant opens the treasures of his mercy, when sinners return to him by sincere repentance; grace, capable of terminating all the melancholy thoughts that are produced by the fear of being abandoned by God in the midst of our race, and of having the work of salvation left imperfect; for, after he has given us a present so magnificent, what can he refuse? "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Rom. viii. 32. Grace, so clearly revealed in our Scriptures, that the most accurate reasoning, heresy the most extravagant, and infidelity the most obstinate, cannot enervate its declarations; for the death of Christ may be considered in different views: it is a sufficient confirmation of his doctrine; it is a perfect pattern of patience; it is the most magnanimous degree of extraordinary excellencies that can be imagined: but the gospel very seldom presents it to us in any of these

views, it leaves them to our own perception; but when it speaks of his death, it usually speaks of it as an expiatory sacrifice. Need we repeat here a number of formal texts, and express decisions, on this matter? Thanks be to God, we are preaching to a Christian auditory, who make the death of the Redeemer the foundation of faith! The gospel, then, assures the penitent sinner of pardon. Zeno, Epicurus, Pythagoras, Socrates, Porch, Academy, Lycæum, what have you to offer to your disciples equal to this promise of the gospel?

IV. But that which principally displays the prerogatives of the Christian above those of the philosopher is an *all-sufficient provision against the fear of death*. A comparison between a dying Pagan and a dying Christian will show this. I consider a Pagan, in his dying-bed, speaking to himself what follows: "On which side soever I consider my state, I perceive nothing but trouble and despair. If I observe the forerunners of death, I see awful symptoms, violent sickness and intolerable pain, which surround my sick-bed, and are the first scenes of the bloody tragedy. As to the world, my dearest objects disappear; my closest connexions are dissolving; my most specious titles are effacing; my noblest privileges are vanishing away; a dismal curtain falls between my eyes and all the decorations of the universe. In regard to my body, it is a mass without motion or life; my tongue is about to be condemned to eternal silence; my eyes to perpetual darkness; all the organs of my body to entire dissolution; and the miserable remains of my carcass to lodge in the grave, and to become food for worms. If I consider my soul, I scarcely know whether it be immortal; and could I demonstrate its natural immortality, I should not be able to say, whether my Creator would display his attributes in preserving, or in destroying it; whether my wishes for immortality be the dictates of nature, or the language of sin. If I consider my past life, I have a witness within me, attesting that my practice has been less than my knowledge, how small soever the latter has been; and that the abundant depravity of my heart has thickened the darkness of my mind. If I consider futurity, I think I discover, through many thick clouds, a future state; my reason suggests that the Author of nature has not given me a soul so sublime in thought, and so expansive in desire, merely to move in this little orb for a moment; but this is nothing but conjecture; and if there be another economy after this, should I be less miserable than I am here? One moment I hope for annihilation, the next I shudder with the fear of being annihilated; my thoughts and desires are at war with each other; they rise, they resist, they destroy one another." Such is the dying heathen. If a few examples of those who have died otherwise be adduced, they ought not to be urged in evidence against what we have advanced; for they are rare, and very probably deceptive, their outward tranquillity being only a concealment of trouble within. Trouble is the greater for confinement within, and for an affected appearance without. As we ought not to believe that philosophy has rendered men insensible of pain, because some philosophers have maintained

that pain is no evil, and have seemed to triumph over it; so neither ought we to believe that it has disarmed death in regard to the disciples of natural religion, because some have affirmed that death is not an object of fear. After all, if some Pagans enjoyed a real tranquillity at death, it was a groundless tranquillity to which reason contributed nothing at all.

O! how differently do Christians die! How does revealed religion triumph over the religion of nature in this respect! May each of our hearers be a new evidence of this article! The whole that troubles an expiring heathen, revives a Christian in his dying bed.

Thus speaks the dying Christian: "When I consider the awful symptoms of death, and the violent agonies of dissolving nature, they appear to me as medical preparations, sharp but salutary; they are necessary to detach me from life, and to separate the remains of inward depravity from me. Besides, I shall not be abandoned to my own frailty; but my patience and constancy will be proportional to my sufferings; and that powerful arm which has supported me through life, will uphold me under the pressure of death. If I consider my sins, many as they are, I am invulnerable; for I go to a tribunal of mercy, where God is reconciled, and justice is satisfied. If I consider my body, I perceive I am putting off a mean and corruptible habit, and putting on robes of glory. Fall, fall, ye imperfect senses, ye frail organs; fall, house of clay, into your original dust; you will be "sown in corruption, but raised in incorruption; sown in dishonour, but raised in glory; sown in weakness, but raised in power," 1 Cor. xv. 42. If I consider my soul, it is passing, I see, from slavery to freedom. I shall carry with me that which thinks and reflects. I shall carry with me the delicacy of taste, the harmony of sounds, the beauty of colours, the fragrance of odoriferous smells. I shall surmount heaven and earth, nature and all terrestrial things, and my ideas of all their beauties will multiply and expand. If I consider the future economy to which I go, I have, I own, very inadequate notions of it; but my incapacity is the ground of my expectation. Could I perfectly comprehend it, it would argue its resemblance to some of the present objects of my senses, or its minute proportion to the present operations of my mind. If worldly dignities and grandeurs, if accumulated treasures, if the enjoyments of the most refined voluptuousness were to represent to me celestial felicity, I should suppose that, partaking of their nature they partook of their vanity. But, if nothing can here represent the future state, it is because that state surpasses every other. My ardour is increased by my imperfect knowledge of it. My knowledge and virtue, I am certain, will be perfected; I know I shall comprehend truth, and obey order; I know I shall be free from all evils, and in possession of all good; I shall be present with God, I know, and with all the happy spirits who surround his throne; and this perfect state, I am sure, will continue for ever and ever."

Such are the all-sufficient supports which revealed religion affords against the fear of death. Such are the meditations of a dying Christian; not of one whose whole Christianity consists of dry speculations, which have no

influence over his practice; but of one who applies his knowledge to relieve the real wants of his life.

Christianity then, we have seen, is superior to natural religion, in these four respects. To these we will add a few more reflections in farther evidence of the superiority of revealed religion to the religion of nature.

1. *The ideas of the ancient philosophers concerning natural religion were not collected into a body of doctrine.* One philosopher had one idea, another studious man had another idea; ideas of truth and virtue, therefore, lay dispersed. Who does not see the pre-eminence of revelation on this article? No human capacity either has been, or would ever have been, equal to the noble conception of a perfect body of truth. There is no genius so narrow as not to be capable of proposing some clear truth, some excellent maxim: but to lay down principles, and to perceive at once a chain of consequences, these are the efforts of great geniuses; this capability is philosophical perfection. If this axiom be incontestable, what a fountain of wisdom does the system of Christianity argue? It presents us, in one lovely body of perfect symmetry, all the ideas we have enumerated. One idea supposes another idea; and the whole is united in a manner so compact, that it is impossible to alter one particle without defacing the beauty of all.

2. *Pagan philosophers never had a system of natural religion comparable with that of modern philosophers,* although the latter glory in their contempt of revelation. Modern philosophers have derived the clearest and best parts of their systems from the very revelation which they affect to despise. We grant, the doctrines of the perfections of God, of providence, and of a future state, are perfectly conformable to the light of reason. A man who should pursue rational tracks of knowledge to his utmost power, would discover, we own, all these doctrines: but it is one thing to grant that these doctrines are conformable to reason, and it is another to affirm that reason actually discovered them. It is one thing to allow, that a man, who should pursue rational tracks of knowledge to his utmost power, would discover all these doctrines; and it is another to pretend, that any man has pursued these tracks to the utmost, and has actually discovered them. It was the gospel that taught mankind the use of their reason. 'Twas the gospel that assisted men to form a body of natural religion. Modern philosophers avail themselves of these aids; they form a body of natural religion by the light of the gospel, and then they attribute to their own penetration what they derive from foreign aid.

3. *What was most rational in the natural religion of the Pagan philosophers was mixed with fancies and dreams.* There was not a single philosopher who did not adopt some absurdity, and communicate it to his disciples. One taught that every being was animated with a particular soul, and on this absurd hypothesis he pretended to account for the phenomena of nature. Another took every star for a god, and thought the soul a vapour, that passed from one body to another, expiating in the body of a beast the sins that were commit-

ted in that of a man. One attributed the creation of the world to a blind chance, and the government of all events in it to an inviolable fate. Another affirmed the eternity of the world, and said, there was no period in eternity in which heaven and earth, nature and elements were not visible. One said every thing is uncertain; we are not sure of our own existence; the distinction between just and unjust, virtue and vice, is fanciful, and has no real foundation in the nature of things. Another made matter equal to God; and maintained, that it concurred with the Supreme Being in the formation of the universe. One took the world for a prodigious body, of which he thought God was the soul. Another affirmed the materiality of the soul, and attributed to matter the faculties of thinking and reasoning. Some denied the immortality of the soul, and the intervention of Providence; and pretended that an infinite number of particles of matter, indivisible and indestructible, revolved in the universe; that from their fortuitous concourse arose the present world; that in all this there was no design; that the feet were not formed for walking, the eyes for seeing, nor the hands for handling. On the contrary, the gospel is light without darkness. It has nothing mean; nothing false; nothing that does not bear the characters of that wisdom from which it proceeds.

4. *What was pure in the natural religion of the heathens was not known, nor could be known to any but philosophers.* The common people were incapable of that penetration and labour, which the investigating of truth, and the distinguishing of it from that falsehood, in which passion and prejudice had enveloped it, required. A mediocrity of genius, I allow, is sufficient for the purpose of inferring a part of those consequences from the works of nature, of which we form the body of natural religion; but none but geniuses of the first order are capable of kenning those distant consequences which are enfolded in darkness. The bulk of mankind wanted a short way proportional to every mind. They wanted an authority the infallibility of which all mankind might easily see. They wanted a revelation founded on evidence plain and obvious to all the world. Philosophers could not show the world such a short way, but revelation has shown it. No philosopher could assume the authority necessary to establish such a way: it became God alone to dictate in such a manner, and in revelation he has done it.

Here we would finish this discourse; but, as the subject is liable to abuse, we think it necessary to guard you against two common abuses: and as the doctrine is reducible to practice, we will add two general reflections on the whole to direct your conduct.

1. *Some, who acknowledge the superior excellence of revealed religion to the religion of nature, cast an odious contempt on the pains that are taken to cultivate reason, and to improve the mind.* They think the way to obtain a sound system of divinity is to neglect an exact method of reasoning; with them to be a bad philosopher is the ready way to become a good Christian; and to cultivate reason is to render the design of religion abortive. Nothing can be more

foreign from the intention of St. Paul, and the design of this discourse, than such an absurd consequence. Nothing would so effectually depreciate the gospel, and betray the cause into the hands of atheists and infidels. On the contrary, an exact habit of reasoning is essential to a sound system of divinity; reason must be cultivated if we would understand the excellent characters of religion; the better the philosopher, the more disposed to become a good Christian. Do not deceive yourselves, my brethren; without rational knowledge, and accurate judgment, the full evidence of the arguments that establish the doctrine of the existence of God can never be perceived; at least the doctrine can never be properly defended. Without the exercise of reason, and accuracy of judgment, we can never perceive clearly the evidence of the proofs on which we ground the divinity of revelation, and the authenticity of the books that contain it; at least, we can never answer all the objections which libertinism opposes against this important subject. Without rational and accurate knowledge, the true meaning of revelation can never be understood. Without exercising reason, and accuracy of judgment, we cannot distinguish which of all the various sects of Christianity has taken the law of Jesus Christ for its rule, his oracles for its guide, his decisions for infallible decrees; at least we shall find it extremely difficult to escape those dangers which heresy will throw across our path at every step, and to avoid those lurking holes in which the most absurd sectaries lodge.— Without the aid of reason, and accuracy of thought, we cannot understand the pre-eminence of Christianity over natural religion.— The more a man cultivates his reason, the more he feels the imperfection of his reason. The more accuracy of judgment a man acquires, the more fully will he perceive his need of a supernatural revelation to supply the defect of his discoveries, and to render his knowledge complete.

2. *The pre-eminence of revelation inspires some with a cruel divinity, who persuade themselves, that all whom they think have not been favoured with revelation, are excluded from salvation, and doomed to everlasting flames.* The famous question of the destiny of those who seem to us not to have known any thing but natural religion, we ought carefully to divide into two questions; a question of fact, and a question of right. The question of right is, whether a heathen, considered as a heathen, and on supposition of his having no other knowledge than that of nature, could be saved? The question of fact is, whether God, through the same mercy, which inclined him to reveal himself to us in the clearest manner, did not give to some of the heathens a knowledge superior to that of natural religion.

What we have already heard is sufficient to determine the question of right: for, if the notion we have given of natural religion be just, it is sufficient to prove, that it is incapable of conducting mankind to salvation.— “This is life eternal, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent,” John xvii. 3. “There is no other name under

heaven given among men whereby we must be saved," Acts iv. 13. The disciples of natural religion had no hope and "were without God in the world," Eph. ii. 12. A latitudinarian theology in vain opposes these decisions, by alleging some passages of Scripture which seem to favour the opposite opinion. In vain is it urged, that "God never left himself without witness, in doing the heathens good;" for it is one thing to receive of God "rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons," Acts xiv. 17, (and the apostle speaks of these blessings only:) and it is another thing to participate an illuminating faith, a sanctifying spirit, a saving hope. In vain is that quoted, which our apostle said in his discourse in the Areopagus, that "God hath determined,—that the heathens should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him," chap. xvii. 27: for it is one thing to find God, as him who "giveth life and breath to all mankind, as him who hath made of one blood all nations of men, as him in whom we live, and move and have our being; as him whom gold, or silver, or stone cannot represent," ver. 25, 28, 29; and another thing to find him as a propitious parent; opening the treasures of his mercy, and bestowing on us his Son. It is to no purpose to allege that the heathens are said to have been *without excuse*: for it is one thing to be inexcusable for "changing the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things," Rom. i. 20; for giving themselves up to those excesses which the holiness of this place forbids me to name, and which the apostle depicts in the most odious colours; and it is another thing to be inexcusable for rejecting an economy that reveals every thing necessary to salvation.—There is no difficulty, then, in the question of right. The disciple of natural religion, considered as such, could not be saved. Natural religion was insufficient to conduct men to salvation.

But the question of fact, (whether God gave any pagan knowledge superior to that of natural religion?) ought to be treated with the utmost caution.

We will not say, with some divines, that the heathens were saved by an *implicit faith* in Jesus Christ. By implicit faith, they mean, a disposition in a wise heathen to have believed in Jesus Christ, had Jesus Christ been revealed to him. We will not affirm, with Clement of Alexandria, that philosophy was that to the Greeks which the law was to the Jews, a "schoolmaster, to bring men unto Christ,"\* Gal. iii. 24. We will not affirm, with St. Chrysostom, that they who, despising idolatry, adored the Creator before the coming of Christ, were saved without faith.† We will not, like one of the reformers, in a letter to Francis I. king of France, place Theseus, Hercules, Numa, Aristides, Cato, and the ancestors of the king, with the patriarchs, the Virgin Mary, and the apostles; acting less in the character of a minister, whose office it is to "declare all the counsel of God," Acts xx. 27, than in

that of an author, whose aim it is to flatter the vanity of man.\* Less still, do we think we have a right to say, with St. Augustine, that the Erythrean Sybil is in heaven.† Some, who now quote St. Chrysostom, St. Clement, and St. Augustine, with great veneration, would anathematize any contemporary who should advance the same propositions which these fathers advanced. But after all, who dares to "limit the Holy One of Israel?" Ps. lxxviii. 41. Who dares to affirm, that God could not reveal himself to a heathen on his death-bed? Who will venture to say, he has never done so? Let us renounce our inclination to damn mankind. Let us reject that theology which derives its glory from its cruelty. Let us entertain sentiments more charitable than those of some divines, who cannot conceive they shall be happy in heaven, unless they know that thousands are miserable in hell. This is the second abuse which we wish to prevent.

But although we ought not to despair of the salvation of those who were not born under the economy of grace as we are, we ought however (and this is the first use of our subject to which we exhort you,) we ought to value this economy very highly, to attach ourselves to it inviolably, and to derive from it all the succour, and all the knowledge, that we cannot procure by our own speculations. Especially, we ought to seek in this economy for remedies for the disorders which sin has caused in our souls. It is a common distemper in this age, to frame arbitrary systems of religion, and to seek divine mercy where it is not to be found. The wise Christian derives his system from the gospel only. Natural reason is a very dangerous guarantee of our destiny. Nothing is more fluctuating and precarious than the salvation of mankind, if it have no better assurance than a few metaphysical speculations on the goodness of the Supreme Being. Our notions of God, indeed, include love.—The productions of nature, and the conduct of Providence, concur, I grant, in assuring us, that God loves to bestow benedictions on his creatures. But the attributes of God are fathomless; boundless oceans, in which we are as often lost as we have the presumption to attempt to traverse them without a pilot.—Nature and Providence are both labyrinths, in which our frail reason is quickly bewildered, and finally entangled. The idea of justice enters no less into a notion of the Supreme Being than that of mercy. And, say what we will, that we are guilty creatures will not admit of a doubt; for conscience itself, our own conscience, pronounces a sentence of condemnation on us, however prone we may be to flatter and favour ourselves. God condescends to terminate the doubts which these various speculations produce in our minds. In his word of revelation he assures us that he is merciful; and he informs us on what we may found our hopes of sharing his mercy, on the covenant he has made with us in the gospel. We be to us if, by criminally refusing to "bring every thought to the obedience of

\* Strom. lib. i. p. 282. Edit. Par. vi. 499.

† Hom. xvii. St. Math.

\* See an Epistle of Zuinglius, at the beginning of his Exposition of the Christian Faith.

† City of God, lib. xviii. c. 23.

Christ," 2 Cor. x. 5, we forsake these "fountains of living waters," which he opens to us in religion, and persist in "hewing out broken cisterns of speculations and systems!" Jer. ii. 13. The sacred books, which are in our hands, and which contain the substance of the sermons of inspired men, show us these "fountains of living waters." They attest, in a manner the most clear, and level to the smallest attention of the lowest capacity, that Jesus Christ alone has reconciled us to God; that "God hath set him forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood; that God called him to be a high priest, that he might become the author of eternal salvation unto all them that come unto God by him," Rom. iii. 25; Heb. v. 9, 10; and chap. vii. 25. Let us go then unto God "by him," and by him only: and, let me repeat it again, 'Wo be to us, if we determine to go to God by our own speculations and systems.

But the principal use we ought to make of the text, and of this sermon, is truly and thoroughly to acknowledge that superiority of virtue and holiness, to which the superiority of revealed religion engages us. A mortifying, but a salutary reflection! What account can we give of the light that shines in the gospel with so much splendour, and which distinguishes us from the heathens, whose blindness we deplore? When we place the two economies opposite to each other, and contemplate both, a cloud of reflections arise, and our prerogatives present themselves from every part. The clearest light shines around us. Light into the attributes of God; light into the nature, the obligations, the duration of man; light into the grand method of reconciliation, which God has presented to the church; light into the certainty of a future state. But when we oppose disciple to disciple, virtue to virtue, we hardly find any room for comparison. Except here and there an elect soul; here and there one lost in the crowd, can you see any great difference between the Christian and the pagan world?

What shame would cover us, were we to contrast Holland with Greece, the cities in these provinces with the city of Corinth! Corinth was the metropolis of Greece. There commerce prospered, and attracted immense riches from all parts of the universe, and along with wealth, pride, imperiousness, and debauchery, which almost inevitably follow a prosperous trade. Thither went some of the natives of other countries, and carried with them their passions and their vices. There immorality was enthroned. There, according to Strabo,\* was a temple dedicated to the immodest Venus. There the palace of dissoluteness was erected, the ruins of which are yet to be seen by travellers; that infamous palace, in which a thousand prostitutes were maintained. There the abominable Lais held her court, and exacted six talents of every one who fell a prey to her deceptions. There impurity was become so notorious, that a Corinthian was synonymous to a prostitute; and the proverb, "to live like a Corinthian," was as much as to say, "to live a life of debauchery."† Ye provinces!

in which we dwell. Ye cities! in which we preach. O, Lais! Lais! who attendest our sermons so often, . . . . . I spare you. But how could we run the parallel between Holland and Greece, between these cities and that of Corinth?

Moreover, were we to compare success with success, the docility of our disciples with the docility of those disciples to whom the pagan philosophers, who lived in those days of darkness, preached, how much to our disadvantage would the comparison be? Pythagoras would say, when I taught philosophy at Crotona, I persuaded the lascivious to renounce luxury, the drunkard to abstain from wine, and even the most gay ladies to sacrifice their rich and fashionable garments to modesty.\* When I was in Italy, I re-established liberty and civil government, and by one discourse reclaimed two thousand men; I prevailed with them to subdue the suggestions of avarice, and the emotions of pride, and to love meditation, retirement and silence. I did more with my philosophy than you do with that morality, of which you make such magnificent display. Hegesias would say, I threw all Greece into an uproar: what I said on the vanity of life, on the insipid nature of its pleasures, the vanity of its promises, the bitterness of its calamities, had an effect so great, that some destroyed themselves, others would have followed their example, and I should have depopulated whole cities, had not Ptolemy silenced me.† My discourses detached men from the world more effectually than yours, although you preach the doctrines of a future life, of paradise, and of eternity. Zeno would tell us, I influenced my disciples to contemn pain, to despise a tyrant, and to trample on punishment. I did more towards elevating man above humanity with that philosophy, of which you have such unfavourable ideas, than you do with that religion on which you bestow such fine encomiums.

What then! Shall the advantages, which advance the Christian revelation above the speculations of the pagan world, advance at the same time the virtues of the pagans above those of Christians? And shall all the ways of salvation which are opened to us in the communion of Jesus Christ, serve only to render salvation inaccessible to us? God forbid! Let us assimilate our religion to the economy under which we live. May knowledge conduct us to virtue, and virtue to felicity and glory! God grant us this grace! To him be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

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## SERMON XXV.

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### THE SUPERIOR EVIDENCE AND INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY.

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1 JOHN iv. 4.

*Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.*

THAT appearance, which is recorded in the second book of Kings, chap. vi. 8, &c. was

\* Diog. Laert. lib. iii. in Pythag. p. 114. Edit. Rom. fol. 1594.

† Cic. Qu. Tusc. lib. i. Diog. Laert. in Aristip. lib. ii.

\* Geog. lib. viii. p. 378. Edit. Par. 1620.

† Eras. Adag. Cent. 7. p. 633, 720.

very proper to embolden the timid servant of Elisha. The king of Syria was at war with the king of Israel. The wise counsel of the prophet was more advantageous to his prince than that of his generals was. The Syrian thought, if he could render himself master of such an extraordinary man, he could easily subdue the rest of the Israelites. In order to ensure success he surrounded Dothan, the dwelling place of the prophet, with his troops in the night. The prophet's servant was going out early the next morning with his master, when on seeing the numerous Syrian forces, he trembled, and exclaimed, "Alas! my master, how shall we do?" Fear not, replied Elisha, "they that be with us, are more than they that be with them." To this he added, addressing himself to God in prayer, "Lord, open his eyes that he may see!" The prayer was heard. The servant of Elisha presently saw the sufficient ground of his master's confidence; he discovered a celestial multitude of horses, and chariots of fire, which God had sent to defend his servant from the king of Syria.

How often, my brethren, have you trembled at the sight of that multitude of enemies which is let loose against you? When you have seen yourselves called to wrestle, as St. Paul speaks, "not only against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against spiritual wickedness in high places;" against the sophisms of error, against the tyrants of the church, and which is still more formidable, against the depravity of your own hearts: how often in these cases have you exclaimed, "Alas! how shall we do? Who is sufficient for these things?" 2 Cor. ii. 16. "Who then can be saved?" Matt. xix. 25.

But take courage, Christian wrestlers! "they that be with you are more than they that are against you. O Lord! open their eyes that they may see! May they see the great cloud of witnesses," Heb. xii. 1, who fought in the same field to which they are called, and there obtained a victory! May they see the blessed angels who encamp round about them, to protect their persons, and to defeat their foes! May they see the powerful aid of that Spirit which thou hast given them! "May they see Jesus, the author and finisher of their faith," Ps. xxxiv. 7; 1 John iii. 24, and Heb. xii. 2, who animates them from heaven, and the eternal rewards which thou art preparing to crown their perseverance! and may a happy experience teach them that truth, on which we are going to fix their attention, "Greater is he that is in them, than he that is in the world." Amen.

Two preliminary remarks will elucidate our subject:

1. Although the proposition in my text is general, and regards all Christians, yet St. John wrote it with a particular view to those persons to whom he addressed the epistle from which we have taken it. In order to ascertain this, reflect on the times of the apostles, and remark the accomplishment of that prophecy which Jesus Christ had some time before delivered. He had foretold, that there would arise in Judea "false Christs, and false prophets, who would show great signs and wonders, inasmuch that (if it were possible,) they would deceive the very elect," Matt. xxiv. 24. This

prophecy was to be accomplished immediately before the destruction of Jerusalem: and to that period learned men assign the publication of this epistle. St. John calls the time in which he wrote, "the last time," chap. ii. 18, that is to say, in the Jewish style, the time in which the metropolis of Judea was to be destroyed: and adds the sign by which Christians might "know that it was the last time; as ye have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now are there many Antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time." Remark those words, "as ye have heard;" the apostle meant by them, to remind his readers of the prophecy of Jesus Christ.

I do not pretend now to inquire what seducers Jesus Christ particularly intended in this prophecy. Simon the sorcerer may be placed in the class of false Christs. There is a very remarkable passage to this purpose in the tenth verse of the eighth chapter of Acts. It is there said, that this impostor had so "bewitched the people of Samaria, that all, from the least to the greatest, said, This man is the great power of God." What means this phrase, *the great power of God*? It is the title which the ancient Jews gave the Messiah. Philo, treating of the divine essence, establishes the mystery of the Trinity, as clearly as a Jew could establish it, who had no other guide than the Old Testament. He speaks first of God; then of what he calls the *logos*, the word (the same term is translated *word* in the first chapter of the gospel of St. John,) and he calls this word *the great power of God*, and distinguishes him from a third person, whom he denominates *the second power*. Moreover, Origen says, Simon the sorcerer took the title of *Son of God*, a title which the Jews had appropriated to the Messiah.

As there were false Christs in the time of St. John, so there were also false prophets, that is, false teachers. These St. John has characterized in the chapters which precede my text; and the portraits drawn by the apostle are so exactly like those which the primitive fathers of the church have exhibited of Ebion and Cerinthus, that it is easy to know them. A particular investigation of this subject would divert our attention too far from our principal design; and it shall suffice at present to observe, that these impostors caused great mischief in the church. Simon, the sorcerer, indeed, at first, renounced his imposture; but he soon adopted it again. Justin Martyr informs us, that, in his time, there remained some disciples of that wretch, who called him *the first intelligence* of the divinity, that is, *the word*; and who named Helen, the associate of Simon in his imposture, *the second intelligence* of the divinity, by which title they intended to describe the Holy Ghost. Only they, who are novices in the history of primitive Christianity, can be ignorant of the ravages, which Ebion and Cerinthus made in the church.

But Jesus Christ had foretold, and all ages have verified the prediction, that "the gates of hell should not prevail against the church," Matt. xvi. 18. The most specious sophisms of Ebion and Cerinthus, the most seducing deceptions of Simon and his associates, did not draw off one of the elect from Jesus



Christ; the faithful followers of the Son of God, notwithstanding their dispersion, triumphed over false Christs, and false teachers. St. John extols their victory in the words of my text; "Ye have overcome them (says he,) because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world."

It seems almost needless precisely to point out here whom St. John means by "him, who is in believers," and by "him who is in the world;" or to determine which of the different senses of commentators seem to us the most defensible. Some say, the apostle intended the Holy Spirit by "him who is in you;" others think, he meant Jesus Christ; and others suppose him speaking of the principle of regeneration, which is in Christians, and which renders them invulnerable by all the attacks of the world. In like manner, if we endeavour to affix a distinct idea to the other terms, "him who is in the world;" some pretend that St. John means Satan; others, that he expresses, in a vague manner, all the means which the world employs to seduce good men.

But, whatever difference there may appear in these explanations, they all come to the same sense. For if the apostle speaks of the inhabitation of Jesus Christ, it is certain, he dwells in us by his Holy Spirit; and if he means the Holy Spirit, it is certain he dwells in us by the principles of regeneration. In like manner in regard to the other proposition. If it be Satan, who, the apostle says, is in the world, he is there undoubtedly by the errors which his emissaries published there, and by the vices which they introduce there. The design of the apostle, therefore, is to show the superiority of the means which God employs to save us, to those which the world employs to destroy us.

2. But this produces another difficulty, and the solution of it is my second article. It should seem, if the apostle had reason to say of them who had persevered in Christianity, that "he who was in them was greater than he who was in the world," seducers also had reason to say, that he who was in those whom they had seduced, was greater than he who was in persevering Christians. Satan has still, in our day, more disciples than Jesus Christ. Can it be said, that Satan is greater than Jesus Christ? Can it be said, that the means employed by that lying and murdering spirit to seduce mankind, are superior to those which the Holy Spirit employs to illuminate them? No, my brethren; and our answer to these questions, which requires your particular attention, will serve to elucidate one of the most obscure articles of religion. We will endeavour to express the matter clearly to all our attentive hearers.

We must carefully distinguish a mean applied to an irrational agent from a mean applied to an intelligent agent. A mean, that is applied to an irrational agent, can never be accounted superior to the obstacles which oppose it, unless its superiority be justified by success. A certain degree of power is requisite to move a mass of a certain weight; a degree of power superior to the weight of a certain mass will never fail to move the mass out of its place, and to force it away.

But it is not so with the means which are applied to intelligent beings; they are not always attended with that success, which, it should seem, ought to follow the application of them. I attempt to prove to a man, on whom nature has bestowed common sense, that if an equal number be taken from an equal number, an equal number will remain. I propose my demonstration to him with all possible clearness, and he has no less faculty to comprehend it, than I have to propose it. He persists, however, in the opposite proposition: but his obstinacy is the only cause of his error; he refuses to believe me, because he refuses to hear me. Were an attentive and teachable man to yield to my demonstration, while the former persisted in denying it, could it be reasonably said then, that motives of incredulity in the latter were superior to motives of credulity? We must distinguish, then, a mean applied to an intelligent being, from a mean applied to an irrational being.

Farther. Among the obstacles, with which intelligent beings resist means applied to them, physical obstacles must be distinguished from moral obstacles. Physical obstacles are such as necessarily belong to the being that resists, so that there is no faculty to remove them. I propose to an infant a conclusion, the understanding of which depends on a chain of propositions, which he is incapable of following. The obstacle, which I find in him, is an obstacle merely physical; he has not a faculty to remove it.

I propose the same conclusion to a man of mature age; he understands it no more than the infant just now mentioned; but his ignorance does not proceed from a want of those faculties which are necessary to comprehend it, but from his disuse of them. This is a moral obstacle.

It cannot be fairly said, that the power applied to physical resistance is greater than the resistance, unless it necessarily prevail over it; but it is very different with that power, which is applied to moral resistance. Those who have attended to what has been said, easily perceive the reason of the difference, without our detaining you in explaining it.

Why do we not use the same fair reasoning on religious subjects, which we profess to use on all other subjects? Does religion authorize us to place that to the account of God which proceeds solely from the free obstinacy and voluntary malice of mankind? Jesus Christ did not descend to this world to convert irrational beings, but intelligent creatures: he found two sorts of obstacles in the way of their conversion, obstacles merely physical, and obstacles merely moral. Obstacles merely physical are those which would have prevented our discovering the plan of redemption, if he had not revealed it; and of the same kind are those, which our natural constitution, being disconcerted by sin, opposes against the end, which our Saviour proposes, of rendering us holy. Jesus Christ has surmounted these obstacles by the light of revelation, and by the aid of his Holy Spirit.

But he found also other obstacles merely moral. Such were those which he met with in the Pharisees, and which hindered those

execrable men from yielding to the power of his miracles. Such are those still of all erroneous and wicked men, whose errors and vices proceed from similar principles. The superiority of the means which Jesus Christ uses to reclaim them, does not depend on the success of those means; they fail, it is evident, through the power of those merely moral obstacles, which a voluntary malice, and a free obstinacy, oppose against them.

This remark, as I said before, elucidates one of the most obscure articles of Christianity. It accounts for the conduct of God towards his creatures, and for the language which his servants used on his behalf. The omnipotence of God is more than sufficient to convince the most obstinate minds, and to change the most obdurate hearts, and yet he declares, although he has displayed only some degree of it, that he has employed all the means he could to convert the last, and to convince the first. "What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard.—What could have been done more to my vineyard?" Isa. v. 3, 4. Acts of omnipotence might have been done, in order to have forced it to produce good grapes, and to have annihilated its unhappy fertility in producing *wild grapes*. But no, his vineyard, as he says, was *the house of Israel*. The house of Israel consisted of intelligent beings, not of irrational beings. God applied to these beings means suitable, not to irrational, but to intelligent beings. He met with two sorts of obstacles to the conversion of these beings; physical obstacles, and moral obstacles; and he opposed to each sort of these obstacles a superior power; but a power suitable to the nature of each. The superiority of that, which he opposed to physical obstacles, necessarily produced its effect, without which it would not have been a superior, but an inferior, power. To moral obstacles he opposed a power suitable to moral obstacles; if it did not produce its effect, it was not because it had not in itself superior influence; God was not to be blamed, but they, to whom it was applied.

Our remark is, particularly, a key to our text. The means which God employs to irradiate our minds, and to sanctify our hearts, are superior to those which the world employs to deceive and to deprave us; if that superiority, which is always influential on believers, be destitute of influence on obstinate sinners, it is no less superior in its own nature. The unsuccessfulness of the means with the last proceeds solely from their own obstinacy and malice. "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?" "Ye have overcome them, because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." This, I think, is the substance of the meaning of the apostle.

But, as it is only the general sense, it requires to be particularly developed, and I ought to investigate the subject by justifying three propositions, which are included in it,

and which I shall have occasion to apply to the Christian religion.

I. Truth has a light superior to all the glimmerings of falsehood.

II. Motives to virtue are stronger than motives to vice.

III. The Holy Spirit, who opens the eyes of a Christian, to show him the light of the truth, and who touches his heart, in order to make him feel the power of motives to virtue, is infinitely more powerful than Satan, who seduces mankind by falsehood and vice.

Each of these propositions would require a whole discourse; I intend, however, to explain them all in the remaining part of this: the more brevity I am obliged to observe, the more attention you ought to give.

I. *Truth has a light superior to all the glimmerings of error.* Some men, I grant, are as tenacious of error, as others are of truth. False religions have disciples, who seem to be as sincerely attached to them, as believers are to true religion: and if Jesus Christ has his martyrs, Satan also has his.

Yet I affirm, that the persuasion of a man, who deceives himself, is never equal to that of a man who does not deceive himself: How similar soever that impression may appear, which falsehood makes on the mind of him who is seduced by it, to that which truth makes on the mind of him who is enlightened by it; there is always this grand difference, the force of truth is irresistible, whereas it is always possible to resist that of error.

The force of a known truth is irresistible. There are, it is granted, some truths, there are even infinite numbers, which lie beyond the stretch of my capacity: and there may also be obstacles, that hinder my knowledge of a truth proportional to the extent of my mind. There may, indeed, be many distractions, which may cause me to lose sight of the proofs that establish a truth; and there may be many passions in me, which may induce me to wish it could not be proved, and which, by urging me to employ the whole capacity of my mind in considering objections against it, leave me no part of my perception to attend to what establishes it. Yet all these cannot diminish the light which is essential to truth; none of these can prevent a known truth from carrying away the consent in an invincible manner. As a cloud, that conceals the sun, does not diminish the splendour which is essential to that globe of fire; so all the obstacles, which prevent my knowledge of a truth, that lies within the reach of my capacity, cannot prevent my receiving the evidence of it, in spite of myself, as soon as I become attentive to it. It does not depend on me to believe, that from the addition of two to two there results the number four. It is just the same with the truths of philosophy; the same with the truths of religion, and the same with all the known truths in the world. To speak strictly, the knowledge of a truth, and the belief of a truth, is one and the same operation of the mind. Mental liberty does not consist in believing, or in not believing a known truth; it consists in giving, or in not giving, that attention to a truth which is requisite in order to obtain the knowledge of it.

Merit, and demerit (allow me these expressions, and take them in a good sense,) merit and demerit do not consist in believing, or in disbelieving, a known truth; for neither of these depend upon us; they consist in resisting, or in not resisting, the obstacles which prevent the knowledge of it. We conclude, then, that the force of a known truth is irresistible.

It is not the same with error. How strong soever the prejudices may be that plead for it, it is always possible to resist it. Never was a man deceived in an invincible manner. There is no error so specious, in regard to which a man, whose mental powers are in a good state, and not depraved by a long habit of precipitation, cannot suspend his judgment.

I do not say, that every man is always capable of unravelling a sophism: but it is one thing not to be able to unravel a sophism, and it is another to be invincibly carried away with its evidence. Nor do I affirm, that a man will always find it easy to suspend his judgment. What there is of the plausible in some errors; our natural abhorrence of labour; the authority of our seducers; the interest of our passions in being seduced; each of these separately, all these together, will render it sometimes extremely difficult to us to suspend our judgments, and will hurry us on to rash conclusions. It belongs to human frailty to prefer an easy faith above a laborious discussion: and we rather choose to believe we have found the truth, than submit to the trouble of looking for it.

It is certain, however, when we compare what passed in our minds, when we yielded to a truth, with what passed there when we suffered ourselves to be seduced by an error, we perceive, that in the latter case our acquiescence proceeded from an abuse of our reason; whereas in the former it came from our fair and proper use of it. Truth, then, has a light superior to the glimmerings of error. There is, therefore, something greater in a man whom truth irradiates, than there is in a man whom falsehood blinds.

Let us abridge our subject. Let us apply what we have said of truth in general to the truths of religion in particular. To enter more fully into the design of our text, let us make no difficulty of retiring from it to a certain point, and leaving Ebion, Cerinthus, and Simon the sorcerer, whom, probably, St. John had in view, let us stop at a famous modern controversy. Let us attend to the contest between a believer of revelation and a skeptic, and we shall see the superior evidence of that principle of truth, which enlightens the first, above the principle of error, which blinds the last. What a superiority has a believer over a skeptic? What a superiority at the tribunal of authority! at the tribunal of interest! at the tribunal of history! at the tribunal of conscience! at the tribunal of reason! at the tribunal of skepticism itself! From each of these it may be truly pronounced, "Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world."

1. The believer is superior at the tribunal of *authority*. The skeptic objects against the believer, the examples of some few nations, who, it is said, live with religion; and those of some philosophers, whose pretended atheism

has rendered them famous. The believer replies to the skeptic, by urging his well-grounded suspicions in regard to those historians, and travellers, who have published such examples; and, opposing authority against authority, in favour of the grand leading principles of religion, he alleges the unanimous consent of the whole known world.

2. At the tribunal of *interest*. The skeptic resists the believer, by arguing the constraint which religion continually puts on mankind; the pleasure of pursuing every wish, without being terrified with the idea of a formidable witness of our actions, or a future account of our conduct. The believer resists the skeptic, by arguing the benefit of society, which would entirely be subverted, if infidels could effect their dreadful design of demolishing those bulwarks, which religion builds. He urges the interest of each individual, who in those periods of life, in which he is disgusted with the world; in those, in which he is exposed to catastrophes of glory and fortune; above all, in the period of death, has no refuge from despair, if the hopes, that religion affords, be groundless.

3. At the tribunal of *history*. The skeptic objects to the believer the impossibility of obtaining demonstration, properly so called, of distant facts. The believer urges on the infidel his own acquiescence in the evidence of events, as ancient as those, the distance of which is objected; and, turning his own weapons against him, he demonstrates to him, that reasons, still stronger than those, which constrain the skeptic to admit other events, such as number of witnesses, unanimity of historians, sacrifices made to certify the testimony, and a thousand more similar proofs, ought to engage him to believe the facts on which religion is founded.

4. At the tribunal of *conscience*. The infidel opposes his own experience to the believer, and boasts of having shaken off the yoke of this tyrant. The believer replies, by relating the experiences of the most celebrated skeptics, and, using the infidel himself for a demonstration of the truths, which he pretends to subvert, reproaches him with feeling, in spite of himself, the remorse of that conscience, from which he affects to have freed himself: he proves that it awakes when lightnings flash, when thunders roll in the air, when the messengers of death approach to execute their terrible ministry.

5. At the tribunal of *reason*. The skeptic objects to the believer, that religion demands the sacrifice of reason of its disciples; that it reveals abstruse doctrines, and incomprehensible mysteries; and that it requires all to receive its decisions with an entire submission. The believer opposes the infidel, by arguing the infallibility of the intelligence who revealed these doctrines to us. He proves to him, that the best use that can be made of reason, is to renounce it in the sense in which revelation require its renunciation, so that reason never walks a path so safe, nor is ever elevated to a degree of honour so eminent, as when ceasing to see with its own eyes, it sees only with the eyes of the infallible God.

6. The believer triumphs over the infidel at the tribunal of *skepticism* itself. One single

degree of probability in the system of the believer, in our opinion, disconcerts and confounds the system of the skeptic; at least it ought to embitter all the fancied sweets of infidelity. What satisfaction can a man of sense find in that boasted independence, which the system of infidelity procures, if there be the least shadow of a probability of its plunging him into endless misery? But this very man, who finds the evidences of religion too weak to induce a man of sense to control his passions, during the momentary duration of this life, this very man finds the system of infidelity so evident, that it engages him to dare that eternity of misery which religion denounces against the impenitent. What a contrast! The obstinate skeptic falls into a credulity that would be unpardonable in a child. These fiery globes, that revolve over our heads with so much pomp and glory; these heavens that declare the glory of God, Ps. xix. 1; that firmament, which shows his handy-work; these successions of seasons; that symmetry of body; these faculties of mind; the martyrs, who attested the truth of the facts on which religion is founded; the miracles, that confirm the facts; that harmony, between the prophecies and their accomplishments; and all the other numerous arguments, that establish the doctrine of the existence of God, and of the truth of revelation; all these, he pretends, cannot prove enough to engage him to render homage to a Supreme Being; and the few difficulties, which he objects to us; a few rash conjectures; a system of doubts and uncertainties, seem to him sufficiently conclusive to engage him to brave that adorable Being, and to expose himself to all the miseries that attend those who affront him.

We conclude, then, that our first proposition is sufficiently justified. Truth in general, the truths of religion in particular, have a light superior to all the glimmerings of error. "Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world."

II. We said, in the second place, *motives to virtue are superior to motives to vice*. This proposition is a necessary consequence of the first. Every motive to vice supposes that in some cases, it is more advantageous to a man to abandon himself to vice than to cleave inviolably to virtue: this is a falsehood: this is even a falsehood of the grossest kind. In what case can a creature promise himself more happiness in rebelling against his Creator, than in submitting to his authority? In what case can we hope for more happiness in pleasing Satan than in pleasing God?

What I affirmed of all known truth, that its force is irresistible, I affirm on the same principle, of all motives to virtue: the most hardened sinners cannot resist them if they attend to them, nor is there any other way of becoming insensible to them, than that of turning the eyes away from them. Dissipation is the usual cause of our irregularities. The principal, I had almost said, the only secret of Satan, in his abominable plan of human destruction, is to dissipate and to stun mankind; the noise of company, the din of amusements, the bustle of business; it does not signify if it be but a noise, it will always produce its effect;

it will always divide the capacity of the mind, it will prevent him, in whose ears it sounds, from thinking and reflecting, from pursuing an argument and from attending to the weight of conclusive evidence.

And really, where is the man so blind as to digest the falsehoods which motives of vice imply? Where is the wretch so resolute as to reason in this manner?

"I love to be esteemed; I will therefore devote myself wholly to the acquisition of the esteem of those men who, like me, will shortly be devoured with worms; whose ashes, like mine, will be shortly confounded with the dust of the earth: but I will not take the least pains to obtain the approbation of those noble intelligences, those sublime geniuses, those angels and seraphims, who incessantly surround the throne of God; I will not give myself a moment's concern about obtaining a share of those praises, which the great God will one day bestow, in rich abundance before heaven and earth, on them who have been faithful to him.

I love honour; I will therefore apply myself wholly to make the world say of me, That man has an excellent taste for dress; his table is delicately served; the noble blood of his family was never debased by ignoble alliances; nobody can offend him with impunity; he must always be approached with respect: but I will never give myself any trouble to force them to say of me, that man fears God; he prefers his duty above all other things; he thinks there is more magnanimity in forgiving an affront than in revenging it; to be holy, in his opinion, is better than to be noble in the world's esteem, and so on.

I am very fond of pleasure; I will therefore give myself wholly to the gratification of my senses; to the leading of a voluptuous life; a feast shall be succeeded by an amusement, and an amusement shall conduct to debauchery; this round I intend perpetually to pursue: but I will never stir one step to obtain that "fulness of joy," which is "at God's right hand," that "river of pleasures," with which "they, who put their trust under the shadow of his wings, are abundantly satisfied," Ps. xvi. 11, and xxxvi. 7, 8.

I hate constraint and trouble; I will therefore divert my attention wholly from all penitential exercises; and particularly from imprisonment, banishment, racks, and stakes; but I will brave the chains of darkness, with their galling weight; the devils, with their fury; hell, with its flames; I am at a point, I consent to curse eternally the day of my birth; eternally to consider annihilation as an invaluable good; to seek death for ever without finding it; for ever to blaspheme my Creator; eternally to hear the howlings of the damned; to howl eternally with them; like them, to be for ever and ever the object of that condemning sentence, "Depart from me, ye cursed! into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels," Matt. xxv. 41. I ask again, Where is the wretch hardened enough to digest these propositions? Yet these are the motives to vice. Is not the developing of these sufficient to discover, that they ought to yield to virtue, and to prove in our second sense, that "Greater is

he that is in us, than he that is in the world?"

But, how active soever the light of religion may be, prejudices often cover its brightness from us; how superior soever motives to virtue may be to motives to vice, our passions invigorate motives to vice, and enervate those to virtue. Were we even free from innate dispositions to sin, we should be hurried into it by an external enemy, who studies our inclinations, adapts himself to our taste, avails himself of our frailties, manages circumstances, and who, according to the expression of an apostle, "walketh about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour," 1 Pet. v. 8. This enemy is Satan.

III. But the Holy Spirit, who opens our eyes (and this is my third proposition,) the Holy Spirit, who opens our eyes to show us the light of truth, and who touches our hearts to make us feel the force of virtuous motives, is infinitely more powerful than Satan.

I do not pretend to agitate here the indissoluble question concerning the power of the devil over sublunary beings, and particularly over man: what I should advance on this subject would not be very agreeable to my hearers. We are naturally inclined to attribute too much to the devil, and we easily persuade ourselves that we are in an enchanted world. It seems to us that as many degrees of power as we add to those which God has given the tempter, so many apologies we acquire for our frailties; and that the more power the enemy has, with whom we are at war, the more excusable we are for suffering ourselves to be conquered, and for yielding to superior force. Do we revolve any black design in our minds? It is the devil who inspires us with it. Do we lay a train for executing any criminal intrigue? It is the devil who invented it. Do we forget our prayers, our promises, our protestations? It is the devil who effaced them from our memory. My brethren, do you know who is the most terrible tempter? Our own cupidity. Do you know what devil is the most formidable? It is self.

But, passing reflections of this kind, and taking, in its plain and obvious meaning, a truth which the holy Scriptures in a great many places attest, that is, that the devil continually endeavours to destroy mankind; I repeat my third proposition, The Holy Spirit, who watches to save us, is infinitely more powerful than the devil, who seeks to destroy us.

The power of Satan is a *borrowed* power. This mischievous spirit cannot move without the permission of God; yea, he is only a minister of his will. This appears in the history of Job. Jealous of the prosperity, more still of the virtue of that holy man, he thought he could corrupt his virtue by touching his prosperity. But he could not execute one of his designs farther than, by God loosing his rein, allowed him to execute it. The power of the Spirit of God is a power proper and essential to him who exercises it.

Because the power of the devil is a borrowed power, it is a *limited* power, and although we are incapable of determining its bounds, yet we may reasonably believe they are narrow.

"Jehovah will not give his glory to any other," Isa. xlii. 8; least of all will he give it to such an unworthy being as the devil.

The power of the Spirit of God is a boundless power. He acts on exterior beings to make them concur in our salvation. He acts on our blood and humours, to stir them to motion, or to reduce them to a calm. He acts on our spirits, I mean on those subtle particles which, with inconceivable rapidity, convey themselves into the divers organs of our bodies, and have an extensive influence over our faculties. He acts on our memories, to impress them with some objects, and to efface others. He acts immediately on the substance of our souls; he produces ideas; he excites sensations; he suspends the natural effects of their union to the body. He sometimes, by this suspension, renders a martyr insensible to the action of the flames that consume him; and teaches him to say even amidst the most cruel torments, "I glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience experience, or proof;" (this is a metaphor taken from gold, which is proved by the fire that purifies it,) "and experience hope; and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto me," Rom. v. 3—5.

As the power of Satan is limited in its degrees, so is it also in its *duration*. Recollect a vision of St. John. "I saw," said he, "an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him that he should deceive the nations no more." Rev. xx. 1—3. Without making any vain attempts to fix the sense of this vision, let us be content to derive this instruction from it, that the power of the devil is limited in its duration, as well as in its degrees. There are periods in which Satan is *bound with the chain* of the superior power of the Holy Ghost. There are times in which he is *shut up* in a prison, *sealed* with the seal of the decrees of God; a seal that no created power can open.

The power of the Spirit of God is without limits in its periods as it is in its degrees. Christian! the worse thy times are, the more ready will this spirit be to succour thee, if thou implore his aid. Art thou near some violent operation? Does an object fatal to thine innocence fill thee with fear and dread? "Do the sorrows of death compass thee? Do the pains of hell get hold on thee? Call upon the name of the Lord;" say, "O Lord! I beseech thee, deliver my soul," Ps. cxvi. 3, 4. He will hear thy voice, and thy supplications; and, by the mighty action of his Spirit, he will "deliver thy soul from death, thine eyes from tears, and thy feet from falling," ver. 1. 8.

How invincible soever the hatred of Satan to us may appear, it cannot equal the love of God for us; whatever desire the devil may have to destroy us, it cannot compare with that which the Holy Spirit has to save us. It would be easy to enlarge these articles, and to increase their number; but our time is nearly

elapsed. What success can Satan have against a Spirit armed with so much power, and animated with so much love? "Surely, there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel. Ye have overcome them; because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world."

My brethren, the age for which God has reserved us has a great resemblance to that of the apostles. Satan is as indefatigable now in his attempts to destroy mankind as he was then. We also have our Simons, who call themselves "the great power of God." We have men like Ebion and Cerinthus: and if the ministers of Jesus Christ conquer the world, the world also conquers some of the ministers of Christ.

In which class, my brethren, must you be placed? In that of the disciples of false Christs, or in that of the disciples of the true Saviour? In the class of those whom the world conquers, or in the class of those who have conquered the world? On a clear answer to this question depends the consequence you must draw from the words of the text.

If you be of those who are overcome by the world, the text should alarm and confound you. You have put arms into the hands of this enemy. Nothing but a fund of obstinacy and malice could have induced you to resist the superior means which God has employed to save you. You are that vineyard, of which the prophet said, "My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill; and he fenced it, and built a tower, and planted it with the choicest vine; and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes," Isa. v. 1—3; and as you are the original of this portrait, you are also the object of the following threatening, "And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up, and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down, and I will lay it waste, I will also command the clouds, that they rain no rain upon it," ver. 5, 6.

But the text ought to fill you with joy and consolation, if you be of those who have overcome the world. What pleasure does it afford a believer to remember his combats with the world and his conquests over it! What unspeakable pleasure, to be able to say to himself, "In my youth my vigorous constitution seemed to threaten to drive me to the utmost excesses; in my mature age, I walked in some slippery paths, which made me almost despair of preserving my candour and innocence; here, a certain company had an absolute authority over my mind, and used it only to seduce me; there, an inveterate enemy put my resolution to the severest trial, and exhausted almost all my patience; here, false teachers, who were so dexterous in the art of enveloping the truth, that the most piercing eyes could scarcely discern it, had well nigh beguiled me; there, vio-

lent persecutors endeavoured to force me to an open abjuration of religion. Thanks be to God! I have resisted all these efforts; and, although Satan has sometimes succeeded in his designs, and has made me totter, he has always failed in his main purpose, of making me fall finally, and of tearing me for ever from the communion of Jesus Christ."

The victories you have obtained, my brethren, are pledges of others which you will yet obtain. Come again, next Lord's day, and renew your strength at the table of Jesus Christ. Come, and promise him anew, that you will be always faithful to that religion, the light of which shines in your eyes with so much glory. Come, and protest to him, that you will give yourselves wholly up to those powerful motives to virtue which his gospel affords. Come, and devote yourselves entirely to that Spirit which he has given you. Having done these things, fear nothing; let your courage redouble, as your dangers increase.

All the attacks, which Satan has made on your faith to this day, should prepare you for the greatest and most formidable attack of all; "ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin," Heb. xii. 4. The last enemy that shall "be destroyed is death," 1 Cor. xv. 26. The approaches of death are called "an agony," that is, the combat by excellence. Then Satan will attack you with cutting griefs, with doubts and remorse. He will represent to you a deplorable family, whose cries will pierce your hearts, and which, by tightening the ties that bind you to the world, will retain your souls on earth, while they long to ascend to heaven. He will terrify you with ideas of divine justice, and "fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries," Heb. x. 27. He will paint dismal colours to you, the procession at your funeral, the torch, the shroud, and the grave.

But "he who is in you," will render you invulnerable to all these attacks. He will represent to you the delightful relations you are going to form; the heavenly societies to which you are going to be united; the blessed angels, waiting to receive your souls. He will show you that in the tomb of Jesus Christ which will sanctify yours. He will remind you of that death of the Saviour which renders your's precious in the sight of God. He will open the gates of heaven to you, and will enable you to see, without a sigh, the foundations of the earth sinking away from your feet. He will change the groans of your death-beds into songs of triumph; and, amidst all your horrors, he will teach each of you to exult, "Blessed be the Lord my strength, who teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight," Ps. cxliv. 1. "Thanks be unto God, who always causeth us to triumph in Christ," 2 Cor. ii. 14. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" 1 Cor. xv. 55. God grant you this blessing. To him be honour and glory. Amen.

## SERMON XXVI.

THE ABSURDITY OF LIBERTINISM  
AND INFIDELITY.

PSALM xciv. 7—10.

*They say, the Lord shall not see: neither shall the God of Jacob regard it. Understand ye brutish among the people: and ye fools, when will ye be wise? He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see? He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not be correct? He that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know?*

INVECTIVE and reproach seldom proceed from the mouth of a man who loves truth and defends it. They are the unusual weapons of them who plead a desperate cause; who feel themselves hurt by a formidable adversary; who have not the equity to yield when they ought to yield; and who have no other part to take than that of supplying the want of solid reasons by odious names.

Yet, whatever charity we may have for erroneous people, it is difficult to see with moderation men obstinately maintaining some errors, guiding their minds by the corruption of their hearts, and choosing rather to advance the most palpable absurdities, than to give the least check to the most irregular passions.—Hear how the sacred authors treat people of this character: “My people is foolish, they have not known me; they are sottish children, they have no understanding. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass, his master’s crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Ephraim is like a silly dove without heart. O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you?” Jer. iv. 22; Isa. i. 3; Hos. vii. 11; Matt. iii. 7; and Gal. iii. 1.

Not to multiply examples, let it suffice to remark, that if ever there were men who deserved such odious names, they are such as our prophet describes. Those abominable men, I mean, who, in order to violate the laws of religion without remorse, maintain that religion is a chimera; who break down all the bounds which God has set to the wickedness of mankind, and who determine to be obstinate infidels, that they may be peaceable libertines.—The prophet therefore lays aside, in respect to them, that charity which a weak mind would merit, that errs only through the misfortune of a bad education, or the limits of a narrow capacity. “O ye most brutish among the people,” says he to them, “understand. Ye fools when will ye be wise?”

People of this sort I intend to attack to-day. Not that I promise myself much success with them, or entertain hopes of reclaiming them. These are the *fools* of whom Solomon says, “though thou shouldst bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him,” Prov. xxvii. 22. But I am endeavouring to prevent the progress of the evil, and to guard our youth

against favourable impressions of infidelity and libertinism, which have already decoyed away too many of our young people, and to confirm you all in your attachment to your holy religion. Let us enter into the matter.

In the style of the sacred authors, particularly in that of our prophet, to deny the existence of a God, the doctrine of Providence, and the essential difference between just and unjust, is one and the same thing. Compare the psalm out of which I have taken my text, with the fourteenth, with the fifty-third, and particularly with the tenth, and you will perceive, that the prophet confounds them, who say in their hearts, “there is no God,” with those who say, “God hath forgotten; he hideth his face, he will never see it,” Ps. x. 11.

In effect, although the last of these doctrines may be maintained without admitting the first, yet the last is no less essential to religion than the first. And although a man may be a deist, and an epicurean, without being an atheist, yet the system of an atheist is no more odious to God than that of an epicurean, and that of a deist.

I shall therefore make but one man of these different men, and, after the example of the prophet, I shall attack him with the same arms. In order to justify the titles that he gives an infidel, I shall attack,

I. His taste.

II. His policy.

III. His indocility.

IV. His logic, or, to speak more properly, his way of reasoning.

V. His morality.

VI. His conscience.

VII. His politeness and knowledge of the world.

In all these reflections, which I shall proportion to the length of these exercises, I shall pay more regard to the genius of our age than to that of the times of the prophet: and I shall do this the rather, because we cannot determine on what occasion the psalm was composed of which the text is a part.

I. If you consider the *taste*, the discernment, and choice of the people, of whom the prophet speaks, you will see he had a great right to denominate them, most brutish and foolish.” What an excess must a man have attained, when he hates a religion without which he cannot but be miserable! Who, of the happiest of mankind, does not want the succour of religion? What disgraces at court! What mortifications in the army! What accidents in trade! What uncertainty in science! What bitterness in pleasure! What injuries in reputation! What inconstancy in riches! What disappointments in projects! What infidelity in friendship! What vicissitudes in fortune! Miserable man! What will support thee under so many calamities? What miserable comforters are the passions in these sad periods of life! How inadequate is philosophy itself, how improper is Zeno, how unequal are all his followers, to the task of calming a poor mortal, when they tell him, “Misfortunes are inseparable from human nature. No man should think himself exempt from any thing that belongs to the condition of mankind. If maladies be violent, they will be short; if they be long,

they will be tolerable. A fatal necessity prevails over all mankind; complaints and regrets cannot change the order of things. A generous soul should be superior to all events, it should despise a tyrant, defy fortune, and render itself insensible to pain." Tolerable reflections in a book, plausible arguments in a public auditory! But weak reflections, vain arguments, in a bed of infirmity, while a man is suffering the pain of the gout or the stone!

O! how necessary is religion to us in these fatal circumstances! It speaks to us in a manner infinitely more proper to comfort us under our heaviest afflictions! Religion says to you, "Out of the mouth of the Most High proceedeth not evil and good," Lam. iii. 38.—"He formeth light, and createth darkness; he maketh peace, and createth evil," Isa. xlv. 7. "Shall there be evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it?" Amos iii. 6. Religion tells you, that if God afflicts you it is for your own advantage; it is, that, being uneasy on earth, you may take your flight towards heaven; that "your light affliction, which is but for a moment, may work for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," 2 Cor. iv. 17. Religion bids you "not to think it strange, concerning the fiery trial, which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you," 1 Pet. iv. 12, but to believe, that "the trial of your faith, being much more precious than that of gold, which perisheth, will be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ," chap. i. 7.

But religion is above all necessary in the grand vicissitude, in the fatal point, to which all the steps of life tend; I mean, at the hour of death. For at length, after we have rushed into all pleasures, after we have sung well, danced well, feasted well, we must die, we must die. And what, pray, except religion can support a man, struggling with "the king of terrors?" Job xviii. 14. A man, who sees his grandeur abased, his fortune distributed, his connexions dissolved, his senses benumbed, his grave dug, the world retiring from him, his bones hanging on the verge of the grave, and his soul divided between the horrible hope of sinking into nothing, and the dreadful fear of falling into the hands of an angry God.

In sight of these formidable objects, fall, fall, ye bandages of infidelity! ye veils of obscurity and depravity! and let me perceive how necessary religion is to man. It is that which sweetens the bitterest of all bitters. It is that which disarms the most invincible monster. It is that which transforms the most frightful of all objects into an object of gratitude and joy. It is that which calms the conscience, and confirms the soul. It is that which presents to the dying believer another being, another life, another economy, other objects, and other hopes. It is that which, "while the outward man perisheth, reneweth the inward man day by day," 2 Cor. iv. 16. It is that which dissipates the horrors of "the valley of the shadow of death," Ps. xxiii. 4. It is that which cleaves the clouds in the sight of a departing Stephen; tells a converted thief, "to-day shalt thou be in paradise," Luke xxiii. 43, and cries

to all true penitents, "Blessed are the dead, which die in the Lord," Rev. xiv. 13.

II. Having taken the unbelieving libertine on his own interest, I take him on the public interest, and having attacked his taste and discernment, I attack his *policy*. An infidel is a disturber of public peace; who, by undertaking to sap the foundations of religion, undermines those of society. *Society cannot subsist without religion*. If plausible objections may be formed against this proposition, it is because opponents have had the art of disguising it. To explain it, is to preclude the sophisms which are objected against it. Permit us to lay down a few explanatory principles.

First. When we say, *Society cannot subsist without religion*, we do not comprehend in our proposition all the religions in the world. The proposition includes only those religions which retain the fundamental principles that constitute the base of virtue; as the immortality of the soul, a future judgment, a particular Providence. We readily grant there may be in the world a religion worse than atheism; for example, any religion that should command its votaries to kill, to assassinate, to betray. And as we readily grant this truth to those who take the pains to maintain it, so whatever they oppose to us, taken from the religions of pagans, which were hurtful to society, is only vain declamations, that prove nothing against us.

Secondly. When we affirm, *Society cannot subsist without religion*, we do not pretend, that religion, which retains articles safe to society, may not so mix those articles with other principles pernicious to it, that they may seem at first sight worse than atheism. We affirm only, that to take the whole of such a religion, it is more advantageous to society to have it than to be destitute of it. All, therefore, that is objected against our proposition concerning those wars, crusades, and persecutions, which were caused by superstition, all this is only vain sophistry, which does not affect our thesis in the least.

Thirdly. When we say, *Society cannot subsist without religion*, we do not say, that religion, even the purest religion, may not cause some disorders in society; but we affirm only, that these disorders, however numerous, cannot counterbalance the benefits which religion procures to it. So that all objections, taken from the troubles which zeal for truth may have produced in some circumstances, are only vain objections, that cannot weaken our proposition.

Fourthly. When we affirm, *Society cannot subsist without religion*, we do not affirm that all the virtues which are displayed in society proceed from religious principles; so that all just magistrates are just for their love of equity; that all grave ecclesiastics are serious because they respect their character; that all chaste women are chaste from a principle of love to virtue: human motives, we freely grant, often prevail instead of better. We affirm only, that religious principles are infinitely more proper to regulate society than human motives. Many persons, we maintain, do actually govern their conduct by religious principles, and society would be incomparably more irregular, were there no religion in it. That list of vir-



tues, therefore, which only education and constitution produce, does not at all affect the principle which we are endeavouring to establish; and he, who takes his objections from it, does but beat the air.

Lastly. When we affirm, *Society cannot subsist without religion*, we do not say, that all atheists and deists ought therefore to abandon themselves to all sorts of vices; nor that they who have embraced atheism, if indeed there have been any such, were always the most wicked of mankind. Many people of these characters, we own, lived in a regular manner. We affirm only, that irreligion, of itself, opens a door to all sorts of vices, and that men are so formed, that their disorders would increase were they to disbelieve the doctrines of the existence of a God, of judgment, and of providence. All the examples, therefore, that are alleged against us, of a Diagoras, of a Theodorus, of a Pliny, of a Vanini, of some societies, real or chimerical, who, it is pretended, lived regular lives without the aid of religion; all these examples, I say, make nothing against our hypothesis.

These explanations being granted, we maintain, that no politician can succeed in a design of uniting men in one social body without supposing the truth and reality of religion. For, if there be no religion, each member of society may do what he pleases; and then each would give a loose to his passions; each would employ his power in crushing the weak; his cunning in deceiving the simple, his eloquence in seducing the credulous, his credit in ruining commerce, his authority in distressing the whole with horror and terror, and carnage and blood. Frightful disorders in their nature; but necessary on principles of infidelity! For, if you suppose these disorders may be prevented, their prevention must be attributed either to private interest, to worldly honour, or to human laws.

But *private interest* cannot supply the place of religion. True, were all men to agree to obey the precepts of religion, each would find his own account in his own obedience. But it does not depend on an individual to oppose a popular torrent, to reform the public, and to make a new world: and, while the world continues in its present state, he will find a thousand circumstances in which virtue is incompatible with private interest.

Nor can *worldly honour* supply the place of religion. For what is worldly honour? It is a superficial virtue; an art, that one man possesses, of disguising himself from another; of deceiving politely; of appearing virtuous rather than of being actually so. If you extend the limits of worldly honour farther, if you make it consist in that purity of conscience, and in that rectitude of intention, which are in effect firm and solid foundations of virtue, you will find, either that this is only a fine idea of what almost nobody is capable of, or, if I may be allowed to say so, that the virtues which compose your complex idea of worldly honour are really branches of religion.

Finally, *Human laws* cannot supply the place of religion. To whatever degree of perfection they may be improved, they will always savour in three things of the imperfection of the legislators.

1. They will be *imperfect in their substance*. They may prohibit, indeed, enormous crimes; but they cannot reach refined irregularities, which are not the less capable of troubling society for appearing less atrocious. They may forbid murder, theft, and adultery; but they can neither forbid avarice, anger, nor concupiscence. They will avail in the preserving and disposing of property, they may command the payment of taxes to the crown, and of debts to the merchant, the cultivation of sciences, and liberal arts; but they cannot ordain patience, meekness, and love; and you will grant, a society, in which there is neither patience, meekness, nor love, must needs be an unhappy society.

2. Human laws will be *weak in their motives*. The rewards which they offer may be forborne, for men may do without them; the punishments which they inflict may be suffered; and there are some particular cases in which they, who derogate from their authority, may advance their own interest more than if they constantly and scrupulously submit to it.

3. Human laws will be *restrained in their extent*. Kings, tyrants, masters of the world, know the art of freeing themselves from them. The laws avenge us on an insignificant thief, whom the pain of hunger and the fear of death tempted to break open our houses, to rob us of a trifling sum; but who will avenge us of magnificent thieves? For, my brethren, some men, in court cabinets, in dedicatory epistles, in the sermons of flatterers, and in the prologues of poets, are called conquerors, heroes, demi-gods; but, in this pulpit, in this church, in the presence of the God who fills this house, and who regards not the appearances of men, you conquerors, you heroes, you demi-gods, are often nothing but thieves and incendiaries. Who shall avenge us of those men who, at the head of a hundred thousand slaves, ravage the whole world, pillage on the right hand and on the left, violate the most sacred rights, and overwhelm society with injustice and oppression? Who does not perceive the insufficiency of human laws on this article, and the absolute necessity of religion?

III. The infidel carries his *indocility* to the utmost degree of extravagance, by undertaking alone to oppose all mankind, and by audaciously preferring his own judgment above that of the whole world, who, excepting a small number, have unanimously embraced the truths which he rejects.

This argument, taken from unanimous consent, furnishes in favour of religion, either a bare presumption, or a real demonstration, according to the different faces under which it is presented.

It furnishes a proof perhaps more than presumptive when it is opposed to the objections which an unbelieving philosopher alleges against religion. For, although the faith of a rational man ought not to be founded on a plurality of suffrages, yet unanimity of opinion is respectable, when it has three characters. 1. *When an opinion prevails in all places*. Prejudices vary with climates, and whatever depends on human caprice differs in France, and in Spain, in Europe and Asia, according as the inhabitants of each country have their blood hot or cold; their imagination strong or weak,

2. *When an opinion prevails at all times.* Prejudices change with the times; years instruct; and experience corrects errors, which ages have rendered venerable. 3. *When an opinion is contrary to the passions of men.* A prejudice that controls human passions cannot be of any long duration. The interest that a man has in discovering his mistake will put him on using all his endeavours to develop a delusion. These three characters agree to truth only.

I am aware that some pretend to enervate this argument, by the testimonies of some ancient historians, and by the relations of some modern travellers, who tell us of some individuals, and of some whole societies, who are destitute of the knowledge of God and of religion.

But, in order to a solid reply, we arrange these atheists and deists, who are opposed to us, in three different classes. The first consists of philosophers, the next of the senseless populace, and the last of profligate persons. *Philosophers*, if you attend closely to the matter, will appear, at least the greatest part of them will appear, to have been accused of having no religion, only because they had a purer religion than the rest of their fellow-citizens. They would not admit a plurality of gods, they were therefore accused of believing in no God. The infidelity of the *senseless populace* is favourable to our argument. We affirm, wherever there is a spark of reason, there is also a spark of religion. Is it astonishing that they who have renounced the former, should renounce the latter also? As to the *profligate*, who extinguish their own little light, we say of them, with a modern writer, *It is glorious to religion to have enemies of this character.*

But let us see whether this unanimous consent, which has afforded us a presumption in favour of religion, will furnish us with a demonstration against those who oppose it.

Authority ought never to prevail over our minds, against a judgment grounded on solid reasons, and received on a cool examination. But authority, especially an authority founded on an unanimity of sentiment, ought always to sway our minds in regard to a judgment formed without solid reasons, without examination, and without discussion. No men deserve to be called the most "foolish, and the most brutish\* among the people," so much as those men, who being, as the greatest number of infidels are, without study, and without knowledge; who, without deigning to weigh, and even without condescending to hear, the reasons on which all the men in the world, except a few, found the doctrine of the existence of God and of providence, give themselves an air of infidelity, and insolently say, Mercury, Trismegistus, Zoroaster, Pythagoras, Aristotle, Socrates, Plato, Seneca; moreover, Moses, Solomon, Paul, and the apostles, taught such and such doctrines; but, for my part, I am not of their opinion. And on what

\* Mr. Saurin follows the reading of the French version, *les plus brutaux, most brutish.* This is perfectly agreeable to the original, for the Hebrew forms the superlative degree by prefixing the letter *beth* to a noun-substantive, which follows an adjective, as here, Cant. i. 8; Prov. xxx. 30, *hominum brutissimi; hominum stupidissimi; totius hujus populi stupidissimi;* say commentators.

ground pray do you reject the doctrines which have been defended by such illustrious men? Do you know that, of all characters, there is not one so difficult to sustain as that which you affect? For, as you deny the most common notions, the clearest truths, sentiments, which are the most generally received, if you would maintain an appearance of propriety of character, you must be a superior genius. You must make profound researches, digest immense volumes, and discuss many an abstract question. You must learn the art of evading demonstrations, of palliating sophisms, of parrying ten thousand thrusts, that from all parts will be taken at you. But you, contemptible genius! you idiot! you, who hardly know how to arrange two words without offending against the rules of grammar, or to associate two ideas without shocking common sense, how do you expect to sustain a character which the greatest geniuses are incapable of supporting?

IV. Yet, as no man is so unreasonable as not to profess to reason; and as no man takes up a notion so eagerly as not to pique himself on having taken it up after a mature deliberation, we must talk to the infidel as to a philosopher, who always follows the dictates of reason, and argues by principles and consequences. Well, then! Let us examine *his logic*, or, as I said before, *his way of reasoning*; his way of reasoning, you will see, is his brutality, and his logic constitutes his extravagance.

In order to comprehend this, weigh, in the most exact and equitable balance, the argument of our prophet. "He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see? He that chastiseth the heathen, shall he not correct? He that teacheth man knowledge, shall he not know?" These are, in brief, three sources of evidences, which supply the whole of religion with proof. The first are taken from the works of nature; "He who planted the ear; He who formed the eye." The second are taken from the economy of Providence; "He that chastiseth the heathen." The third are taken from the history of the church; "He that teacheth man knowledge."

The first are taken from the wonderful works of *nature*. The prophet alleges only two examples; the one is that of the *ear*, the other that of the *eye*. None can communicate what he has not, is the most incontestable of all principles. He who communicates faculties to beings whom he creates, must needs possess whatever is most noble in such faculties. He who empowered creatures to hear, must himself hear. He who imparted the faculty of discerning objects, must needs himself discern them. Consequently, there is great extravagance in saying, "The Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it."

The same argument which the structure of our ears, and that of our eyes affords us, we derive also from all the wonderful works of the Creator. The Creator possesses all those great and noble excellencies, in a superior degree, the faint shadows of which he has communicated to creatures. On this principle, what an idea ought we to form of the Creator? From what a profound abyss of power must

those boundless spaces have proceeded, that immeasurable extent, in which imagination is lost, those vast bodies that surround us, those luminous globes, those flaming spheres which revolve in the heavens, along with all the other works that compose this universe? From what an abyss of wisdom must the succession of seasons, of day, and of night, have proceeded; those glittering stars, so exact in their courses, and so punctual in their duration; along with all the different secret springs in the universe, which with the utmost accuracy answer their design? From what an abyss of intelligence must rational creatures come, beings who constitute the glory of the intelligent world; profound politicians, who pry into the most intricate folds of the human heart; generals, who diffuse themselves through a whole army, animating with their eyes, and with their voices, the various regiments which compose their forces; admirable geniuses, who develope the mysteries of nature, rising into the heavens by dioptrics, descending into the deepest subterranean abysses; quitting continental confinement by the art of navigation; men who, across the waves, and in spite of the winds, contemn the rocks, and direct a few planks fastened together to sail to the most distant climes? Who can refuse to the author of all these wonderful works, the faculty of seeing and hearing?

But I do not pretend to deny, an infidel will say, that all these wonderful works owe their existence to a Supreme Cause; or, that the Supreme Being, by whom alone they exist, does not himself possess all possible perfection. But I affirm, that the Supreme Being is so great, and so exalted, that this elevation and inconceivable excellence prevent him from casting his eyes down to the earth, and paying any regard to what a creature, so mean, and so indigent as man, performs. A being of infinite perfection, does he interest himself in my conduct? Will he stoop to examine whether I retain or discharge the wages of my servants? Whether I be regular or irregular in my family? and so on. A king, surrounded with magnificence and pomp, holding in his powerful hands the reins of his empire; a king, employed in weighing reasons of state, in equipping his fleets, and in levying his armies; will he concern himself with the demarches of a few worms crawling beneath his feet?

But this comparison of God to a king, and of men to worms, is absurd and inconclusive. The economy of Providence, and the history of the church, in concert with the wonderful works of nature, discover to us ten thousand differences, between the relations of God to men, and those of a king to worms of the earth. No king has given intelligent souls to worms; but God has given intelligent souls to us. No king has proved, by ten thousand avenging strokes, and by ten thousand glorious rewards, that he observed the conduct of worms; but God, by ten thousand glorious recompenses, and by ten thousand vindictive punishments, has proved his attention to the conduct of men. No king has made a covenant with worms; but God has entered into covenant with us. No king has commanded worms to obey him; but God, we affirm, has

ordained our obedience to him. No king can procure eternal felicity to worms; but God can communicate endless happiness to us. A king, although he be a king, is yet a man; his mind is little and contracted, yea, infinitely contracted; it would be absurd, that he, being called to govern a kingdom, should fill his capacity with trifles: but is this your notion of the Deity? The direction of the sun, the government of the world, the formation of myriads of beings which live through universal nature, the management of the whole universe, cannot exhaust that intelligence, who is the object of our adoration and praise. While his thoughts include, in their boundless compass, all real and all possible beings, his eyes survey every individual as if each were the sole object of his attention.

These arguments being thus stated, either our infidel must acknowledge that they, at least, render probable the truth of religion in general, and of this thesis in particular, "God regardeth the actions of men;" or he refuses to acknowledge it. If he refuses to acknowledge it; if he seriously affirms, that all these arguments, very far from arising to demonstration, do not even afford a probability in favour of religion, then he is an idiot, and there remains no other argument to propose to him than that of our prophet, "Thou fool! When wilt thou be wise?"

I ever question whether any unbeliever could ever persuade himself of what he endeavours to persuade others; that is, that the assemblage of truths, which constitute the body of natural religion; that the heavy strokes of justice avenging vice, and the ecstatic rewards accompanying virtue, which appear in Providence; that the accomplishment of numerous prophecies; that the operation of countless miracles, which are related in authentic histories of the church; no, I cannot believe that any infidel could ever prevail with himself to think, that all this train of argument does not form a probability against a system of infidelity and atheism.

But if the power and the splendour of truth forces his consent; if he be obliged to own, that although my arguments are not demonstrative, they are, however, in his opinion, probable; then, with the prophet, I say to him, "O thou most brutish among the people!"

V. Why? Because, in comparing his logic with his *morality* (and this is my fifth article,) I perceive that nothing but an excess of brutality can unite the two things. Hear how he reasons; "It is probable, not only that there is a God, but also that this God regards the actions of men, that he reserves to himself the punishment of those who follow the suggestions of vice, and the rewarding of them who obey the laws of virtue. The system of irreligion is counterbalanced by that of religion. Perhaps irreligion may be well grounded; but perhaps religion may be so. In this state of uncertainty, I will direct my conduct on the principle that irreligion is well-grounded, and that religion has no foundation. "I will break in pieces," ver. 5, (this was the language, according to our Psalmist, of the unbelievers of his time,) "I will break in pieces the people of God; I will afflict his heritage; I will slay the

widow and the stranger;" or, to speak agreeably to the genius of our time, I will spend my life in pleasure, in gratifying my sensual appetites, in avoiding what would check me in my course; in a word, in living as if I were able to demonstrate either that there was no God, or that he paid no regard to the actions of men. Ought he not rather, on the contrary, as his mind is in a state of uncertainty between both, to attach himself to that which is the most safe? Ought he not to say, "I will so regulate my conduct, that if there be a God; whose existence indeed I doubt, but, however, am not able to disprove; if God pay any regard to the actions of men, which I question, but cannot deny, he may not condemn me." Judge ye, Christians! men who can thus brutally insult a dark futurity, and the bare possibility of those punishments which religion denounces against the wicked; such men, are they not either the most foolish, or the most brutish among the people? "Understand, ye most brutish among the people! Ye fools! When will ye be wise?"

VI. I would attack the conscience of the libertine, and terrify him with the language of my text, "He who teacheth man knowledge, shall not he correct?" That is to say, *He who gave you laws, shall not he regard your violation of them?* The persons whom I attack, I am aware, have defied us to find the least vestige of what is called conscience in them. But had you thoroughly examined yourselves when you set us at defiance on this article? Have you been as successful as you pretended to have been in your daring enterprise of freeing yourselves entirely from the terrors of conscience? Is this light quite extinct? This interior master, does he dictate nothing to you? This rack of the Almighty, does it never force you to confess what you would willingly deny? Are your knees so firm, that they never smite together with dread and horror?

The question, concerning the possibility of entirely freeing a man from the empire of conscience, is a question of fact. We think we have reason for affirming, that no man can bring himself to such a state. You pretend to be yourselves a demonstration of the contrary. You are, you declare, perfectly free from the attacks of conscience. This is a fact, and I grant it; I take your word: but here is another fact, in regard to which we ought to be believed in our turn, and on which our word is worth as much as yours. This is it: we have seen a great number of sick people; we have attended a great number of dying people. Among those, to whom in the course of our ministry we have been called, we have met with all sorts of characters. We have visited some, who once were what you profess to be now, people who boasted of having freed themselves from vulgar errors, from the belief of a God, a religion, a hell, a heaven, and of saying, when they abandon themselves to the utmost excesses, as you say, "The Lord shall not see; neither shall the God of Jacob regard it." But we have never met with a single individual, no, not one, who has not contradicted himself at the approach of death. It is said some have not done this. For our parts, we have never met with any such; we have never attended one who has not proved by his

example, that you will contradict yourselves also. We have often visited those who have renounced all their systems, and have cursed their infidelity a thousand and a thousand times. We have visited many who have required the aid of that very religion which they had ridiculed. We have often seen those who have called superstition to assist religion; and who have turned pale, trembled, and shaken, at the bare sight of our habit, before they had heard the sentence which God pronounced by our mouths. But we have never seen an individual, no, not one, who died in his pretended skepticism. It remains with you to account for these facts. You are to inquire, whether you yourselves will be more courageous. It belongs to you to examine, whether you can better support the character, and whether you can bear those dying agonies, those devouring regrets, those terrible misgivings, which made your predecessors unsay all, and discover as much cowardice at death as they had discovered brutality in their lives.

VII. Perhaps you have been surprised, my brethren, that we have reserved the weakest of our attacks for the last. Perhaps you object, that motives, taken from what is called *politeness*, and a *knowledge of the world*, can make no impressions on the minds of those who did not feel the force of our former attacks. It is not without reason, however, that we have placed this last. Libertines and infidels often pique themselves on their *gentility* and *good breeding*. They frequently take up their system of infidelity, and pursue their course of profaneness, merely through their false notions of gentility. Reason they think too scholastic, and faith pedantry. They imagine; that in order to distinguish themselves in the world, they must affect neither to believe nor to reason.

Well! you *accomplished gentleman!* do you know what the world thinks of you? The prophet tells you: but it is not on the authority of the prophet only, it is on the opinion of your fellow-citizens, that I mean to persuade you. You are considered in the world as the "most brutish" of mankind. "Understand, ye most brutish among the people." What is an *accomplished gentleman?* What is *politeness* and *good breeding?* It is the art of accommodating one's self to the genius of that society, and of seeming to enter into the sentiments of that company in which we are; of appearing to honour what they honour; of respecting what they respect; and of paying a regard even to their prejudices, and their weaknesses. On these principles, are you not the *rudest* and *most unpolished* of mankind? Or, to repeat the language of my text, are you not the "most brutish among the people?" You live among people who believe a God, and a religion; among people who were educated in these principles, and who desire to die in these principles; among people who have many of them sacrificed their reputation, their ease, and their fortune to religion. Moreover, you live in a society, the foundations of which sink with those of religion, so that were the latter undetermined, the former would therefore be sunk. All the members of society are interested in supporting this edifice, which you are endeavoring to destroy.

vouring to destroy. The magistrate commands you not to publish principles that tend to the subversion of his authority. The people requests you not to propagate opinions which tend to subject them to the passions of a magistrate, who will imagine he has no judge superior to himself. This distressed mother, mourning for the loss of her only son, prays you not to deprive her of the consolation which she derives from her present persuasion, that the son whom she laments is in possession of immortal glory. That sick man beseeches you not to disabuse him of an error that sweetens all his sorrows. You dying man begs you would not rob him of his only hope. The whole world conjures you not to establish truths (even supposing they were truths, an hypothesis which I deny and detest,) the whole world conjures you not to establish truths, the knowledge of which would be fatal to all mankind. In spite of so many voices, in spite of so many prayers, in spite of so many entreaties, and among so many people interested in the establishment of religion, to affirm that religion is a fable, to oppose it with eagerness and obstinacy, to try all your strength, and to place all your glory in destroying it: what is this but the height of rudeness, brutality, and madness? "Understand, ye most brutish among the people! Ye fools! When will ye be wise?"

Let us put a period to this discourse. We come to you, my brethren! When we preach against characters of these kinds, we think we read what passes in your hearts. You congratulate yourselves, for the most part, for not being of the number for detesting infidelity, and for respecting religion. But shall we tell you, my brethren? How odious soever the men are, whom we have described, we know others more odious still. There is a restriction in the judgment, which the prophet forms of the first, when he calls them in the text, "The most foolish, and the most brutish among the people;" and there are some men who surpass them in brutality and extravagance.

Do not think we exceed the truth of the matter, or that we are endeavouring to obtain your attention by paradoxes. Really, I speak as I think; I think there is more ingenuousness, and even (if I may venture to say so,) a less fund of turpitude in men who, having resolved to roll on with the torrent of their passions, endeavour to persuade themselves either that there is no God, or that he pays no regard to the actions of men; than in those who, believing the existence and providence of God, live as if they believed neither. Infidels were not able to support, in their excesses, the ideas of an injured benefactor, of an angry Supreme Judge, of an eternal salvation neglected, of daring hell, a "lake burning with fire and brimstone, and smoke ascending up for ever and ever," Rev. xxi. 8; xiv. 11. In order to give their passions a free scope, they found it necessary to divert their attention from all these terrifying objects, and to efface such shocking truths from their minds.

But you! who believe the being of a God! You! who believe yourselves under his eye, and who insult him every day without repentance, or remorse! You! who believe God holds thunder in his hand to crush sinners,

and yet live in sin! You! who think there are devouring flames, and chains of darkness; and yet presumptuously brave their horrors! You! who believe the immortality of your souls, and yet occupy yourselves about nothing but the present life! What a front! What a brazen front is yours!

You consider religion a revelation proceeding from heaven, and supported by a thousand authentic proofs. But, if your faith be well-grounded, how dangerous is your condition! For, after all, the number of evidences who attest the religion which you believe, this number of witnesses depose the truth of the practical part of religion, as well as the truth of the speculative part. These witnesses attest, that "without holiness, no man shall see the Lord; that neither thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God," Heb. xii. 14; 1 Cor. vi. 10. And consequently, these evidences attest that you thieves, that you covetous, that you drunkards, that you revilers, that you extortioners, shall be excluded from that happy mansion. Do you reject this proposition? Class yourselves then with infidels. Contradict nature; contradict conscience; contradict the church; deny the recovery of strength to the lame; the giving of sight to the blind; the raising of the dead; contradict heaven, and earth, and sea, nature, and every element. Do you admit the proposition? Acknowledge then that you must be irretrievably lost, unless your ideas be reformed and renewed, unless you renounce the world that enchants and fascinates your eyes.

This, my brethren, this is your remedy. This is what we hope for you. This is that to which we exhort you by the compassion of God, and by the great salvation which religion presents to you. Respect this religion. Study it every day. Apply its comforts to your sorrows, and its precepts to your lives. And, joining promises to precepts, and precepts to promises, assert your Christianity. Assure yourselves then of the peace of God in this life, and of a participation of his glory after death. God grant you this grace! Amen.

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## SERMON XXVII.

### THE SALE OF TRUTH.

PROV. xxiii. 23.

*Sell not the truth.*

"If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more," Numb. xxii. 18. This was the language of a man whose memory the church holds in execration: but who, when he pronounced these words, was a model worthy of the imitation of the whole world. A king sent for him; made him, in some sort, the arbiter of the success of his arms; considered him as one who could command victory as he pleased; put a commission to him into the hands of the most illustrious persons of his court; and accompanied it with presents, the magnificence of

which was suitable to the favour he solicited. Balaam was very much struck with so many honours, and charmed with such extraordinary presents. He felt all that a man of mean rank owed to a king, who sought and solicited his help; but he felt still more the majesty of his own character. He professed himself a minister of that God, before whom "all nations are as a drop of a bucket," Isa. xl. 15; and, considering Balak, and his courtiers, in this point of view, he sacrificed empty honour to solid glory, and exclaimed in this heroic style, "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more." Moreover, before Balak, in the presence of all his courtiers, and, so to speak, in sight of heaps of silver and gold sparkling to seduce him, he gave himself up to the emotions of the prophetic spirit that animated him, and, burning with that divine fire which this spirit kindled in his soul, he uttered these sublime words: "Balak, the king of Moab hath brought me from Aram, out of the mountains of the East, saying, Come, curse me Jacob, and come, defy Israel. How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? Or how shall I defy whom the Lord hath not defied? Behold, I have received commandment to bless, and he hath blessed, and I cannot reverse it.— Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel," Numb. xxiii. 7, 8. 20. 23. "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel," chap. xxiv. 5.

I would excite your zeal to-day, my brethren, by an example so worthy of your emulation. A few days ago, you remember, we endeavoured to show you the importance of this precept of Solomon, "Buy the truth." We pointed out to you then the means of making the valuable acquisition of truth. We told you God had put it up at a price, and that he required, in order to your possession of it, the sacrifice of dissipation, the sacrifice of indolence, the sacrifice of precipitancy of judgment, the sacrifice of prejudice, the sacrifice of obstinacy, the sacrifice of curiosity, and the sacrifice of the passions. In order to inspire you with the noble design of making all these sacrifices, we expatiated on the worth of truth, and endeavoured to convince you of its value in regard to that natural desire of man, the increase and perfection of his intelligence, which it fully satisfies; in regard to the ability which it affords a man to fill those posts in society to which Providence calls him; in regard to those scruples which disturb a man's peace, concerning the choice of a religion, scruples which truth perfectly calms; and, finally, in regard to the banishment of those doubts, which distress people in a dying hour, doubts which are always intolerable, and which become most exquisitely so, when they relate to questions so interesting as those that revolve in the mind of a dying man.

Having thus endeavoured to engage you to "buy the truth," when it is proposed to you, we are going to exhort you to-day to preserve it carefully after you have acquired it. We are going to enforce this salutary advice, that were ten thousand envoys from Moab, and

from Midian, to endeavour to ensnare you, you ought to sacrifice all things rather than betray it, and to attend to that same Solomon, who last Lord's day said, "Buy the truth," saying to you, to-day, "and sell it not."

If what we shall propose to you now requires less exercise of your minds than what we said to you in our former discourse, it will excite a greater exercise of your hearts.— When you hear us examine the several cases in which "the truth is sold," you may perhaps have occasion for all your respect for us to hear with patience what we shall say on these subjects.

But, if a preacher always enervates the force of his preaching when he violates the precepts himself, the necessity of which he urges on others, does he not enervate them in a far more odious manner still, when he violates them while he is recommending them; preaching humility with pride and arrogance; enforcing restitution on others, while he himself is clothed with the spoils of the fatherless and the widow; pressing the importance of fraternal love with hands reeking, as it were, with the blood of his brethren? What idea, then, would you form of us, if, while we are exhorting you "not to sell truth," any human motives should induce us to *sell* it, by avoiding to present portraits too striking, lest any of you should know yourselves again. God forbid we should do so! "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I would not go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to speak less or more." Allow us, then, that noble liberty which is not inconsistent with the profound respect which persons of our inferior station owe to an auditory as illustrious as this to which we have the honour to preach. Permit us to forget every interest but that of *truth*, and to have no object in view but your salvation and our own. And thou, God of *truth*! fill my mind during the whole of this sermon, with this exhortation of thine apostle: "I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine," 2 Tim. iv. 1, 2. "Take heed unto thyself, and unto thy doctrine; for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee," 1 Tim. iv. 16. Amen.

You may comprehend what we mean by "selling truth," if you remember what we said it is "to buy" it. *Truth*, according to our definition last Lord's day, is put in our text for an agreement between the nature of an object and the idea we form of it. "To buy truth" is to make all the sacrifices which are necessary for the obtaining of ideas conformable to the objects of which they ought to be the express images. On this principle, our text, I think, will admit of only three senses, in each of which we may "sell truth."

1. "Sell not the truth," that is to say, do not lose the disposition of mind, that aptness to universal truth, when you have acquired it. Justness of thinking, and accuracy of reasoning, are preserved by the same means by which they are procured. As the constant use of these means is attended with difficulty, the

practice of them frequently tires people out. There are seeds of some passions which remain, as it were, buried during the first years of life, and which vegetate only in mature age. There are virtues which some men would have practised till death, had their condition been always the same. A Roman historian remarks of an emperor,\* that "he always would have merited the imperial dignity, had he never arrived at it." He who was a model of docility, when he was only a disciple, became inaccessible to reason and evidence as soon as he was placed in a doctor's chair. He who applied himself wholly to the sciences, while he considered his application as a road to the first offices in the state, became wild in his notions, and lost all the fruit of his former attention, as soon as he obtained the post which had been the object of all his wishes. As people neglect advancing in the path of *truth*, they lose the habit of walking in it. The mind needs aliment and nourishment as well as the body. "To sell truth" is to lose, by dissipation, that aptness to "universal truth" which had been acquired by attention; to lose, by precipitation, by prejudice, by obstinacy, by curiosity, by gratifying the passions, those dispositions which had been acquired by opposite means. This is the first sense that may be given to the precept, "Sell not the truth."

2. The Wise Man perhaps intended to excite those who possess superior knowledge to communicate it freely to others. He intended, probably, to reprove those mercenary souls, who trade with their wisdom, and "sell it," as it were, by the penny. This sense seems to be verified by the following words, "wisdom, and instruction, and understanding." Some supply the first verb "buy, buy wisdom, and instruction." The last verb may also be naturally joined to the same words, and the passage may be read, "Sell neither wisdom nor instruction." Not that Solomon intended to subvert an order established in society; for it is equitable, that they who have spent their youth in acquiring literature, and have laid out a part of their fortune in the acquisition, should reap the fruit of their labour, and be indemnified for the expense of their education: "the workman is worthy of his meat, and they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel," Matt. x. 10; 1 Cor. ix. 14. Yet the same Jesus Christ, who was the herald as well as the pattern of disinterestedness, said to his apostles when he was speaking to them of the miracles which he had empowered them to perform, and of the truths of the gospel in general, which he intrusted them to preach, "Freely ye have received, freely give," Matt. x. 8. And St. Paul was so far from staining his apostleship with a mercenary spirit, that when he thought a reward for his ministry was likely to tarnish its glory, he chose rather to work with his hands than to accept it. That great man, who had acquired the delightful habit of living upon meditation and study, and of expanding his soul in contemplating abstract things; that great man was seen to supply his wants by working at the mean trade

of tent-making, while he was labouring at the same time in constructing the mystical tabernacle, the church: greater in this noble abasement than his pretended successors in all their pride and pomp. A man of superior understanding ought to devote himself to the service of the state. His depth of knowledge should be a public fount, from which each individual should have liberty to draw. A physician owes that succour to the poor which his profession affords; the counsellor owes them his advice; the casuist his directions; without expecting any other reward than that which God has promised to benevolence. I cannot help repeating here the idea which Cicero gives us of those ancient Romans, who lived in the days of liberty, and of the true glory of Rome. "They acquainted themselves," says that orator, "with whatever might be useful to the republic. They were seen walking backward and forward, in the public places of the city, in order to afford a freedom of access to any of the citizens who wanted their advice, not only on matters of jurisprudence, but on any other affairs, as on the marrying of a daughter, the purchasing, or improving of a farm, or, in short, on any other article that might concern them."\*

3. A third sense may be given to the precepts of Solomon, and by *selling*, we may understand what, in modern style, we call *betraying truth*. To *betray truth* is, through any sordid motive, to suppress, or to disguise things of consequence, to the glory of religion, the interest of a neighbour, or the good of society.

It would be difficult to demonstrate which of these three meanings is most conformable to the design of Solomon. In detached sentences, such as most of the writings of Solomon are, an absolute sense cannot be precisely determined; but, if the interpreter ought to suspend his judgment, the preacher may regulate his choice by circumstances, and, of several probable meanings, all agreeable to the analogy of faith, and to the genius of the sacred author, may take that sense which best suits the state of his audience. If this be a wise maxim, we are obliged, I think, having indicated the three significations, to confine ourselves to the third.

In this sense we observe six orders of persons who may "sell truth."

- I. The courtier.
- II. The indiscreet zealot.
- III. The Apostate, and the Nicodemite.
- IV. The judge.
- V. The politician.
- VI. The pastor.

A courtier may "sell truth" by a mean adulation. An indiscreet zealot by pious frauds, instead of defending *truth* with the arms of *truth* alone. An apostate, and a Nicodemite, by "loving this present world," 2 Tim. iv. 10, or by fearing persecution when they are called "to give a reason of the hope that is in them," 1 Pet. iii. 15, and to follow the example of that Jesus *who*, according to the apostle, "before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession," 1 Tim. vi. 13. A judge may "sell truth" by a spirit of partiality,

\* Galba. Tacit. Hist. Lib. i.

\* De Oratore. Lib. iii.

when we ought to be blind to the appearance of persons. A politician, by a criminal caution, when he ought to probe the wounds of the state, and to examine in public assemblies what are the real causes of its decay, and who are the true authors of its miseries. In fine, a pastor may "sell truth" through a cowardice that prevents his "declaring all the counsel of God;" his "declaring unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin," Micah iii. 8. Thus the flattery of the courtier; the pious frauds of the indiscreet zealot; the worldly mindedness and timidity of the apostate, and of the Nicodemite; the partiality of the judge; the criminal circumspection of the members of legislative bodies; and the cowardice of the pastor; are six defects which we mean to expose, six sources of reflections that will supply the remainder of this discourse.

I. Mean *adulation* is the first vice we attack; the first way of *selling truth*. We intend here that fraudulent traffic which aims, at the expense of a few unmeaning applauses, to procure solid advantages; and, by erecting an altar to the person addressed, and by offering a little of the smoke of the incense of flattery, to conciliate a profitable esteem. This unworthy commerce is not only carried on in the palaces of kings, it is almost every where seen, where superiors and inferiors meet; because, generally speaking, wherever there are superiors, there are people who love to hear the language of adulation; and because, wherever there are inferiors, there are people mean enough to let them hear it. What a king is in his kingdom, a governor is in his province; what a governor is in his province, a nobleman is in his estate; what a nobleman is in his estate, a man of trade is among his workmen and domestics. Farther, the incense of flattery does not always ascend from an inferior only to a superior, people on the same line in life mutually offer it to one another, and sometimes the superior stoops to offer it to the inferior. There are men who expect that each member of society should put his hand to forward the building of a fortune which entirely employs themselves, and which is the spring of every action of their own lives; people who aim to shelter themselves under the protection of the great, to incorporate their own reputation with that of illustrious persons, to accumulate wealth, and to lord it over the lower part of mankind. These people apply one engine to all men, which is flattery. They proportion it to the various orders of persons whom they address; they direct it according to their different foibles; vary it according to various circumstances; give it a different ply at different times; and artfully consecrate to it, not only their voice, but whatever they are, and whatever they possess. They practice an absolute authority over their countenances, compose them to an air of pleasure, distort them to pain, gild them with gladness, or becloud them with grief. They are indefatigable in applauding; they never present themselves before a man without exciting agreeable ideas in him, and these they never fail to excite when, blind to his frailties, they affect an air of ecstasy at his virtues, and hold themselves ready to publish his abilities, and his

acquisitions for prodigies. They acquire friends of the most opposite characters, because they praise alike the most opposite qualities. They bestow as much praise on the violent as on the moderate; they praise pride as much as they praise humility; and give equal encomiums to the lowest avarice and to the highest generosity.

Such is the character of the flatterer. This is the first traffic which the Wise Man forbids. "Sell not the truth." Shameful traffic! a traffic unworthy not only of a Christian, and of a philosopher; but of every man who preserves the smallest degree of his primitive liberty. Against this traffic the church and the synagogue, Christianity and paganism, St. Paul and Seneca have alike remonstrated. A traffic shameful not only to him who offers this false incense, but to him who loves and enjoys it. The language of a courtier who elevates his prince above humanity, is often a sure mark of his inward contempt of him. A man who exaggerates and amplifies your virtues, takes it for granted that you know not yourself. He lays it down for a principle, that you are vain, and that you love to see yourself only on your bright side. His adulation is grounded on a belief of your injustice, he knows you arrogate a glory to yourself to which you have no just pretension. He lays it down for a principle, that you are destitute of all delicacy of sentiment, and that you prefer empty applause before respectful silence. He lays it down for a principle, that you have little or no religion, as you violate its most sacred law, humility. A man must be very short-sighted, he must be a mere novice in the world, and a stranger to the human heart, if he be fond of flattering eulogiums. There is no king so cruel, no tyrant so barbarous, no monster so odious, whom flattery does not elevate above the greatest heroes. The traffic of the flatterer, then, is equally shameful to him who *sells truth*, and to him who buys it.

II. *Indiscreet zealots* make the second class of them who "sell truth." If the zealot be guilty of the same crime, he is so from a motive more proper, it should seem, to exculpate him. He uses falsehood only to establish truth, and if he commit a fraud, it is a fraud consecrated to religion. I am not surprised, my brethren, that the partisans of erroneous communities have used this method; and that they have advanced, to establish it, arguments, in their own opinions, inconclusive, and facts of their own invention. A certain cardinal who made himself famous in the church by his theological attacks on the protestants, and who became more so still by the repulses which the latter gave him, has been justly reproached with using these methods. People have applied that comparison to him which he applied to a certain African named Leo, whom he likens to that amphibious bird in the fable, which was sometimes a bird, and sometimes a fish: a bird when the king of the fish required tribute, and a fish when the king of the birds demanded it.\*

To supply the want of truth with falsehood is a kind of *wisdom* that better becomes "the

\* See Bayle in the article *Bellurmine*. Rem. D.



children of this world," Luke xvi. 8, than the ministers of the living God. It would be hardly credible, unless we saw it with our own eyes, that the ministers of God should use the same arms which the ministers of the devil employ; and endeavour to support a religion founded on reason and argument, by the very same artifices which are only needful to uphold a religion founded alone on the fancies of men. We blush for religion when we see the primitive fathers adopting this method, not only in the heat of argument, when disputants forget their own principles, but coolly and deliberately. We are ashamed of primitive times, when he hear a St. Jerome commending those who said not what they believed, but whatever they thought proper to confound their pagan opponents; making a captious distinction between what was written in *dogmatizing*, and what was written in *disputing*; and maintaining that, in disputing, people were free to use what arguments they would, to promise bread, and to produce a stone.\* We are confounded at finding, among the archives of Christianity, letters of Lentulus to the Roman senate in favour of Jesus Christ; those of Pilate to Tiberius; of Paul to Seneca, and of Seneca to Paul; yea, those of king Agbarus to Jesus Christ, and of Jesus Christ to king Agbarus. We are shocked at hearing the fathers compare the pretended sybilline oracles to the inspired prophecies; attribute an equal authority to them; cite them with the same confidence; and thus expose Christianity to the objections of its enemies.† And would to God we ourselves had never seen among us celebrated divines derive, from the visions of enthusiasts, arguments to uphold the truth!

Mere human prudence is sufficient to perceive the injustice of this method. The pious frauds of the primitive ages are now the most powerful objections that the enemies of religion can oppose against it. They have excited suspicions about the real monuments of the church, by producing the spurious writings which an indiscreet zeal had propagated for its glory; and those unworthy artifices have much oftener shaken believers than reclaimed infidels.

God anciently forbade the Jews to offer him in sacrifice "the hire of a whore, or the price of a dog," Deut. xxiii. 18. Will he suffer Christianity to be established as the religion of Mohammed is propagated? Will Jesus Christ call Belial to his aid? Shall light apply to the powers of darkness to spread the glory of its rays? And do we not always sin against this precept of Solomon, "Sell not the truth," when we part with truth even to obtain truth itself?

III. We put apostates, and time-servers, or Nicodemites, in the third class of those who "Sell the truth."

1. Apostates, . . . . . But we need not halt to attack an order of men against which every thing becomes a pursuing minister of the vengeance of Heaven. The idea they leave in the community they quit;

the contempt of that which embraces them; the odious character they acquire; the horrors of their own consciences; the thundering language of our Scriptures; the dreadful examples of Judas and Julian, of Hymeneus, Philetus, and Spira; the fires and flames of hell: these are arguments against apostacy; these are the gains of those who "sell the truth" in this manner.

2. But there is another order of men to whom we would show the justice of the precept of Solomon; they are persons who "sell the truth," through the fear of those punishments which persecutors inflict on them who have courage to hang out the bloody flag; I mean time-servers, Nicodemites. You know them, my brethren: would to God the misfortunes of the times had not given us an opportunity of knowing them so well! They are the imitators of that timid disciple who admired Jesus Christ, who was fully convinced of the truth of his doctrine, stricken with the glory of his miracles, penetrated with the divinity of his mission, and his proselyte in his heart; but who, "for fear of the Jews," John vii. 13, durst not venture to make an open profession of the truth, and, as the evangelist remarks, "went to Jesus by night," chap. iii. 2. Thus our modern Nicodemites. They are shocked at superstition, they thoroughly know the truth, they form a multitude of ardent wishes for the prosperity of the church, and desire, they say, to see the soldiers of Jesus Christ openly march with their banners displayed, and to list themselves under them the first: but they only pretend, that in time of persecution, when they cannot make an open profession without ruining their families, sacrificing their fortunes, and fleeing their country, it is allowable to yield to the times, to disguise their Christianity, and to be antichristian without, provided they be Christians within.

1. But, if their pretences be well-grounded, what mean these express decisions of our Scriptures? "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven: but whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven. He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life, shall lose it; and he that loseth his life, for my sake, shall find it. Whosoever, therefore, shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels," Matt. x. 32; Mark viii. 38.

2. If there be any ground for the pleas of temporizers, why do the scriptures set before us the examples of those believers who walked in paths of tribulation, and followed Jesus Christ with heroic firmness in steps of crucifixion and martyrdom? Why record the example of the three children of Israel, who chose rather to be cast into a fiery furnace, than to fall down before a statue, set up by an idolatrous king? Dan. iii. 19. Why that of the martyrs, who suffered under the barbarous Antiochus, and the courage of that mother,

\* Epist. ad. Pammach. Voyez Daille sur le droit usage des peres, chap. vi.

† Vid. Blondel des Sibilles. Liv. i. chap. v. x. xiv. and xlv.

who, after she had seven times suffered death, so to speak, by seeing each of her seven sons put to death, suffered an eighth, by imitating their example, and by crowning their martyrdom with her own? Why that "cloud of witnesses, who through faith were stoned, were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword, wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented?" Heb. xi. 37.

3. If the pretences of time-servers be well-grounded, what was the design of the purest actions of the primitive church; of those councils which were held on account of such as had the weakness to cast a grain of incense into the fire that burned on the altar of an idol? Why those rigorous canons which were made against them; those severe penalties that were inflicted on them; those delays of their absolution, which continued till near the last moments of their lives?

If these pretences be allowable, what is the use of all the promises which are made to confessors and martyrs; the *white garments*, that are reserved for them; the *palms* of victory which are to be put in their hands; the crowns of glory that are prepared for them; the reiterated declarations of the author and finisher of their faith, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne. Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown," Rev. iii. 11. 21.

4. If these pretences be reasonable, would God have afforded such miraculous assistance to his servants the martyrs, in the time of their martyrdom? It was in the suffering of martyrdom that St. Peter saw an angel, who opened the prison-doors to him, Acts xii. 7. In suffering martyrdom, Paul and Silas felt the prison, that confined them, shake, and their chains loosen and fall off, ver. 14. In suffering martyrdom, St. Stephen "saw the heavens opened, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God," chap. xvi. 26; and viii. 56. In the suffering of martyrdom, Barlaam sang this song, "Blessed be the Lord, who teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight," Ps. cxliv. 1.\* It was during their martyrdom, that Perpetua and Felicitas saw a ladder studded with swords, daggers, and instruments of punishment that reached up to heaven, at the top of which stood Jesus Christ, encouraging them.† And you, my brethren, in participating the sufferings of primitive believers, have you not partaken of their consolations? Sometimes Providence opened ways of escape in spite of the vigilance of your enemies. Sometimes powerful protections, which literally fulfilled the promise of the gospel, that he who should quit any temporal advantage for the sake of it, should "receive a hundred fold, even in this life." Sometimes deliverances, which seemed perfectly miraculous. Sometimes a firmness equal to the most cruel tortures; an heroic courage, that astonished, yea, that wearied out your executioners. Sometimes transporting joys, which enabled you to say, "When we are weak, then are we strong. We are more than conquerors, through him

that loved us. We glory in tribulations also." So many reflections, so many arguments, which subvert the pretences of Nicodemites; and which prove that with the greatest reason, we place them among those who betray the truth.

But, great God! to what am I doomed this day? Who are these time-servers, who are these Nicodemites, whose condemnation we are denouncing? How many of my auditors have near relations, enveloped in this misery? Where is there a family of our exiles, to which the words of a prophet may not be applied; "My flesh is in Babylon, and my blood among the inhabitants of Chaldea," Jer. li. 35. Ah! shame of the reformation! Ah! fatal memoir! just cause of perpetual grief! Thou Rome! who insultest and gloriest over us, do not pretend to confound us with the sight of galleys filled by thee with protestant slaves, whose miseries thou dost aggravate with reiterated blows, with galling chains, with pouring vinegar into their wounds! Do not pretend to confound us by showing us gloomy and filthy dungeons, inaccessible to every ray of light, the horror of which thou dost augment by leaving the bodies of the dead in those dens of the living: these horrid holes have been changed into delightful spots, by the influences of that grace which God has "shed abroad in the hearts" of the prisoners, Rom. v. 5, and by the songs of triumph which they have incessantly sung to his glory. Do not pretend to confound us by showing us our houses demolished, our families dispersed, our fugitive flocks driven to wander over the face of the whole world. These objects are our glory, and thy insults are our praise. Wouldst thou cover us with confusion? Show us, show us the souls which thou hast taken from us. Reproach us, not that thou hast extirpated heresy; but that thou hast caused us to renounce religion: not that thou hast made martyrs; but that thou hast made Protestants apostates from the truth.

This is our tender part. Here it is that no sorrow is like our sorrow. On this account "tears run down the wall of the daughter of Zion like a river, day and night," Lam. ii. 18. What shall I say to you, my brethren, to comfort you under your just complaints? Had you lost your fortunes, I would tell you, a Christian's treasure is in heaven. Had you been banished from your country only, I would tell you, a faithful soul finds its God in desert wildernesses, in dreary solitudes, and in the most distant climes. Had you lost only your churches, I would tell you, the favour of God is not confined to places and to walls. But, you weeping consorts; who show me your husbands separated from Jesus Christ, by an abjuration of thirty years; what shall I say to you? What shall I tell you, ye tender mothers! who show me your children lying at the foot of the altar of an idol?

O God! are thy compassions exhausted? Has religion, that source of endless joy, no consolation to assuage our grief? These deserters of the truth are our friends, our brethren, other parts of ourselves. Moreover, they are both apostates and martyrs: apostates, by their fall; martyrs, by their desire, although feeble, of rising again: apostates, by the fears that re-

\* Basil. Tom. i. 440. Homil. 18. Edit. de Paris, 1638.

† Tertul. de anima. Cap. lv.

tain them; martyrs, by the emotions that urge them: apostates, by the superstitious practices which they are constrained to perform; martyrs, by the secret sighs and tears which they address to heaven. O may the martyr obtain mercy for the apostate! May their frailty excuse their fall! May their repentance expiate their idolatry! or rather, May the blood of Jesus Christ, covering apostacy, frailty, and the imperfection of repentance itself, disarm thy justice, and excite thy compassion!

IV. We have put *judges* in the fourth class of those to whom the text must be addressed, "Sell not the truth."

1. A judge "sells truth," if he be partial to him whose cause is unjust, on account of his connexions with him. When a judge ascends the judgment-seat he ought entirely to forget all the connexions of friendship, and of blood. He ought to guard against himself, lest the impressions that connexions have made on his heart, should alter the judgment of his mind, and should make him turn the scale in favour of those with whom he is united by tender ties. He ought to "bear the sword" indifferently, Rom. xiii. 4, like another Levi, against his brother, and against his friend, and to merit the praise that was given to that holy man. "He said unto his father, and to his mother, I have not seen him, neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children," Deut. xxiii. 19. He ought to involve his eyes in a thick mist, through which it would be impossible for him to distinguish from the rest of the crowd, persons for whom nature so powerfully pleads.

2. A judge "sells truth," when he suffers himself to be dazzled with the false glare of the language of him who pleads against justice. Some counsellors have the front to affirm a maxim, and to reduce it to practice, in direct opposition to the oaths they took when they were invested with their character. The maxim I mean is this; as the business of a judge is to distinguish truth from falsehood, so the business of a counsellor is, not only to place the rectitude of a cause in a clear light, but also to attribute to it all that can be invented by a man expert in giving sophistry the colours of demonstration and evidence. To suffer himself to be misled by the *ignes fatui* of eloquence, or to put on the air of being convinced, either to spare himself the trouble of discussing a truth, which the artifice of the pleader envelopes in obscurity; or to reward the orator in part for the pleasure he has afforded him by the vivacity and politeness of his harangue: each of these is a *sale of truth*, a sacrificing of the rights of widows and orphans, to a propriety of gesture, a tour of expression, a figure of rhetoric.

3. A judge *sells truth*, when he yields to the troublesome assiduity of an indefatigable solicitor. The practice of soliciting the judges is not the less irregular for being authorized by custom. When people avail themselves of that access to judges, which, in other cases belongs to their reputation, their titles, or their birth, they lay snares for their innocence. A client ought not to address his judges, except in the person of him, to whom he has committed his cause, imparted his grounds of action,

and left the making of the most of them. To regard solicitations instead of reproofing them; to suffer himself to be carried away with the talk of a man, whom the avidity of gaining his cause inflames, inspires subtle inventions, and dictates emphatical expressions, is, again, to "sell truth."

4. A judge *sells truth*, when he receives presents. "Thou shalt not take a gift; for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous," Deut. xvi. 19. God gave this precept to the Jews.

5. A judge makes a *sale of truth*, when he is terrified at the power of an oppressor. It has been often seen in the most august bodies, that suffrages have been constrained by the tyranny of some, and sold by the timidity of others. Tyrants have been known to attend, either in their own persons, or in those of their emissaries, in the very assemblies which were convened on purpose to maintain the rights of the people, and to check the progress of tyranny. Tyrants have been seen to endeavour to direct opinions by signs of their hands, and by motions of their eyes; they have been known to intimidate judges by menaces, and to corrupt them by promises; and judges have been known to prostrate their souls before these tyrants, and to pay the same devoted deference to maxims of tyranny, that is due to nothing but an authority tempered with equity. A judge on his tribunal ought to fear none but him whose sword is committed to him. He ought to be not only a defender of *truth*, he ought also to become a martyr for it, and confirm it with his blood, were his blood necessary to confirm it.

"He that hath ears to hear, let him hear," Matt. xi. 15. There is a primitive justice essential to moral beings; a justice independent of the will of any Superior Being; because there are certain primitive and essential relations between moral beings, which belong to their nature. As, when you suppose a square, you suppose a being that has four sides; as, when you suppose a body, you suppose a being, from which extent is inseparable, and independent of any positive will of a Superior Being; so when you suppose a benefit, you suppose an equity, a justice, a fitness, in gratitude, because there is an essential relation between gratitude and benefit; and the same may be said of every moral obligation.

The more perfect an intelligent being is, the more intelligence is detached from prejudices; the clearer the ideas of an intelligent mind are, the more fully will it perceive the opposition and the relation, the justice and the injustice, that essentially belong to the nature of moral beings. In like manner, the more perfection an intelligence has, the more does it surmount irregular motions of the passions; and the more it approves justice, the more will it disapprove injustice; the more it is inclined to favour what is right, the more will it be induced to avoid what is wrong.

God is an intelligence, who possesses all perfections; his ideas are perfect images of objects; and on the model of his all objects were formed. He sees, with perfect exactness, the essential relations of justice and injustice. He is necessarily inclined, though without con-

straint, and by the nature of his perfections, to approve justice, and to disapprove injustice; to display his attributes in procuring happiness to the good, and misery to the wicked.

In the present economy, a part of the reasons of which we discover, while some of the reasons of it are hidden in darkness, God does not immediately distinguish the cause that is founded on equity, from that which is grounded on iniquitous principles. This office he has deposited in the hands of judges; he has intrusted them with his power; he has committed his sword to them; he has placed them on his tribunal; and said to them, "Ye are gods," Ps. lxxxii. 6. But the more august the tribunal, the more inviolable the power, the more formidable the sword, the more sacred the office, the more rigorous will their punishments be, who, in any of the ways we have mentioned, betray the interests of that *truth* and justice with which they are intrusted. Some judges have defiled the tribunal of "the Judge of all the earth," Gen. xviii. 25, on which they were elevated. Into the bowels of the innocent they have thrust that sword which was given them to maintain order, and to transfix those who subvert it. That supreme power, which God gave them, they have employed to war against that God himself who vested them with it, and him they have braved with insolence and pride. "I saw under the sun the place of judgment, that wickedness was there; and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there; and I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked. If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and the violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter; for He, that is higher than the highest, regardeth it, and there be higher than they. Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. "Buy the truth, and sell it not," Eccl. iii. 16; v. 3; Ps. ii. 10.

V. This precept of Solomon, "Sell not the truth," regards the *politician*, who, by a timid circumspection, uses an artful concealment, when he ought to probe state wounds to the bottom, and to discover the real authors of its miseries, and the true causes of its decline. In these circumstances, it is not enough to mourn over public calamities in secret; they must be spoken of with firmness and courage; the statesman must be the mouth and the voice of all those oppressed people, whose only resources are prayers and tears; he must discover the fatal intrigues that are whispered in corners against his country; unveil the mysterious springs of the conduct of him, who, under pretence of public benefit, seeks only his own private emolument; he must publish the shame of him, who is animated with no other desire, than that of building his own house on the ruins of church and state; he must arouse him from his indolence, who deliberates by his own fire-side, when imminent dangers require him to adopt bold, vigorous, and effectual measures; he must, without scruple, sacrifice him, who himself sacrifices to his own avarice or ambition, whole societies; he must fully persuade other senators, that, if the misfortunes of the times require the death of any, it must be that of him who kindled the fire, and not of him who is ready to

shed the last drop of his blood to extinguish it. To keep fair with all, on these occasions, and by a timid silence, to avoid incurring the displeasure of those who convulse the state, and of those who cry for vengeance against them, is a conduct not only unworthy of a Christian, but unworthy of a good patriot. Silence then is an atrocious crime, and to *suppress truth* is to *sell it*, to *betray it*.

How does an orator merit applause, my brethren, when, being called to give his suffrage for the public good, he speaks with that fire, which the love of his country kindles, and knows no law but equity, and the safety of the people! With this noble freedom the heathens debated; their intrepidity astonishes only those who are destitute of courage to imitate them. Represent to yourselves Demosthenes speaking to his masters and judges, and endeavouring to save them in spite of themselves, and in spite of the punishments which they sometimes inflicted on those who offered to draw them out of the abysses into which they had plunged themselves. Represent to yourselves this orator making remonstrances, that would now-a-days pass for firebrands of sedition, and saying to his countrymen, "Will ye then eternally walk backward and forward in your public places, asking one another, what news? Is Philip dead? says one. No, replies another; but he is extremely ill. Ah! what does the death of Philip signify to you, gentlemen? No sooner would Heaven have delivered you from him, than ye yourselves would create another Philip."\* Imagine you hear this orator blaming the Athenians for the greatness of their enemy: "For my part, gentlemen, I protest I could not help venerating Philip, and trembling at him, if his conquests proceeded from his own valour, and from the justice of his arms; but whoever closely examines the true cause of the fame of his exploits, will find it in our faults; his glory originates in our shame."† Represent to yourselves this orator plunging a dagger into the hearts of the perfidious Athenians, even of them, who indulged him with their attention, and loaded him with their applause. "War, immortal war, with every one who dares here to plead for Philip. You must absolutely despair of conquering your enemies without, while you suffer them to have such eager advocates within. Yet you are arrived at this pitch of, what shall I call it? imprudence, or ignorance. I am often ready to think, an evil genius possesses you. You have brought yourselves to give these miserable, these perfidious wretches a hearing, some of whom dare not disown the character I give them. It is not enough to hear them, whether it be envy, or malice, or an itch for satire, or whatever be the motive, you order them to mount the rostrum, and taste a kind of pleasure as often as their outrageous railleries and cruel calumnies rend in pieces reputations the best established, and attack virtue the most respectable."‡ Such an orator, my brethren, merits the highest praise. With whatever chastisements God may correct a people, he has not determined their destruction, while he preserves men, who are able to show them in this manner, the means of preventing it.

\* Prem. Philippiq.

† Prem. Olynth.

‡ Trois Phil.

VI. Finally, the last order of persons, interested in the words of my text, consists of *pastors* of the church. And who can be more strictly engaged not to *sell truth* than the ministers of the God of *truth*? A pastor should have this precept in full view in our public assemblies, in his private visits, and particularly when he attends dying people.

1. In our *public assemblies* all is consecrated to *truth*. Our churches are houses of the living and *true* God. These pillars are "pillars of truth," 1 Tim. iii. 15. The word, that we are bound to announce to you, "is truth," John xvii. 17. We be to us, if any human consideration be capable of making us disguise that *truth*, the heralds of which we ought to be; or if the fear of showing you a disagreeable light, induces us "to put it under a bushel!" True, there are some mortifying truths: but public offences merit public reproofs, whatever shame may cover the guilty, or however eminent and elevated their post may be. We know not a sacred head, when we see "the name of blasphemy written on it," Rev. xii. 1. But the ignominy of such reproof, say ye, will debase a man in the sight of the people, whom the people ought to respect, and will disturb the peace of society. But who is responsible for this disturbance, he who reproves vice, or he who commits it? And ought not he, who abandons himself to vice, rather to avoid the practice of it, than he who censures such a conduct, to cease to censure it? If any claim the power of imposing silence on us, on this article, let him produce his right, let him publish his pretensions; let him distribute among those, who have been chosen to ascend this pulpit, lists of the vices which we are forbidden to censure; let him signify the law, that commands the reproof of the offences of the poor, but forbids that of the crimes of the rich; that allows us to censure men without credit, but prohibits us to reprove people of reputation.

2. A pastor ought to have this precept before his eyes in his *private visits*. Let him not publish before a whole congregation a secret sin; but let him paint it in all its horrid colours with the same privacy with which it was committed. To do this is the principal design of those pastoral visits, which are made among this congregation, to invite the members of it to the Lord's Supper. There a minister of truth ought to trouble that false peace, which impunity nourishes in the souls of the guilty. There he ought to convince people, that the hiding of crimes from the eyes of men, cannot conceal them from the sight of God. There he ought to make men tremble at the idea of that eye, from the penetration of which neither the darkness of the night, nor the most impenetrable depths of the heart can conceal any thing.

Our ideas of a minister of Jesus Christ, are not formed on our fancies, but on the descriptions which God has given us in his word, and on the examples of the holy men who went before us in the church, whose glorious steps we wish, (although, alas! so far inferior to these models,) whose glorious steps we wish to follow. See how these sacred men announced the truth: Hear Samuel to Saul: "Wherefore didst thou not obey the voice of the Lord, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the

sight of the Lord. Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold! to obey is better than sacrifice; and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry;" 1 Sam. xv. 19. 22. Behold Nathan before David. "Thou art the man. Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight? Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now, therefore, the sword shall never depart from thine house. Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour. For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun," 2 Sam. xii. 7—12. See Elijah before Ahab, who said to him, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel? I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim," 1 Kings xviii. 17, 18; and not to increase this list by quoting examples from the New Testament, see Jeremiah. Never was a minister more gentle. Never was a heart more sensibly affected with grief than his at the bare idea of the calamities of Jerusalem. Yet were there ever more terrible descriptions of the judgments of God, than those which this prophet gave? When we need any fiery darts to wound certain sinners, it is he who must furnish them. He often speaks of nothing but sackcloth and ashes, lamentation and wo. He announces nothing but mortality, famine, and slavery. He represents the "earth without form, and void," returned, as it were, to its primitive chaos; "the heavens destitute of light; the mountains trembling; the hills moving lightly." He cannot find a man; "Carmel is a wilderness," and the whole world a desolation. All the inhabitants of Jerusalem seem to him "climbing up upon the rocks," or running into thickets to hide themselves from the "horsemen and the bowmen. When he strives to hold his peace, his heart maketh a noise in him," Jer. vi. 22. 24. 26. 29. His whole imagination is filled with bloody images. He is distorted, if I may speak so, with the poison of that cup of vengeance, which was about to be presented to the whole earth. A minister announcing nothing but maledictions, seems a conspirator against the peace of a kingdom. Jeremiah was accused of holding a correspondence with the king of Babylon. It was pretended, that either hatred to his country, or a melancholy turn of mind, produced his sorrowful prophecies: nothing but punishment was talked of for him, and, at length, he was confined in a "miry dungeon," chap. xxxviii. 6. In that filthy dungeon the love of *truth* supported him.

3. But, when a pastor is called to attend a *dying person*, he is more especially called to remember this precept of Solomon, "Sell not the *truth*." On this article, my brethren, I wish to know the most accessible paths to your hearts; or rather, on this article, my brethren,

I wish to find the unknown art of uniting all your hearts, so that every one of our hearers might receive, at least, from the last periods of this discourse, some abiding impressions. In many dying people a begun work of conversion is to be finished. Others are to be comforted under the last and most dangerous attacks of the enemy of their salvation, who terrifies them with the fear of death. In regard to others, we must endeavour to try whether our last efforts to reclaim them to God will be more successful than all our former endeavours. Can any reason be assigned to counterbalance the motives which urge us to speak plainly in these circumstances? A soul is ready to perish; the sentence is preparing; the irrevocable voice, "Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire," will presently sound; the gulfs of hell yawn; the devils attend to seize their prey. One single method remains to be tried: the last exhortations and efforts of a pastor. He cannot entertain the least hope of success, unless he unveil mysteries of iniquity, announce odious truths, attack prejudices, which the dying man continues to cherish, even though eternal torments are following close at their heels. We be to us if any human consideration stop us on these pressing occasions, and prevent our making the most of this, the last resource!

It belongs to you, my brethren, to render this last act of our office to you practicable. It belongs to you to concur with your pastors in sending away company, that we may open our hearts to you, and that you may open yours to us. Those visitors, who, under pretence of collecting the last words of an expiring man, cramp, and interrupt him, who would prepare him to die, should repress their unseasonable zeal. If, when we require you to speak to us alone, on your death-bed, we are animated with any human motive; if we aim to penetrate into your family secrets; if we wish to share your estate; pardon traitors, assassins, and the worst of murderers; but let national justice inflict all its rigours on those, who abuse the weakness of a dying man, and, in functions so holy, are animated with motives so profane. In all cases, except in this one, we are ready to oblige you. A minister, on this occasion, ought not only not to fall, he ought not to stumble. But how can you expect that, in the presence of a great number of witnesses, we should fully expatiate on some truths to a sinner? Would you advise us to tell an immodest woman of the excesses to which she had abandoned herself, in the presence of an easy, credulous husband? Would you have us, in the presence of a whole family, discover the shame of its head?

Here I finish this meditation. I love to close all my discourses with ideas of death. Nothing is more proper to support those, who experience the difficulties that attend the path of virtue, than thinking that the period is at hand, which will terminate the path, and reward the pain. Nothing is more proper to arouse others, than thinking that the same period will quickly imbitter their wicked pleasures.

Let every person, of each order to which the text is addressed, take the pains of applying it to himself. May the meanness of

flatterers; may the pious frauds of indiscreet zealots; may the fear of persecution, and the love of the present world, which makes such deep impressions on the minds of apostates and Nicodemites; may the partiality of judges; may the sinful circumspection of statesmen, may all the vices be banished from among us. Above all, we who are ministers of truth! let us never disguise truth; let us love truth; let us preach truth; let us preach it in this pulpit; let us preach it in our private visits; let us preach it by the bed-sides of the dying. In such a course we may safely apply to ourselves, in our own dying-beds, the words of those prophets and apostles, with whom we ought to concur in "the work of the ministry, in the perfecting of the saints. I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. I have kept back nothing, that was profitable. I have taught publicly, and from house to house. I am pure from the blood of all men. I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God. O my God! I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation; I have not concealed thy loving kindness, and thy truth, from the great congregation. Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O Lord; let thy loving kindness and thy truth continually preserve them," Eph. iv. 12; Acts xx. 33. 20. 26, &c. Amen.

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## SERMON XXVIII.

### THE SOVEREIGNTY OF JESUS CHRIST IN THE CHURCH.

ROMANS xiv. 7, 8.

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

THESE words are a general maxim, which St. Paul lays down for the decision of a particular controversy. We cannot well enter into the apostle's meaning, unless we understand the particular subject, which led him to express himself in this manner. Our first reflections, therefore, will tend to explain the subject; and afterward we will extend our meditations to greater objects. We will attend to the text in that point of view, in which those Christians are most interested, who have repeatedly engaged to devote themselves wholly to Jesus Christ; to consecrate to him through life, and to commit to him at death, not only with submission, but also with joy, those souls, over which he has acquired the noblest right. Thus shall we verify, in the most pure and elevated of all senses, this saying of the apostle; "none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For, whether we live, we live unto the Lord; or, whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore or die, we are the Lord's."

St. Paul proposes in the text, and in some

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

Retain every part of this definition, for each is essential to the subject defined. I say that he who exercises toleration, acts on a principle of benevolence; for were he to act on a principle of indolence, or, of contempt for religion, his disposition of mind, far from being a virtue worthy of praise, would be a vice fit only for execration. Toleration, I say, is to be exercised towards him only who errs through *weakness of mind*; for he, who persists in his error through arrogance, and for the sake of rending the church, deserves rigorous punishment. I say, farther, that he, who exercises toleration, does not confine himself to praying for him who is the object of it, and to endeavour to reclaim him, he proceeds farther, and *holds communion* with him; that is to say, he assists at the same religious exercises, and partakes of the Lord's Supper at the same table. Without this communion, can we consider him whom we pretend to tolerate, as a brother in the sense of St. Paul? I add finally, *erroneous sentiments*, which are tolerated, *must be compatible with the great truths of religion; and observances*, which are tolerated, *must not destroy the essence of evangelical worship*, although they are incongruous with its simplicity and glory. How can I assist in a service, which, in my opinion, is an insult on the God whom I adore? How can I approach the table of the Lord, with a man who rejects all the mysteries which God exhibits there? and so of the rest. Retain, then, all the parts of this definition, and you will form a just notion of toleration.

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

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

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

I do not think, however, that St. Paul had any particular view to the Essenes, at least, we are not obliged to suppose, that his views were confined to them. All the world know, that Jews have an aversion to blood. A Jew, exact in his religion, does not eat flesh, even to the present day, with Christians, lest the latter should not have taken sufficient care to discharge the blood. When, therefore, St. Paul describes converted Jews by their scrupulosity in regard to the eating of blood, he does not speak of what they did in their own families, but of what they practised, when they were invited to a convivial repast with people, who thought themselves free from the prohibition of eating blood, whether they were gentiles yet involved in the darkness of paganism, or gentile converts to Christianity. Thus far our subject is free from difficulty.

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

The solution lies in the connexion of the text with the foregoing verses, and particularly with the fourth verse, "Who art thou, that judgest another man's servant?" To judge in this place does not signify to discern, but to condemn. The word has this meaning in a hundred passages of the New Testament. I confine myself to one passage for example. "If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged," 1 Cor. xi. 31; that is to say, if we would condemn ourselves at the tribunal of repentance, after we have partaken unworthily of the Lord's Supper, we should not be

condemned at the tribunal of divine justice. In like manner, "Who art thou, that judgest another man's servant?" is as much as to say, "who art thou that condemnest?" St. Paul meant to make the Christians of Rome understand, that it belonged only to the sovereign of the church to absolve or to condemn, as he saw fit.

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

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

That this Jesus, "whose," the apostle says, "we are," is God, the apostle does not permit us to doubt; for he confounds the expressions "to eat to the Lord," and to "give God thanks;" to "stand before the judgment seat of Christ," and to "give account of himself to God;" to be "Lord both of the dead and living," ver. 6. 10. 12; and this majestic language, which would be blasphemy in the mouth of a simple creature, "As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God." ver. 11.

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

But the most remarkable, and at the same time the most difficult article on this subject, is this. These texts, which seem to establish the divinity of Christ in a manner so clear, furnish the greatest objection that has ever been proposed against it. True, say the enemies of this doctrine, Jesus Christ is God, since the Scripture commands us to worship him. But his divinity is an acquired divinity; since that supremacy, which entitles him to adoration as God, is not an essential, but an acquired supremacy. Now, that this supremacy is acquired is indubitable, since the texts that have been

cited, expressly declare, that it is a fruit of his sufferings and death. We have two arguments to offer in reply.

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

2. Nothing hinders that the true God, who, as the true God, merits our adoration, should acquire every day new rights over us, in virtue of which we have new motives of rendering those homages to him, which we acknowledge he always infinitely merited. Always when God bestows a new blessing, he acquires a new right. What was Jacob's opinion, when he made this vow? "If God will be with me, and will keep me in the way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God," Gen. xxviii. 20, &c. Did the patriarch mean, that he had no other reason for regarding the Lord as his God than this favour, which he asked of him? No such thing. He meant, that to a great many reasons, which bound him to devote himself to God, the favour which he asked would add a new one. It would be easy to produce a long list of examples of this kind. At present the application of this one shall suffice. Jesus Christ who as supreme God has natural rights over us, has also acquired rights, because he has designed to clothe himself with our flesh, in which he died to redeem us. *None of us his own*, we are all his, not only because he is our Creator, but because he is also our Redeemer. He has a supremacy over us peculiar to himself, and distinct from that which he has in common with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

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

This is the design of St. Paul in the words of



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

But, ye intestine divisions! Thou spirit of faction! Ye theological wars! how long will ye be lost loose among us? Is it possible that Christians, who bear the name of reformed, Christians united by the bond of their faith in the belief of the same doctrines, and, if I may be allowed to speak so, Christians united by the very efforts of their enemies to destroy them; can they violate, after all, those laws of toleration, which they have so often prescribed to others, and against the violation of which they have remonstrated with so much wisdom and success? Can they convoke ecclesiastical assemblies? Can they draw up canons? Can they denounce excommunications and anathemas against those, who retaining with themselves the leading truths of Christianity and of the reformation, think differently on points of simple speculation, on questions purely metaphysical, and, if I may speak the whole, on matters so abstruse, that they are alike indeterminable by them, who exclude members from the communion of Jesus Christ, and by those who are excluded? O ye sons of the reformation! how long will you counteract your own principles? how long will you take pleasure in increasing the number of those, who breathe only your destruction, and move only to destroy you? O ye subjects of the Sovereign of the church! how long will you encroach on the rights of your sovereign, dare to condemn those whom he absolves, and to reject those, whom his generous benevolence tolerates? "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? for none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For, whether we live, we live unto the Lord, and, whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore or die, we are the Lord's."

What we have said shall suffice for the subject, which occasioned the maxim in the text. The remaining time I devote to the consideration of the general sense of this maxim. It lays before us the condition, the engagements, the inclination, and the felicity of a Christian.—What is the felicity of a Christian, what is his inclination, what are his engagements, what is his condition? They are *not to be his own*: but to say, "whether I live, or die, I am the Lord's." The whole that we shall propose to you, is contained in these four articles.

I. The text lays before us the primitive condition of a Christian. It is a condition of de-

pendance. "None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Our *life* is not ours. Winds, waves, heat, cold, ailments, vegetables, animals, nature, and each of its component parts, conspire to deprive us of it. Not one of those who have entered this church, can demonstrate that he shall go out of it alive. Not one of those who compose this assembly, even of the youngest and strongest, can assure himself of one year,

one day, one hour, one moment of life. "None of us liveth to himself; for, if we live we are the Lord's."

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

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

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

On what is the high idea of yourself founded? On that self-complacence which fortune, rank, and pleasing objects, that surround you, seem to contribute to excite? And what is necessary to dissipate your self-complacence? Must the earth tremble? Must the sea overflow its banks? Must heaven arm itself with thunder and lightning? Must all nature be shaken? No; one caprice is sufficient. An appearance, under which an object presents itself to us, or rather, a colour, that our imagination lends it, banishes self-complacence, and lo! the man just now elated with so much joy is fixed in a black, a deep despair!

On what is the lofty idea of yourself founded? On your health? But what is necessary to deprive you of your health? Earthquakes? Armies? Inundations? Must nature return to its chaotic state? No; one grain of sand is

sufficient! That grain of sand, which in another position was next to nothing to you, and was really nothing to your felicity, becomes in its present position, a punishment, a martyrdom, a hell!

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

II. Our text points out the *engagements* of a Christian. Let us abridge our reflections. Remark the state in which Jesus Christ found us; what he performed to deliver us from it; and under what conditions we enter on and enjoy this deliverance.

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

Let us leave the metaphor, and let us confine our attention to the meaning. When Jesus Christ came into the world, in what state did he find us? Descended from a long train of ancestors in rebellion against the laws of God, fluctuating in our ideas, ignorant of our origin and end, blinded by our prejudices, infatuated by our passions, "having no hope, and being without God in the world," Eph. ii. 12, condemned to die, and reserved for eternal flames. From this state Jesus Christ delivered us and brought us into "the glorious liberty of the sons of God," Rom. viii. 21, in order to enable us to participate the felicity of the blessed God, by making us partakers of the divine nature," 2 Pet. i. 4. By a deliverance so glorious, does not the Deliverer obtain peculiar rights over us?

Remark, farther, on what conditions Jesus Christ has freed you from your miseries, and you will perceive, that "ye are not your own." What means the morality that Jesus Christ enjoined in his gospel? What vows were made for each of you at your baptism? What hast thou promised at the Lord's table? In one

word, to what authority didst thou submit by embracing the gospel? Didst thou say to Jesus Christ, Lord! I will be partly thine, and partly mine own? To thee I will submit the opinions of my mind; but the irregular dispositions of my heart I will reserve to myself. I will consent to renounce my vengeance: but thou shalt allow me to retain my Delilah, and my Drusilla. For thee I will quit the world and dissipating pleasures, but thou shalt indulge the visionary and capricious flow of my humour. On a Christian festival I will rise into transports of devotion; my countenance shall emit rays of a divine flame; my eyes shall sparkle with seraphic fire; "my heart and my flesh shall cry out for the living God," Ps. lxxxiv. 2; but, when I return to the world, I will sink into the spirit of the men of it; I will adopt their maxims, share their pleasures, immerse myself in their conversation; and thus I will be alternately "cold and hot," Rev. iii. 15, a Christian and a heathen, an angel and a devil. Is this your idea of Christianity? Undoubtedly it is that, which many of our hearers have formed; and which they take too much pains to prove, by the whole course of their conversation. But this is not the idea which the inspired writers have given us of Christianity; it is not that which, after their example, we have given you. Him only I acknowledge for a true Christian, who is "not his own," at least, who continually endeavours to eradicate the remains of sin, that resist the empire of Jesus Christ. Him alone I acknowledge for a true Christian, who can say with St. Paul, although not in the same degree, yet with equal sincerity, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life, which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me," Gal. xi. 20.

Consider, thirdly, what it cost Jesus Christ to deliver you from your wretched state. Could our freedom have been procured by a few emotions of benevolence, or by an act of supreme power? In order to deliver us from our *griefs*, it was necessary for him to *bear* them; to terminate our *sorrows* he must *carry* them (according to the language of a prophet,) to deliver us from the strokes of divine justice he must be "stricken and smitten of God," Isa. liii. 4. I am aware that one of the most deplorable infirmities of the human mind, is to become insensible to the most affecting objects by becoming familiar with them. The glorified saints, we know, by contemplating the sufferings of the Saviour of the world, behold objects that excite eternal adorations of the mercy of him, "who loved them, and washed them from their sins in his own blood, and made them kings and priests unto God and his Father," Rev. i. 5, 6, but in our present state the proposing of these objects to us in a course of sermons is sufficient to weary us. However, I affirm that if we have not been affected with what Jesus Christ has done for our salvation, it has not been owing to our thinking too much, but to our not thinking enough, and perhaps to our having never thought of the subject once, with such a profound attention as its interesting nature demands.

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Bow thyself towards the mystical ark, Christian, and fix thine eyes on the mercy-seat. Revolve in thy meditation the astonishing, I had almost said, the incredible history of thy Saviour's love. Go to Bethlehem, and behold him "who upholdeth all things by the word of his power" (I use the language of an apostle,) him, who thought it no usurpation of the rights of the Deity to be "equal with God;" behold him "humbly himself;" (I use here the words of St. Paul, Heb. i. 3; Phil. ii. 6. His words are more emphatical still.) Behold him *annihilated*;\* for, although the child, who was born in a stable, and laid in a manger, was a real being, yet he may seem to be *annihilated* in regard to the degrading circumstances, which veiled and concealed his natural dignity: behold him *annihilated* by "taking upon him the form of a servant." Follow him through the whole course of his life; "he went about doing good," Acts x. 38, and exposed himself in every place to inconveniences and miseries, through the abundance of his benevolence and love. Pass to Gethsemane; behold his agony; see him as the Redeemer of mankind contending with the Judge of the whole earth; an agony in which Jesus resisted with only "prayers and supplications, strong crying and tears," Heb. v. 7; an agony, preparatory to an event still more terrible, the bare idea of which terrified and troubled him, made "his sweat as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground," Luke xxii. 44, and produced this prayer, so fruitful in controversies in the schools, and so penetrating and affecting, so fruitful in motives to obedience, devotion, and gratitude, in truly Christian hearts; "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt," Matt. xxvi. 44. Go yet farther, Christian! and, after thou hast seen all the sufferings, which Jesus Christ endured in going from the garden to the cross; ascend Calvary with him; stop on the summit of the hill, and on that theatre behold the most astonishing of all the works of Almighty God. See this Jesus, "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person," Heb. i. 3, see him stripped, fastened to an accursed tree, confounded with two thieves, nailed to the wood, surrounded with executioners and tormentors, having lost, during this dreadful period, that sight of the comfortable presence of his Father, which constituted all his joy, and being driven to exclaim, "My God! My God! why hast thou forsaken me?" Matt. xxvii. 40. But behold him, amidst all these painful sufferings, firmly supporting his patience by his love, resolutely enduring all these punishments from those motives of benevolence, which first engaged him to submit to them, ever occupied with the prospect of saving those poor mortals, for whose sake he descended into this world, fixing his eyes on that world of believers, which his cross would subdue to his government, according to his own saying, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me," John xii. 32. Can we help feeling the force of that

\* Videtur hic alludere ad Dan. ix. 26. Ubi dicitur Messias eximianendus, ut ei nihil superis. . e. quasi in nihilum sit redigendus, *Pol: Synopsis.* in loc.

motive, which the Scripture proposes in so many places, and so very emphatically in these words, "The love of Christ constraineth us," 2 Cor. v. 14, that is to say, engages and attaches us closely to him? The love of Christ constraineth us because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead, and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." Yea, "the love of Christ forceth us," when we think what he has done for us.

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

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

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

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

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

Under a sense of our infirmities, when we are terrified with the purity of that morality, the equity of which we are obliged to own, even while we tremble at its severity, it is delightful to belong to a Judge, who does not exact his rights with the utmost rigour; who "knoweth our frame," Ps. ciii. 14, who pities our infirmities; and who assureth us, that "he will not break a bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax," Matt. xii. 20.

When our passions are intoxicated in those fatal moments, in which the desire of possessing the objects of our passions wholly occupies

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

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

In that empty void, into which we are often conducted, while we seem to enjoy the most solid establishments, the most exquisite pleasures, and the most brilliant honours, it is delightful to belong to a patron, who reserves for us objects far better suited to our original excellence, and to the immensity of our desires. To live to Jesus Christ then, is the felicity of a Christian.

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

\* "The subject makes;" or "those subjects make." The regimen of the verb must be determined here by logic rather than syntax. See Sutcliffe's Grammar, Baldwin's edition, page 110.

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

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

*Religious* objects, which we are commanded above all others to love, will contribute to our anguish on a dying bed, if they have confined our love, and rendered us too sensible to that kind of happiness, which piety procures in this world; and if they have prevented our souls from rising into a contemplation of that blessed state, in which there will be no more temple, no more sacraments, no more gross and sensible worship. The man who is too much attached to these things, is confounded at the hour of death. The land of love to which he goes, is an unknown country to him; and as the borders of it, on which he stands, and on which alone his eyes are fixed, present only precipices to his view, fear and trembling surround his every step.

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

I belong to God (these are the sentiments of the believer, of whom I am speaking,) I belong to God, not only by his sovereign dominion over me as a creature; not only by that right, which, as a master, who has redeemed his slave, he has acquired over me: but I belong to God, because I love him, and because, I know, God alone deserves my highest esteem. The deep impressions that his adorable perfections have made on my mind, make me impatient with every object which intercepts my sight of him. I could not be content to abide any longer in this world, were he not to ordain my stay; and were I not to consider his will as the only law of my conduct. But the law, that commands me to live, does not forbid me to desire to die. I consider death as the period fixed for the gratifying of

my most ardent wishes, the consummation of my highest joy. "Whilst I am at home in the body, I am absent from the Lord," 2 Cor. v. 6. But it would be incomparably more delightful "to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord," ver. 8. And what can detain me on earth, when God shall condescend to call me to himself?

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

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

Neither shall ye, *religious* objects! detain me. You are only means, and death is going to conduct me to the end, you are only the road; to die is to arrive at home. True, I shall no more read those excellent works, in which authors of the brightest genius have raised the truth from depths of darkness and prejudice in which it had been buried, and placed it in the most lively point of view. I shall hear no more of those sermons in which the preacher, animated by the holy Spirit of God, attempts to elevate me above the present world: but I shall hear and contemplate eternal wisdom, and I shall discover in my commerce with it, the views, the designs, the plans of my Creator; and I shall acquire more wisdom in one moment by this mean than I should ever obtain by hearing the best composed sermons, and by reading the best written books. True, I shall no more devote myself to you, closet exercises! holy meditations! aspirations of a soul in search of its God! crying, "Lord, I beseech thee, show me thy glory!" Exod. xxxiii. 18. "Lord, dissipate the dark thick cloud that conceals thee from my sight! suffer me to approach that light, which has hitherto been inaccessible to me!" But death is the dissipation of clouds and darkness; it is an approach to perfect light; it takes me from my closet, and presents me like a seraph at the foot of the throne of God and the Lamb.

True, I shall no more partake of you, ye holy ordinances of religion! ye sacred ceremonies! that have conveyed so many consolations into my soul; that have so amply afforded solidity and solace to the ties, which united my heart to my God; that have so often procured me a heaven on earth; but I quit you because I am going to receive immediate effusions of divine love, pleasures at God's right hand for evermore, "fulness of joy in his presence," Ps. xvi. 11. I quit you because . . .

Alas! your hearts perhaps have escaped me, my brethren! perhaps these emotions, superior to your piety, are no longer the subject of your attention. I have, however, no other direction to give you, than that which may stand for an abridgment of this discourse, of all my other preaching, and of my whole min-

istry; love God; be the Lord's by *inclination*, as you are his by *condition*, and by *engagement*. Then the miseries of this life will be tolerable, and the approach of death delightful. God grant his blessing on the world! to him be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

## SERMON XXIX.

### THE EQUALITY OF MANKIND.

PROVERBS xxii. 2.

*The rich and the poor meet together; the Lord is the Maker of them all.*

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

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

To rectify these different ideas, to humble the one class, and to exalt the other, it is necessary to show men in their true point of view; to convince them that diversity of condition, which God has been pleased to establish among them, is perfectly consistent with

equality; that the splendid condition of the first includes nothing that favours their ideas of self-preference; and that there is nothing in the low condition of the last, which deprives them of their real dignity, or debases their intelligences formed in the image of God. I design to discuss this subject to-day. The men, who compose this audience, and among whom Providence has very unequally divided the blessings of this life; princes, who command, and to whom God himself has given authority to command subjects; subjects, who obey, and on whom God has imposed obedience as a duty; the rich, who give alms, and the poor, who receive them; all, all my hearers, I am going to reduce to their natural equality, and to consider this equality as a source of piety. This is the meaning of the Wise Man in the words of the text, "The rich and the poor meet together: the Lord is the maker of them all."

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

It is not unlikely, however, that Solomon, when he spoke of "the rich and the poor," had a particular design in choosing this kind of diversity of condition to illustrate his meaning in preference to every other. Although I can hardly conceive, that there ever was a period of time, in which the love of riches did fascinate the eyes of mankind, as it does in this age, yet it is very credible, that in Solomon's time, as in ours, riches made the grand difference among men. Strictly speaking, there are now only two conditions of mankind, that of the rich, and that of the poor. Riches decide all, yea, those qualities, which seem to have no concern with them, I mean, mental qualifications. Find but the art of amassing money, and you will thereby find that of uniting in your own person all the advantages, of which mankind have entertained the highest ideas. How mean soever your birth may have been, you will possess the art of concealing it, and you may form an alliance with the most illustrious families; how small soever your knowledge may be, you may pass for a superior genius, capable of deciding questions the most intricate, points the most abstruse; and, what is still more deplorable, you may purchase with silver and gold a kind of honour and virtue, while you remain the most abandoned of mankind, at least, your money will attract that respect, which is due to nothing but honour and virtue.

The second truth, which we suppose, is, that this proposition, "the Lord is the maker of them all," is one of those concise, I had almost said, one of those defective propositions, which a judicious auditor ought to fill up in order to give it a proper meaning. This style is very

common in our Scriptures; it is peculiarly proper in sententious works, such as this out of which we have taken the text. The design of Solomon is to teach us, that whatever diversities of conditions there may be in society, the men who compose it are *essentially equal*. The reason that he assigns, is, "the Lord is the maker of them all." If this idea be not added, the proposition proves nothing at all. It does not follow, because the same God is the creator of two beings, that there is any resemblance between them, much less that they are equal. Is not God the creator of pure unembodied intelligences, who have faculties superior to those of mankind? Is not God the author of their existence as well as of ours? Because "God is the creator of both," does it follow that both are equal? God is no less the creator of the organs of an ant, than he is the creator of the sublime geniuses of a part of mankind. Because God has created an ant and a sublime genius, does it follow, that these two beings are equal? The meaning of the words of Solomon depends then on what a prudent reader supplies. We may judge what ought to be supplied by the nature of the subject, and by a parallel passage in the Book of Job. "Did not he that made me in the womb, make my servant? and did he not fashion us alike?"\* chap. xxxi. 15. To the words of our text, therefore, "The Lord is the maker of them all," we must add, the Lord has fashioned them all alike. Nothing but gross ignorance, or wilful treachery, can incline an expositor to abuse this liberty of making up the sense of a passage, and induce him to conclude, that he may add to a text whatever may seem to him the most proper to support a favourite opinion, or to cover an unworthy passion. When we are inquisitive for truth, it is easy to discover the passages of holy Scripture, in which the authors have made use of these concise imperfect sentences.

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

soning, which is this: If there has been among you any one, whose preaching has revealed a redeemer, better adapted to your wants than he, whom we have preached to you; or if you had received more excellent gifts than those, which the Holy Spirit so abundantly diffused among you by our ministry, you might indeed have preferred him before us; but it is not credible, that you have had such teachers: you ought then to respect our ministry.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

has a right to say to himself, the attention, that the Lord of nature gives to the government of the universe, to the wants of mankind, to the innumerable company of angels, and to his own felicity, does not prevent this adorable being from attending to me; from occupying himself about my person, my children, my family, my house, my health, my substance, my salvation, my most minute concern, even a single "hair of my head," Luke xxi. 18. This man has a right of addressing God by names the most tender and mild, yea, if I may venture to speak so, by those most familiar names, which equals give each other; he may call him his God, his master, his father, his friend. Believers have addressed God by each of those names, and God has not only permitted them to do so, he has even expressed his approbation of their taking these names in their mouths. This man has a right of coming to eat with God at the Lord's table, and to live, if I may be allowed to speak so, to live with God, as a man lives with his friend. This man has a right to apply to himself whatever is most great, most comfortable, most ecstatic in the mysteries of redemption, and to say to himself; for me the divine intelligence revolved the plan of redemption; for me the Son of God was appointed before the foundation of the world to be a propitiatory sacrifice; for me in the fulness of time he took mortal flesh; for me he lived several years among men in this world; for me he pledged himself to the justice of his Father, and suffered such unparalleled punishment, as confounds reason and surpasses imagination; for me the Holy Spirit "shook the heavens and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land," Hag. ii. 6, and established a ministry, which he confirmed by healing the sick, by raising the dead, by casting out devils, and by subverting the whole order of nature. This man has a right to aspire to the felicity of the immortal God, to the glory of the immortal God, to the throne of the immortal God. Arrived at the fatal hour, lying on his dying bed, reduced to the sight of useless friends, ineffectual remedies, unavailing tears, he has a right to triumph over death, and to defy his disturbing in the smallest degree the tranquil calm, that his soul enjoys; he has a right to summon the gates of heaven to admit his soul, and to say to them, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates! even lift them up, ye everlasting doors!"

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



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

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

What are the designs of God in regard to men? What end does he propose to effect by placing us on this planet thirty, forty, or sixty years, before he declares our eternal state? We have frequently answered this important question. God has placed us here in a state of probation: he has set before our eyes supreme felicity and intolerable misery; he has pointed out the vices, that conduct to the last, and the virtues necessary to arrive at the first, and he has declared, that our conduct shall determine our future state. This, I think, is the design of God in regard to men. This is the notion that we ought to form, of the end which God proposes in fixing us a few years upon earth, and in placing us among our fellow creatures in society.

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

me in this world. God placed me in this world to enable me to do good, and prepare myself by a holy life for a happy eternity. To do good at the head of a nation, certain talents are necessary. If I have not these talents, not only I should not do good in this post, but I should certainly do evil. I should expose my country to danger, I should sink its credit, obscure its glory, and debase its dignity. It is, therefore, incomparably less glorious for me to be at the head of a state than to occupy a post less eminent. It is glorious to fill the highest office in the church, to announce the oracles of God, to develop the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, and to direct wandering souls to the road, that leads to the sovereign good; but if I be destitute of gifts essential to the filling of this office, it is incomparably more glorious to me to remain a pupil than to commence a tutor. Why? Because that station is the most eligible to me, which best empowers me to answer the end for which my Creator placed me in this world. My Creator placed me in this world, that I might do good, and that by a holy life I might prepare for a happy eternity. In order to do good in the highest offices in the church great talents are necessary; if God has not bestowed great talents on me, I should not only not do good: but I should do harm. Instead of announcing the oracles of God, I should preach the traditions of men; I should involve the mysteries of religion in darkness instead of developing them; I should plunge poor mortals into an abyss of misery, instead of pointing out the road, which would conduct them to a blessed immortality. But by remaining in the state of a disciple I may obtain attention, docility, and love to truth, which are the virtues of my condition. It is more glorious to be a good subject than a bad king; it is more glorious to be a good disciple than a bad teacher.

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

to the object of our pursuit, but according to the manner in which we should have pursued it.

In this point of light, all ranks are equal, every condition is the same. Mankind have then an equality of *destination*. The rich and the poor are placed in different ranks with the same view, both are to answer the great end, that God has proposed to answer by creating and arranging mankind.

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

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

1. Remark the *certainty* of death: "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return," Gen. iii. 19. "It is appointed unto men once to die," Heb. ix. 27. The sentence is universal, its universality involves all the posterity of Adam; it includes all conditions, all professions, all stations, and every step of life ensures the execution of it.

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

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

2. The *proximity* of death is a second demonstration, a second source of demonstrations. The limits of our lives are equal. The life of the rich as well as that of the poor is "reduced to a handbreadth," Ps. xxxix. 5. Sixty, eighty, or a hundred years, is usually the date of a long life. The sceptre has no more privilege in this respect than the crook; nor is the palace at any greater distance from the tomb than the cottage from the grave. Heaps of silver and gold may intercept the rich man's sight of death: but they can neither intercept death's sight of the rich man, nor prevent his forcing the feeble intrenchments, in which he may attempt to hide himself.

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

4. The ravages of death make a fourth demonstration; they are the same with the rich as with the poor. Death alike condemns their eyes to impenetrable night, their tongue to eternal silence, their whole system to total destruction. I see a superb monument. I ap-

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

5. Finally, *the judgment*, that follows death, carries our proposition to the highest degree of evidence. "It is appointed unto men once to die; but after this the judgment," Heb. ix. 27. The rich and the poor must alike appear before that throne which St. John describes in the Revelation, and before that venerable personage, "from whose face the heaven and the earth flee away," chap. xx. 11. If there be any difference between the rich and the poor, it is all, I think, in favour of the latter. The summons, that must be one day addressed to each of us, "give an account of thy stewardship," Luke xvi. 2, this summons is always terrible. You indigent people! whom God (to use the language of Scripture) has "set over a few things," an account of these "few things" will be required of you, and you will be as surely punished for hiding "one talent," as if you had hidden more, Matt. xxv. 17.

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

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

The inferences that we intend to draw from what we have said, are not inferences of sedition and anarchy. We do not mean to disturb the order of society; nor, by affirming that all men have an essential equality, to probate that subordination, without which society would be nothing but confusion, and the men, who compose it, a lawless banditti. We affirm, that the subject and the prince, the master and the servant, are truly and properly equal: but far be it from us to infer, that therefore the subject should withdraw his submission from his prince, or the servant diminish his obedience to his master. On the contrary, subjects and servants would renounce all that is glorious in their conditions, if they entertained such wild ideas in their minds. That, which equals them to the superiors, whom Providence has set over them, is the belief of their being capable, as well as their superiors, of answering the end that God proposed in creating mankind. They would counteract this end, were they to refuse to discharge those duties of their condition to which Providence calls them.

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

Derive from our subject conclusions of *mode-*

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

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

Derive from the truths you have heard conclusions of *vigilance*. Instead of ingeniously flattering yourself with the vain glory of being elevated above your neighbour; or of suffering your mind to sink under the puerile mortification of being inferior to him; incessantly inquire what is the virtue of your station, the duty of your rank, and use your utmost industry to fill it worthily. You are a magistrate, the virtue of your station, the duty of your rank, is to employ yourself wholly to serve your fellow-subjects in inferior stations, to prefer the public good before your own private interest, to sacrifice yourself for the advantage of that state, the reins of which you hold. Practise this virtue, fulfil these engagements, put off self-interest, and devote yourself wholly to a people, who intrust you with their properties, their liberties, and their lives. You are a subject, the duty of your rank, the virtue of your station, is submission, and you should obey not only through fear of punishment, but through a wise regard for order.—Practise this virtue, fulfil this engagement, make it your glory to submit, and in the authority of princes respect the power of God, whose ministers and representatives they are. You are a rich man, the virtue of your station, the duty of your condition, is beneficence, generosity, magnanimity. Practise these virtues, discharge these duties. Let your heart be always moved with the necessities of the wretched, and your ears open to their complaints.—Never omit an opportunity of doing good, and be in society a general resource, a universal refuge.

From the truths which you have heard, derive motives of *zeal* and *fervour*. It is morti-

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

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## SERMON XXX.

### THE WORTH OF THE SOUL.

MATTHEW. XVI. 26.

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

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

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

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

If we take the word for that part of man, which we call the *soul* by excellence, Jesus

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

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

Judge by what precedes our text. "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Jesus Christ spoke thus to fortify his disciples against the temptations, to which their profession of the gospel was about to expose them. If by the word *soul* we understand the *life*, we shall be obliged to go a great way about to give any reasonable sense to the words. On the contrary, if we take the word for the *spirit*, the meaning of the whole is clear and easy. Now it seems to me beyond a doubt, that Jesus Christ, by the manner in which he has connected the text with the preceding verse, used the term *soul* in the latter sense.

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

We will then retain this explication. By the *soul* we understand here the *spirit* of man; and, this word being thus explained, the meaning of Jesus Christ in the whole passage is understood in part, and one remark will be sufficient to explain it wholly. We must attend to the true meaning of the phrase, "lose his soul," which immediately precedes the text, and which we shall often use to explain the text itself. To "lose the soul" does not signify to be deprived of this part of one's self; for, however great this punishment might be, it is the chief object of a wicked man's wishes; but to "lose the soul" is to lose those real blessings, and to sustain those real evils, which a soul is capable of enjoying and of suffering. When, therefore, Jesus Christ says in the words that precede the text, "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" and in the text, "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" he exhibits one truth under different faces, so that our reflections will naturally be turned sometimes to the one, and sometimes to the other of these propositions. He points out, I say, two truths, which being united, signify, that as the conquest of the universe would not be an object of value sufficient to engage us to sacri-

fice our souls, so if we had lost them, no price could be too great to be paid for the recovery of them. Let us here fix our attention; and let us examine what constitutes the dignity of the soul. Let us inquire,

I. The excellence of its nature;

II. The infinity of its duration;

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

I. Nothing can be given in exchange for our souls. We prove this proposition by the excellence of its *nature*. What is the soul?—There have been great absurdities, in the answers given to this question. In former ages of darkness, when most of the studies that were pursued for the cultivation of the mind served to render it unfruitful; when people thought they had arrived at the highest degree of knowledge, if they had filled their memories with pompous terms and superb nonsense; in those times, I say it was thought, the question might be fully and satisfactorily answered, and clear and complete ideas given of the nature of the soul. But in latter times, when philosophy being cleansed from the impurities that infected the schools, equivocal terms were rejected, and only clear and distinct ideas admitted, and thus literary investigations reduced to real and solid use; in these days, I say, philosophers, and philosophers of great name, have been afraid to answer this question, and we have affirmed that the narrow limits which confine our researches, disable us from acquiring any other than obscure notions of the human soul, and that all which we can propose to elucidate the nature of it, serves rather to discover what it is not, than what it is. But if the decisions of the former savour of presumption, does not the timid reservedness of the latter seem a blameable modesty? If we be incapable of giving such sufficient answers to the question as would fully satisfy a genius earnest in inquiring, and eager for demonstration, may we not be able to give clear and high ideas of our souls, and so to verify these sententious words of the Saviour of the world, "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Indeed we do clearly and distinctly know three properties of the soul; and every one of us knows by his own experience, that it is capable of knowing, willing, and feeling. The first of these properties is intelligence, the second volition, the third sensation, or, more properly, the acutest sensibility. I am coming now to the design of my text, and here I hope to prove, at least to the intelligent part of my hearers, by the nature of the soul, that the loss of it is the greatest of all losses, and that nothing is too valuable to be given for its recovery.

*Intelligence* is the first property of the soul, and the first idea that we ought to form of it, to know its nature. The perfection of this property consists in having clear and distinct ideas, extensive and certain knowledge. "To lose the soul," in this respect, is to sink into total ignorance. This loss is irreparable, and he who should have lost his soul in this sense, could give nothing too great for its recovery. Knowledge and happiness are inseparable in intelligent beings, and, it is clear, a soul de-

prived of intelligence cannot enjoy perfect felicity. Few men, I know, can be persuaded to admit this truth, and there are, I must allow, great restrictions to be made on this article, while we are in the present state.

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

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

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

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

5. In this world we often see *real and useful knowledge deprived of its lustre* through the supercilious neglect of mankind, and science, falsely so called, crowned with their applause. One man, whose mind is a kind of scientific chaos, full of vain speculations and confused ideas, shall be preferred before another, whose speculations have always been directed to form his judgment, to purify his ideas, and to bow his heart to truth and virtue. This partiality is often seen. Now, although it argues a narrowness of soul to make happiness depend on the opinions of others, yet it is natural for intelligent beings, placed among other intelligent beings, to wish for that approbation which is due to real merit. Were the present life of any long duration, were not the proximity of all pursuing death a powerful consolation against all our inconveniences, these unjust estimations would be very mortifying.

Such being the imperfections, the defects, and the obstacles of our knowledge, we ought not to be surprised, if in general we do not comprehend the great influence that the perfection of our faculty of thinking and knowing

has over our happiness. And yet even in this life, and with all these disadvantages, our knowledge, however difficult to acquire, however confined, uncertain, and partial, how little soever it may be applauded, contributes to our felicity. Even in this life there is an extreme difference between a learned and illiterate man: between him, whose knowledge of languages enables him (so to speak) to converse with people of all nations, and of all ages; and him who can only converse with his own contemporary countrymen: between him, whose knowledge of history enables him to distinguish the successful from the hazardous, and to profit by the vices and the virtues of his predecessors; and him, who falls every day into mistakes inseparable from the want of experience: between him, whose knowledge of history enables him to distinguish the successful from the hazardous, and to profit by the vices and the virtues of his predecessors; and him, who falls every day into mistakes inseparable from the want of experience: between him whose own understanding weighs all in the balance of truth; and him, who every moment needs a guide to conduct him. Even in this life, a man collected within himself, sequestered from the rest of mankind, separated from an intercourse with all the living, deprived of all that constitutes the bliss of society, entombed, if the expression may be allowed, in a solitary closet, or in a dusty library, such a man enjoys an innocent pleasure, more satisfactory and refined than that, which places of diversion the most frequented, and sights the most superb, can afford.

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

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

The perfection of the will consists in a perfect harmony between the holiness and the

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

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

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

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

Judge ye then of the loss of the soul, ye sensual minds, by this single consideration, if you have been insensible to all the rest. When we endeavour to convince you of the greatness of this loss by urging the privation of that knowledge, which the elect enjoy now, and which they hope to enjoy hereafter, you were not affected with this misery, because you considered the pleasure of knowing as a chimera. When we attempted to convince you of the misery of losing the soul by urging the privation of virtue, and the stinging remorse that follows sin, you were not touched with this misery, because virtue you consider as a restraint, and remorse as a folly. But as you know no other felicity, nor any other misery, than what your senses transmit to your souls, judge of the loss of the soul by conceiving a state, in which all the senses shall be punished. The loss of the soul is the loss of those harmonious sounds, which have so often charmed your ears; it is the loss of those exquisite flavours, that your palate has so often relished; it is the loss of all those objects of desire, which have so often excited your passions. The loss of the soul is an ocean of pain, the bare idea of which has so often made you tremble, when religion called you to sail on it. The loss of the soul will be in regard to you the imprisonment of yon confessor, inclosed in a dark and filthy dungeon, a prey to infection and putre-

faction, deprived of the air and the light. The loss of the soul will reduce you to the condition of that galley-slave groaning under the lashes of a barbarous officer, who is loaded with a galling chain, who sinks under the labour of that oar which he works, or rather, with which he himself is trailing along. The loss of the soul will place you in the condition of yon martyr on the wheel, whose living limbs are disjointed and racked, whose lingering life is loath to cease, who lives to glut the rage of his tormentors, and who expires only through an overflowing access of pain, his executioners with barbarous industry, being frugal of his blood and his strength, in order to make him suffer as much as he can possibly suffer before he dies.

But, as I said before, all these images convey but very imperfect ideas of the loss of our souls. Were we to extend our speculations as far as the subject would allow, it would be easy to prove that the soul is capable of enjoying sensible pleasures infinitely more refined, and of suffering pains infinitely more excruciating, than all those which are felt in this world. In this world, sensations of pleasure and pain are proportioned to the end, that the Creator proposed in rendering us capable of them. This end is almost always the preservation and well-being of the body during the short period of mortal life. To answer this end, it is not necessary, that pleasure and pain should be as exquisite as our senses may be capable of enduring. If our senses give us notice of the approach of things hurtful and beneficial to us, it is sufficient.

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

II. The *immortality* of a soul constitutes its dignity, and its endless duration is a source of demonstrations in favour of the proposition in the text. This dignity is incontestable. The principle of the immortality of the soul, from which we reason, is undeniable. Two suppositions may seem, at first sight, to weaken the evidence of the immortality of the soul. First, The close union of the soul to the body seems unfavourable to the doctrine of its immortality, and to predict its dissolution with

the body. But this supposition, I think, vanishes, when we consider what a disproportion there is between the properties of the soul, and those of the body. This disproportion proves, that they are two distinct substances. The separation of two distinct substances makes indeed some change in the manner of their existing: but it can make none really in their existence.

But whatever advantages we may derive from this reasoning, I freely acknowledge, that this, of all philosophical arguments for the immortality of the soul, the least of any affects me. The great question, on this article, is not what we think of our souls, when we consider them in themselves, independently of God, whose omnipotence surrounds and governs them. Consider an infidel demonstrate against us, that the human soul is material, and that therefore it must perish with the body: could we, on the contrary, demonstrate against him, that the soul is immaterial, and that therefore it is not subject to laws of matter, and must survive the destruction of the body; neither side in my opinion, would gain any thing considerable. The principal question which alone ought to determine our notions on this article, would remain unexamined: that is, whether God will employ his power over our souls to perpetuate, or to destroy them. For could an infidel prove, that God would employ his power to annihilate our souls, in vain should we have demonstrated, that they were naturally immortal; for we should be obliged to own, that they are mortal in respect of the will of that God, whose omnipotence rules them. In like manner, if we could prove to an unbeliever, that God would employ his power to preserve them in eternal existence, in vain would he have demonstrated, that considered in themselves they are mortal; and he would be obliged in his turn to allow human souls are immortal in virtue of the supreme power of God. Now, my brethren, the supposition, that God will employ his power to annihilate our souls, will entirely disappear, if you attend to the well-known and familiar argument of the connexion between the immortality of that soul, and that desire of immortality which the Creator has imparted to it. What can we reply to a man who reasons in this manner?

I find myself in a world, where all things declare the perfections of the Creator. The more I consider all the parts, the more I admire the fitness of each to answer the end of him who created them all. Among numberless productions perfectly correspondent to their destination I find only one being, whose condition does not seem to agree with that marvellous order, which I have observed in all the rest. This being is my own soul. And what is this soul of mine? Is it fire? Is it air? Is it ethereal matter? Under whatever notions I consider it, I am at a loss to define it. However, notwithstanding this obscurity, I do perceive enough of its nature to convince me of a great disproportion between the present state of my soul, and that end for which its Creator seems to have formed it. This soul, I know, I feel (and, of all arguments, there are none more convincing than those, that are taken from sentiment,) this soul is a being eagerly

ben on the enjoyment of a happiness infinite in its duration. Should any one offer me a state of perfect happiness that would continue ten thousand years, an assemblage of reputation and riches, grandeur and magnificence, perhaps, dazzled with its glare, I might cede my pretensions in consideration of this enjoyment. But, after all, I fully perceive, that this felicity, how long, and how perfect soever it might be, would be inadequate to my wishes. Ten thousand years are too few to gratify my desires; my desires leap the bounds of all fixed periods of duration, and roll along a boundless eternity. What is not eternal is unequal to my wishes, eternity only can satisfy them.

Such is my soul. But where is it lodged? Its place is the ground of my astonishment. This soul, this subject of so many desires, inhabits a world of vanity and nothingness.— Whether I climb the highest eminences, or pry into the deepest indigence, I can discover no object capable of filling my capacious desires. I ascend the thrones of sovereigns, I descend into the beggar's dust; I walk the palaces of princes, I lodge in the peasant's cabin; I retire into the closet to be wise, I avoid recollection, choose ignorance, and increase the crowd of idiots; I live in solitude, I rush into the social multitude: but every where I find a mortifying void. In all these places there is nothing satisfactory. In each I am more unhappy, through the desire of seeing new objects, than satisfied with the enjoyment of what I possess. At most, I experience nothing in all these pleasures, which my concupiscence multiplies, but a mean of rendering my condition tolerable, not a mean of making it perfectly happy.

How can I reconcile these things? How can I make the Creator agree with himself? There is one way of doing this, a singular but a certain way; a way that solves all difficulties, and covers infidelity with confusion; a way that teaches me what I am, whence I came, and for what my Creator has designed me. Although God has placed me in this world, yet he does not design to limit my prospects to it; though he has mixed me with mere animals, yet he does not intend to confound me with them; though he has lodged my soul in a frail perishable body, yet he does not mean to involve it in the dissolution of this frame. Without supposing immortality, that which constitutes the dignity of man, makes his misery. These desires of immortal duration, this faculty of thinking and reflecting, of expanding and perpetuating the mind; this superiority of soul, that seems to elevate mankind above beasts, actually places the beast above the man, and fills him with these bitter reflections full of mortification and pain. Ye crawling reptiles! ye beasts of the field! destitute of intelligence and reason! if my soul be not immortal, I envy your condition.— Content with your own organs, pleased with ranging the fields, and browsing the herbage, your desires need no restraint; for all your wishes are fully satisfied. While I, abounding on the one hand with insatiable desires, and on the other confined amidst vain and unsatisfactory objects, I am on this account unhappy!

We repeat these philosophical reasonings,



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

But, when we are thus convinced of our immortality, need we any new arguments to demonstrate the proposition included in the text, "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Most subjects may be made to appear with greater or less dignity, according to the greater or smaller degree of importance, in which the preacher places it. Pompous expressions, bold figures, lively images, ornaments of eloquence, may often supply either a want of dignity, in the subject discussed, or a want of proper disposition in auditors, who attend the discussion of it.—But in my opinion, every attempt to give importance to a motive taken from eternity, is more likely to enfeeble the doctrine than to invigorate it. Motives of this kind are self-sufficient. Descriptions the most simple, and the most natural, that can be made, are always, I think, the most pathetic, and the most terrifying; nor can I find an expression on this article, more eloquent and more emphatical than this of St. Paul, "The things which are seen, are temporal: but the things which are not seen, are eternal," 2 Cor. iii. 18. Were the possession of the whole world the price you ask in "exchange for your souls:" were the whole world free from those characters of vanity, which open such a boundless field to our reflections; would there not always be this disproportion between a perishing world, and a soul aspiring at felicity, that the world would end, and the soul would never die?

Death puts an end to the most specious titles, to the most dazzling grandeur, and to the most delicious life; and the thought of this period of human glory reminds me of the memorable action of a prince, who, although he was a heathen, was wiser than many Christians; I mean the great Saladin. After he had subdued Egypt, passed the Euphrates, and conquered cities without number; after he had retaken Jerusalem, and performed exploits more than human, in those wars which superstition had stirred up for the recovery of the Holy Land; he finished his life in the performance of an action, that ought to be transmitted to the most distant posterity. A moment before he uttered his last sigh, he called the herald, who had carried his banner before him in all his battles, he commanded him to fasten to the top of a lance, the shroud, in which the dying prince was soon to be buried. Go, said he, carry this lance, unfurl this banner, and, while you lift up this standard, proclaim, "This, this is all, that remains to Saladin the Great, the conqueror

and the king of the empire, of all his glory."\* Christians! I perform to-day the office of this herald. I fasten to the top of a spear sensual and intellectual pleasures, worldly riches, and human honours. All these I reduce to the piece of crape, in which you will shortly be buried. This standard of death I lift up in your sight, and I cry, this, this is all that will remain to you of the possessions, for which you exchanged your souls. Are such possessions too great to be given in exchange for such a soul? Can the idea of their perishing nature prevail over the idea of the immortality of the soul? And do you not feel the truth of the text, "What shall a man," a rational man, a man who is capable of comparing eternity with time, what shall such a man "give in exchange for his soul?"

Finally, We make a reflection of another kind to convince you of the dignity of your souls, and to persuade you, that nothing can be too valuable to be given in exchange for them. This is taken from the astonishing works that God has performed in their favour. We will confine ourselves to one article, to the inestimable price that God has given for the redemption of them. Hear these words of the holy Scriptures, "Ye are bought with a price. Ye were redeemed from your vain conversation, not with corruptible things, as silver and gold; but with the precious blood of Christ," 1 Cor. vi. 20; 1 Pet. i. 18.

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

Go, learn it in heaven. Behold the Deity; approach his throne. Observe the "thousand

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

thousands ministering unto him, ten thousand times ten thousand standing before him," Dan. vii. 10. See his eyes sparkling with fire, and his majesty and glory filling his sanctuary, and by the dignity of the victim sacrificed, judge of the value of the sacrifice.

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

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

Go to the infidel, and let him teach you the dignity of the sacrifice of Christ. Remember on this account he attacks Christianity, and he has some show of reason for doing so; for if this religion may be attacked on any side, with the least hope of success, it is on this. The truths of the Christian religion are incontestable: but if there be any one article of the gospel, which requires an entire docility of mind, an absolute submission of heart, a perfect deference to God, who speaks, it is the article of the sacrifice of the cross. Weigh the objections, and, by the greatness of the difficulties judge of the dignity of the mystery.

Recollect, Christian! God thought fit to require the blood of his Son for the redemption of our souls. These souls must have been very precious in the sight of God, since he redeemed them at a price so immense. The misery into which they were liable to be plunged, must have been extremely terrible, since God thought proper to make such great efforts to save them. The felicity of which they are capable, and to which the Lord intends to elevate them, must be infinitely valuable, since it cost him so much to bring them to it. For what in the universe is of equal value with the blood of the Son of God? Disappear all ye other miracles, wrought in favour of our souls! ye astonishing prodigies, that confirmed the gospel! thou delay of the consummation of all things! ye great and terrible signs of the second coming of the Son of God! Vanish before the miracle of the cross, for the cross shines you all into darkness and shade. This glorious light makes your glimmering vanish, and after my imagination is filled with the tremendous dignity of this sacrifice, I can see nothing great besides. But, if God, if this just appraiser of things, has estimated our souls at such a rate, shall we set a low price on them? If he has given so much for them, do we imagine we can give too much for them? If, for their redemption, he has sacrificed the most valuable person in heaven, do we imagine there is any thing upon earth too great to give up for them?

No, no, my brethren! after what we have heard, we ought to believe, that there is no

shadow of exaggeration in this exclamation of Jesus Christ, "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" I do not certainly know what our Saviour meant to say, whether he intended to speak of a man, who should "gain the whole world," and instantly "lose his soul;" or of one who should not "lose his soul" till long after he had obtained "the whole world," and had reigned over it through the course of a long life. But I do know that the words are true, even in the most extensive sense. Suppose a man, who should not only enjoy universal empire for one whole age, but for a period equal to the duration of the world itself, the proposition that is implied in the words of Jesus Christ is applicable to him. Such a soul as we have described, a soul so excellent in its nature, so extensive in its duration, so precious through its redemption; a soul capable of acquiring so much knowledge, of conceiving so many desires, of experiencing so much remorse, of feeling so many pleasures and pains, a soul that must subsist beyond all time, and perpetuate itself to eternity; a soul redeemed by the blood of the Son of God; a soul so valuable ought to be preferred before all things, and nothing is too precious to be given for its exchange. "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or, what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

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

But is this our case? Is it in our power to "gain the whole world?" Is this the price at which we sell our souls? O shame of human nature! O meanness of soul, more proper to confound us than any thing else, with which we can be reproached! This intelligent soul, this immortal soul, this soul which has been thought worthy of redemption by the blood of the Saviour of the world, this soul we often part with for nothing, and for less than nothing! In our condition, placed as most of us are, in a state of mediocrity; when by dissipation and

indolence, by injustice and iniquity, by malice and obstinacy, we shall have procured from vice all the rewards that we can expect, what shall we have gained? cities? provinces? kingdoms? a long and prosperous reign? God has not left these to our choice. His love would not suffer him to expose us to a temptation so violent. Accordingly we put up our souls at a lower price. See this old man, rather dead than alive, bowing under his age, stooping down, and stepping into the grave, at what price does he exchange his soul? at the price of a few days of a dying life; a few pleasures smothered under a pile of years, if I may speak so, or buried under the ice of old age. That officer in the army, who thinks he alone understands real grandeur, at what rate does he value his soul? He loses it for the sake of the false glory of swearing expertly, and of uniting blasphemy and politeness. What does yon mechanic get for his soul? One acre of land, a cottage bigger and less inconvenient than that of his neighbour.

Unmanly wretches! If we be bent on renouncing our dignity, let us, however, keep up some appearance of greatness. Sordid souls! if we will resign our noblest pretensions, let us do it, in favour of some other pretensions that are real. "Be astonished, O ye heavens at this! and be ye horribly afraid; for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water," Jer. ii. 12. Do you perceive, my brethren, the force of this complaint, which God anciently uttered over his people the Jews, and which he now utters over us?—Neither genius nor erudition can explain it. Could they, you might perhaps understand it. A certain elevation, a certain dignity of soul, singular sentiments of heart, are the only expositors of these affecting words. Therefore, I fear, they are unintelligible to most of you. "Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this! and be ye horribly afraid; for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." God loves us, he desires we should love him. He has done every thing to conciliate our esteem. For us he sent his Son into the world. For us he disarmed death. For us he opened an easy path to a glorious eternity. And all this to render himself master of our hearts, and to engage us to return him love for love, life for life. We resist all these attractions, we prefer other objects before him. No matter, he would pass this ingratitude, if the objects, which we prefer before him, were capable of making us happy; if, at least, they bore any apparent proportion to those which he offers to our hopes. But what arouses his displeasure, what provokes his just indignation, what excites reproaches that would cleave our hearts asunder, were they capable of feeling, is the vanity of the objects, which we prefer before him. The soul, in exchange for which the whole world would not be a sufficient consideration, this soul we often give for the most mean, the most vile, the most contemptible part of the world. "O ye heavens! be astonished at this, at this be ye horribly afraid; for my people have

committed two evils: they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water."

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

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

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## SERMON XXXI.

### REAL LIBERTY.

JOHN viii. 26.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Jesus Christ spoke these words in the treasury," ver. 20, that is to say, in a court of the temple, which was called the "women's porch," because women were allowed to enter it. This court was also called "the treasury," because it contained thirteen tubes like trumpets for the reception of public contributions. Jesus Christ is supposed to allude to the form of these, when he says, "When thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee," Matt. vi. 2. Each of these tubes had a different inscription on it, according to the different contributions, for the reception of which they were placed, either charitable contributions for the relief of the poor, or votive for the discharge of a vow, or such as were prescribed by some particular law. In this court sat Jesus Christ observing what each gave to the poor. In this place he absolved a woman caught in adultery and confounded her accuser, whose great zeal against her was excited more by the barbarous desire of shedding the blood of the criminal, than by the horror of the crime. To punish those vices in others, of which the punisher is guilty, is a disposition equally opposite to benevolence and equity. It was a received opinion among the Jews, that the waters of jealousy had no effect on an adulterous wife, whose husband had been guilty of the same crime. Jesus Christ perhaps referred to this opinion, when he said to the Pharisees, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her," ver. 7.

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

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

This conduct certainly required an apology. Jesus Christ must needs justify a right which he claimed, but which no man before him had attempted to claim. This is the true clew of the discourse, from which our text is taken. Jesus Christ there proves, that he is the supreme lawgiver, that although the eternal laws of right and wrong, which proceeded from him, are invariable, yet the positive institutes that depended on the will of the legislator, and derived all their authority from his revealed command, might be continued or abrogated at his pleasure. He there demonstrates of the whole Levitical ritual, what he elsewhere said of one part of it, "the Son of man is Lord of the Sabbath," Matt. xii. 8.

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

What Jesus Christ affirms being granted, that is, that he was "the light" by excellence, no apology is needful; for he had a right to absolve a woman, whom Moses, by the order of God, had condemned to die. The authority of inferior judges is limited to the execution of those laws, which the supreme legislator appoints. Sovereign princes have reserved the prerogative of showing mercy. The Pha-

rises foresaw the consequences of admitting the title that he claimed, and therefore they disputed his right to claim it; "Thou bearest record of thyself," say they, "thy record is not true," chap. viii. 22.

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

But the Pharisees, who made this objection, did not make it for the sake of obtaining evidence, and Jesus Christ reproves them for this duplicity. If you continue in doubt of my mission, said he to them, it is your own fault, your infidelity can only proceed from your criminal passions, "Ye judge after the flesh," ver. 15. If you would suspend these passions, you would soon perceive, that the holiness of my life gives me a right to bear witness in my own cause; for "which of you convinceth me of sin?" ver. 46. You would soon see, that my testimony is confirmed by that of my Father, who, when he sent me into the world, armed me with his omnipotence, which displays itself in my miracles, "He that sent me is with me, the Father hath not left me alone," ver. 29. But the hatred you bear to me prevents your seeing the attributes of my Father in me, "Ye neither know me nor my Father," ver. 19. However, I will not yet justify my mission by inflicting those punishments on you which your obstinacy deserves, "I judge no man;" nor will I perform the office of a judge, till I have finished that of a Redeemer. When you have filled up the measure of your sins, by obtaining a decree for my crucifixion, you shall be forced to acknowledge, under that iron rod, which the Father has given to me to destroy my enemies, the divinity of a mission, that your wilful obstinacy now disputes, "when ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he," ver. 28.

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

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

how durst they have affirmed, after the well known subjection of their country to so many different conquerors, "We were never in bondage to any man?"

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

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

I will neither undertake to prove the fact, nor the consequence inferred from it: but it is clear, that the title of *Son* by excellence, which Jesus Christ claims in this place, entirely corresponds with the end that I have assigned to this whole discourse, that is, to justify that pre-eminence over Moses, which he had assumed; and to prove that he might without usurpation, or, as St. Paul expresses it, without "thinking it robbery," Phil. ii. 6, act as supreme legislator, and pardon a woman whom the law of Moses condemned to die. A passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews will confirm this sense of our text. Jesus Christ, "was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house, has more honour than the house. He that built all things, is God. Moses was faithful in all his house as a servant. But Christ as a son over his own house," Heb. iii. 4, 5, &c. This is the *Son* by excellence, the *Son*, of whom it was said, when he came into the world, "Let all the angels of God worship him," chap. i. 6. This *Son*, this *God*, who "built the house;" this *Son*, this *God*, who is the maker and Lord of all things; this is he to whom alone it appertains to free us from the dominion of sin, and to put us in possession of true and real liberty. "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

Here let us finish this analysis, and let me hope, that its utility will sufficiently apologize for its length, and let us employ our remaining

time in attending to reflections of another kind, by which we shall more fully enter into the views of our blessed Saviour.

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

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

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

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

1. The liberty of man in regard to his *understanding* consists in a power of suspending his judgment, till he has considered any object in contemplation on every side, so that he may yield only to evidence. A suspension of judgment is a power adapted to the limited sphere, in which finite creatures are confined. God, who is an infinite Spirit, has not this kind of liberty; it is incompatible with the eminence of his perfections; the ideas which he had of creatures before their existence, were the models according to which they were created. He perceives at once all objects in every point of view. He sees the whole with evidence, and, as evidence carries consent along with it, he is gloriously incapable of doubt, and of suspending his judgment. It is not so with finite minds, particularly with minds so limited as ours. We hardly know any thing, we are hardly capable of knowing any thing. Our very desire of increasing knowledge, if we be not very cautious, will lead us into frequent and fatal mistakes, by hurrying us to determine a point before we have well examined it; we shall take probability for demonstration, a spark for a blaze, an appearance for a reality. A liberty of suspending our judgment is the only mean of preventing this misfortune; it does not secure us from ignorance: but it keeps us from error. While I enjoy the liberty of affirming only that, of which I have full evidence, I enjoy the liberty of not deceiving myself.

Farther, the desire of knowing is one of the most natural desires of man, and one of the most essential to his happiness. By man I mean him who remains human, for there are some men who have renounced humanity. There are men, who, like brutes, enclosed in a narrow circle of sensations, never aspire to improve their faculty of intelligence any farther, than as its improvement is necessary to the sensual enjoyment of a few gross gratifications, in which all their felicity is contained. But man has a natural avidity of extending the sphere of his knowledge. I think God commanded our first parents to restrain this desire, because it was one of their most eager wishes. Accordingly the most dangerous allurements that Satan used to withdraw them from their obedience to God, was this of science; "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." Gen. iii. 5. The state of innocence was a happy state, however it was a state of trial, to the perfection of which something was wanting. In every dispensation, God so ordered it, that

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

A mind, naturally eager to obtain knowledge, is not really free, if it have not the liberty of touching the tree of knowledge, and of deriving from the source of truth an ability to judge clearly, particularly of those objects, with the knowledge of which its happiness is connected. Without this the garden of Eden could not satisfy me; without this all the delicious pleasures of that blessed abode would leave a void in the plan of my felicity, and I should always suspect, that God entertained but a small degree of love for me, because he reposed no confidence in me. This idea deserves the greater regard, because it is an idea, that Jesus Christ taught his apostles. "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you," John xv. 15.

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

Perhaps I ought to have observed, before I entered on a discussion of the judgment and the will, that these are not two different subjects; but the same subject, considered under two different faces. We are obliged, in order to form complete ideas of the human soul, to consider its divers operations. When it thinks, when it conceives, when it draws conclusions, we say it judges, it understands, it is the *understanding*: when it fears, when it loves, when it desires, we call its volition, *will*. We apply to this subject what St. Paul says of another,

"there are diversities of operations: but it is the same spirit," 1 Cor. xii. 6.

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

If such be the nature of conscience, what we have affirmed of the liberty of the will in general, and of the liberty of the understanding in general, ought to determine what we are to understand by the freedom of the conscience. Conscience is free in regard to the understanding, when it has means of obtaining clear ideas of the justice or injustice of a case before it, and when it has the power of suspending its decisions on a case until it has well examined it. Conscience is free in regard to the will, when it has the power of following what appears just, and of avoiding every thing that appears contrary to the laws of equity. This article, we hope, is sufficiently explained.

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

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

But what relation can there subsist between a little particle of matter and an immaterial spirit, to render it of necessity, that every thought of this spirit must instantly excite some emotion in this particle of matter? And how is it, that every motion of this particle of matter must excite some idea, or some sensation, in this spirit? yet this strange union of body and spirit constitutes man. God, say some, having brought into existence a creature so excellent as an immortal soul, lest it should be dazzled with his own excellence,

united it to dead matter incapable of ideas and designs.

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

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

I do not think that any man is really free in regard to his condition, unless he have the liberty of choosing that kind of life, which seems the most advantageous to him. Solomon was free in this respect, when he had that pleasing dream, in which God presented all the blessings of this world to his view, and gave him his choice of all. A man, on the contrary, is a slave, when circumstances confine him in a condition contrary to his felicity, when, while he wishes to live, he is forced to die, when, while he lingers to die, death flees from him, and he is obliged to live.

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

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

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

Is a sinner free in his conduct, he who finds in an inflexibility of his organs, in an impetu-

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

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

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

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

"If the Son make you free, you shall be free indeed" in your conduct, because by the irresistible aid of his Spirit he will give you dominion over those senses to which you have been a slave; because his Almighty Spirit will calm your humours, attemper your blood, moderate the impetuosity of your spirits, restore to your soul its primitive superiority, subject your constitution entirely to your reason, render reason by a supernatural power lord of the

whole man, make you love to live by its dictates, and teach you to say, while you yield to its force, "O Lord, thou hast allured me, and I was allured; thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed," Jer. xx. 7.

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

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

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



these cruel apprehensions? Is he free, who "through fear of death is all his life-time subject to bondage?" Heb. ii. 15.

The condition of a sinner is still more deplorable, inasmuch as not being at liberty to exist, as he chooses to exist, he has not the liberty of being annihilated. For (and this is the severest part of his slavery, and the height of his misery,) as he is forced to die, when he has so many reasons to fear death, so he is obliged to live, when he has numberless reasons to wish to die; he is not master of his own existence. The superior power that constrains him to exist, excites in him sentiments, which in Scripture style are called, "seeking death, and not finding it," Rev. ix. 6, "cursing the day of birth," saying to the "mountains, Cover us; and to the hills, Fall on us," Jer. 20. 14, expressing despair in these miserable requests, "Mountains! fall on us; rocks! hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?" Rev. vi. 16, 17.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

to reprove, and the most dismal colours too faint to describe.

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

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

We do not exceed the truth in speaking thus. How inconsiderable soever the number of true Christians may be, the number would be less considerable still, if an entire freedom from the fear of death were essential to the Christian character. Death is always an evil, an exceeding great evil, even to saints of the first class. Let not this proposition offend you. Each privilege of redemption is perfectly acquired for us; however, in the present economy we are not put into the full enjoyment of any one. One privilege that redemption has procured for us, is a knowledge of the mysteries of God: but who of us knows them thoroughly? Another privilege of redemption is holiness: but who of us is perfectly holy? One of the privileges of redemption is a most close and tender union to God: but where is the Christian, who does not find this communion interrupted? All the other privileges of redemption are like these. It is the same with death. Death is vanquished, and we are delivered from its dominion: but the perfect enjoyment of this freedom will not be in this present economy. Hence St. Paul says, "The last enemy that shall be destroyed, is death," 1 Cor. xv. 26. Death will not be entirely destroyed till after the resurrection, because although before this great event of the souls of those who die in the Lord, enjoy an ineffable happiness, yet they are in a state of separation from the bodies to which the Creator at first united them; while this separation continues, death is not entirely conquered, this separation is one of the trophies of death. The time of triumphing over the enemy is not yet come; but it will arrive in due time, and when soul and body are again united, we shall exclaim with joy, "O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory?" ver. 55.

Let not the infidel insult the believer here, let him not treat us as visionaries, because we pretend to vanquish death, while we are vanquished by it. Our prerogatives are real, they are infinitely substantial, and there is an immense difference between those fears, which an idea of death excites in a man, whom sin has enslaved, and those which it excites in the soul of a Christian. The one, the man, I

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

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

But Jesus Christ renders annihilation, which was the object of our sinful desires, the object of our fears, or rather, as I said before, he makes that eternal existence, which we must enjoy after death, the ground of our transport and triumph. The happier the condition of the glorified saints should be, the more miserable would it be to apprehend an end of it.—Shortness of duration is one grand character of vanity inseparable from the blessings of this life. They will make thee happy, thou! whose portion is in this life, they will make thee happy, I grant: but thy happiness will be only for a short time, and this is the character that imbitters them. Forget thyself, idolatrous mother! forget thyself with that infant in thine arms, who is thine idol: but death will shortly tear thee from the child, or the child from thee. Slave to voluptuousness! intoxicate thy soul with pleasure: but presently death will destroy the senses that transmit it to thy heart.

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

The different ideas, that we have given, are, I think, more than sufficient to induce us to regard all those with execration, who would tear us from communion with this Jesus, who procures us advantages so inestimable. I do not speak only of heretics, and heresiarchs; I

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

## SERMON XXXII.

### THE DIVINITY OF JESUS CHRIST.

REV. v. 11—14.

*And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the living creatures,\* and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying, with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature, which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I, saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. And the four living creatures said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down, and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.*

ALTHOUGH Atheism and Superstition are weapons, which have been too successfully employed by the devil against the truth, yet are they not his most formidable arms, nor the most difficult to be resisted. It was an excess of stupidity which formed superstition; and it was an excess of corruption, that forged atheism: but a very little knowledge, and a very little integrity sufficiently preserve us from both. Superstition is so diametrically opposite to reason, that one is shocked at seeing earth, water, fire, air, minerals, passions, maladies, death, men, beasts, devils themselves placed by idolaters on the throne of the sovereign, and elevated to supreme honours. Far from feeling a propensity to imitate a conduct so monstrous, we should hardly believe it, were it not attested by the unanimous testimonies of historians and travellers: did we not still see in the monuments of antiquity, such altars, such deities, such worshippers: and did not the Christian world, in an age of light and knowledge, madly prove too faithful a guarantee of what animated the heathen world, in ages of darkness and ignorance.—The system of atheism is so loose, and its consequences so dreadful and odious, that only such as are determined to lose themselves, can be lost in this way. Whether a Creator exist is

\* Beasts, in our translation.—*Animans*—animals—*living creatures*, more agreeably to the apostle's *ζωα*, as well as to Ezek. i. 4, 5, &c. to which St. John seems to allude. *Καὶ εἶδον, καὶ εἶδον . . . ἑν τῷ μέσῳ οὐρανοῦ καθήμενον τὸ ζῶον.*

a question decided, wherever there is a creature. Without us, within us, in our souls, in our bodies, every where, we meet with proofs of a first cause. An infinite being follows us, and surrounds us; "O Lord, thou compasses my path, and my lying down, thou hast beset me behind and before. Whether shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?" Ps. cxxxix. 1. 3. 7.

But there is another class of arguments against our mysteries, which at first present themselves to the mind under a very different aspect. There is a system of error, which, far from appearing to have ignorance for its principle like superstition, or corruption like atheism, seems to proceed from the bosom of truth and virtue, and if I may be allowed to say so, to have been extracted from the very substance of reason and religion. I speak of that system, which tends to degrade the Saviour of the world from his divinity, and to rank him with simple creatures. There is in appearance a distance so immense, between an infant born in a stable, and the "Father of Eternity," Isa. ix. 6, between that Jesus, who conversed with men, and that God, who "upholds all things by the word of his power," Heb. i. 3, between him, who being crucified, expired on a cross, and him, who, sitting on the sovereign throne, receives supreme honours; that it is not at all astonishing, if human reason judge these objects, in appearance contradictory. This system seems also founded on virtue, even on the most noble and transcendent virtue, on zeal and fervency. It aims in appearance at supporting those excellencies, of which God is most jealous, his divinity, his unity, his essence. It aims at preventing idolatry. Accordingly, they who defend this system, profess to follow the most illustrious Scripture models. They are the Phineasses, and Eleazars, who draw their swords only to maintain the glory of Jehovah. They are the Pauls, whose "spirits are stirred by seeing the idolatry of Athens," Acts xvii. 16. They are the Elijahs, who are "moved with jealousy for the Lord of hosts," 1 Kings xix. 10.

But, if the partisans of error are so zealous and fervent, should the ministers of truth languish in lukewarmness and indolence? If the divinity of the Son of God be attacked with weapons so formidable, should not we oppose them with weapons more forcible, and more formidable still? We also are stirred in our turn, we also in our turn are "moved with jealousy" for the Lord of hosts, and we consecrate our ministry to-day to the glory of that God-man, whose ministers we are. In order to prove the doctrine of his divinity we will not refer you to the philosophers of the age, their knowledge is incapable of attaining the sublimity of this mystery; we will not even ask you to hear your own teachers, the truth passing through their lips loses sometimes its force; they are the *elders*, they are the *angels*, they are "the thousands, the ten thousand times ten thousands," Dan. vii. 10, before the throne of God, who render to Jesus Christ supreme honours. We preach to you no other divinity than their divinity. We prescribe to you no other worship than their worship. No! no! celestial intelligences! "Ye angels that

excel in strength; ye, who do the commandments of God; ye ministers that do his pleasure," Ps. ciii. 20, 21, we do not come to-day to set up altar against altar, earth against heaven. The extreme distance, which your perfections put between you and us, and which renders the purity of your worship so far superior to ours, does not change the nature of our homage. We come to mix our incense with that which you incessantly burn before our Jesus, who is the object of your adoration and praise. Behold, Lord Jesus! behold to-day creatures prostrating themselves upon earth before thy throne, like those who are in heaven. Hear the harmonious concert, accept our united voices, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches, wisdom and strength, honour and glory and blessing. Blessing and honour, glory and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. May every one of us fall down, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever. Amen."

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

I. Jesus Christ is supremely adorable, and supremely adored by beings the most worthy of our imitation.

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

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

I. *Jesus Christ is supremely adorable, and supremely adored by beings the most worthy of our emulation*; this is our first proposition. We join the term *supreme* to the term *adoration*, in order to avoid an equivocation, of which this proposition is susceptible. The Scripture does not distinguish, as some divines with so little reason do, many sorts of religious adorations. We do not find there the distinction of the worship of *Latria*, from the worship of *Dulia*: but religious adoration is distinguished from civil adoration. Thus we are told in the nineteenth chapter of Genesis, ver. 1, that Lot, seeing two angels, rose up to meet them, and "bowed himself with his face toward the ground," it is in the Hebrew, he adored them. We have numberless examples of the same kind. To remove this equivocation, to show

that we mean supreme adoration, we have affirmed, that Jesus Christ is *supremely adorable*, and *supremely adored*. But wherein does this supreme adoration consist? The understanding of this article, and in general of this whole discourse, depends on a clear notion of supreme worship. We will make it as plain as we can. Supreme adoration supposes three dispositions in him who renders it, and it supposes accordingly three excellencies in him to whom it is rendered.

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

2. Supreme adoration supposes, that he to whom it is rendered, is supremely amiable, supremely communicative, supremely good. Goodness is a perfection. It is comprised in the idea which we have already given of the adorable Being: but we consider it separately; because in the foregoing article, we considered the divinity without any relation to our happiness, whereas now we consider him in his relation to our felicity; for it is the goodness of God, which relates God to us: it is that, which in some sort reduces to our size, and moves towards us all those other attributes, the immensity of which absorbs us, the glory of which confounds us. Adoration supposes in him who renders it an *adherence of heart*, by which he cleaves to God as to his supreme good. It is an effusion of soul, which makes the worshipper consider him as the source of all the advantages which he now enjoys, and of all the advantages which he can ever enjoy. It makes him perceive, that he derives from him "life, motion, and being," Acts xvii. 25. It makes him say with a prophet, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. It is good for me to draw near to God. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him," Ps. lxxiii. 25, 28, and ii. 12.

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

beings, either to those who gave us birth, or to those who govern us in society, ought to be in subordination to the honour which is rendered to himself.

Such is our idea of supreme adoration, an idea not only proper to direct us in the doctrines of religion, as we shall see presently, but singularly adapted to our instruction in the practice of it; an idea, which may serve to convince us whether we have attained the spirit of religion, or whether we are floating on the surface of it; whether we be idolaters, or true worshippers of the living God; for these three dispositions are so closely connected together, that their separation is impossible. It is for this, that obedience to the commands of God is so powerfully enforced in religion as an essential part of the homage which we owe him. It is for this, that the Scriptures tell us, "covetousness is idolatry; to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams; rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry," Col. iii. 5; 1 Sam. xv. 22, 23.

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

1. The question of right is decided by the idea which the Scripture gives us of Jesus Christ. The three excellences, which we must suppose in him, to whom adoration is paid, are attributed to him in Scripture: and we are there required to render those three homages to him, which suppose adoration in him who renders them. The Scripture attributes to him that *eminence of perfections*, which must claim the homage of our minds. What perfection can you conceive, which is not ascribed to Jesus Christ by the sacred writers? Is it eternity? the Scripture tells you he "existed in the beginning," John i. 1, "he was before Abraham," chap. viii. 58, "he is, he was, he is to come," Rev. i. 8. Is it omnipresence? the Scripture tells you, "where two or three are gathered together in his name, there is he in the midst of them," Matt. xviii. 20, even when he ascended into heaven, he promised to be with his Apostles on earth, chap. xxviii. 20. Is it omnipotence? the Scripture tells you, he is "the Almighty," Rev. i. 8. Is it omniscience? the Scripture tells you, he "knoweth all things," John xxi. 17, he "needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man," chap. ii. 25, he "searcheth the hearts and the reins," Rev. ii. 23. Is it unchangeableness? the Scripture tells you, he is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever," Heb. xiii. 8, even when, "the heavens perish, he shall endure, when they shall "wax old," when they shall "be changed," when they shall be "changed like a vesture he shall be the same, and his years shall have no end," Ps. cii. 26, 27. Hence it is that Scripture attributes to him a perfect equality with his Father; for "he counted it no robbery to be equal with God," Phil. ii. 6. Hence it tells us, "in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," Col. ii. 9. For this reason, it calls him God by excellence; "his name shall be called Won-

derful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father," Isa. ix. 6. "O God! thy God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows," Ps. xlv. 7. "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God," John i. 1. "We are in him that is true, even in Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life," 1 John v. 20. Hence he is called "the great God," Titus ii. 13. "God over all, blessed for evermore," Rom. ix. 5.

2. The Scripture attributes to Jesus Christ that Supreme *communication*, that supreme goodness, that intimate relation to our happiness, which is the second ground of adoration, and the foundation of that second homage, which is required of a worshipper, that is, the homage of the *heart*. Hence it is, that the holy Scriptures direct us to consider him, as the author of all the blessings, which we possess. If the heavens rolling above our heads serve us for a pavilion, if the earth be firm beneath our feet to serve us for a support, it is he who is the author of both; for "thou, Lord, thou hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands," Ps. cii. 29. If numberless creatures near and remote contribute to the happiness of man, it is he who has formed them; for "without him nothing was made that was made. By him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, principalities, or powers, all things were created by him and for him. And he is before all things, and by him all things consist," John i. 3; Col. i. 16, 17. If the Jews received miraculous deliverances in Egypt, if they gained immortal victories over the nations, which they defeated, it was he who procured them, for "the angel of his presence he saved them, in his love and in his pity he redeemed them, and he bare them and carried them all the days of old," Isa. lxiii. 9. If darkness has been dissipated from the face of the church, it was he who made it vanish; for "he is the true light, who lighteth every man that cometh into the world," John i. 9. If we are reconciled to God, it was he who made our peace; for "we have redemption through his blood," Eph. i. 7, "it pleased the Father by him to reconcile all things unto himself, and by the blood of his cross to unite things in heaven, and things on earth," Col. i. 19, 20. If we have received the Comforter, it was he who sent him; for, says he, "I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart, I will send him unto you," John xvi. 7. If, after this life, our souls be carried into the bosom of God, it will be by his adorable hands; "Lord Jesus," said one of his exemplary servants, "receive my spirit," Acts vii. 59. If our bodies rise from their graves, if they be recalled to life, after they have been reduced to ashes, he alone will reanimate them; for "he is the resurrection and the life, he that believeth in him, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in him shall never die," John xi. 25, 26.

3. Finally, the Scripture attributes to Jesus Christ the third ground of adoration, that is,

empire over all creatures. This lays a foundation for the third homage of the worshipper, I mean devotedness of life. "I saw in the night visions," said the prophet Daniel, "and behold! one, like the Son of man, came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed," chap. vii. 13, &c. "The Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee, ask of me and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession; thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel," Ps. ii. 7—9. "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most Mighty! with thy glory and with thy majesty. Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies, the people fall under thee. Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: and the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre," Ps. xlv. 3, 5, 6. "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion, rule thou in the midst of thine enemies," Ps. cx. 1, 2. The question of right then is sufficiently proved.

The question of fact immediately follows. As Jesus Christ is supremely adorable, so he is supremely adored by intelligences, whom we ought to imitate. This adoration is recommended by Scripture; the very Scripture that forbids us to adore any but God, prescribes the adoration of Jesus Christ. "Let all the angels of God worship him," Heb. i. 6. "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son, that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father," John v. 22, 23. "He hath received a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow," Phil. ii. 9, 10. "The four and twenty elders fell down, and worshipped him who liveth for ever and ever." All the particular acts of adoration, which are reputed acts of idolatry when rendered to any but God, are rendered to Jesus Christ by the express direction of the holy Scriptures. Prayer, that prayer, of which it is said, "how shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?" Rom. x. 14, prayer is addressed to Jesus Christ; "they stoned Stephen, praying and saying, Lord Jesus receive my spirit," Acts vii. 59.\* Confidence, that confidence, of which it is said, "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm," Jer. xvii. 5, that confidence is an homage rendered to Jesus Christ; "Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed," Rom. x. 11. Baptism, that baptism, which is commanded to be administered in the name of the Father, that baptism is an homage rendered to Jesus Christ, it is administered in his name; "Go teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of

\* *His lapidoient Etienne, priant, et disant, Seigneur Jesus, &c. perfectly agreeable to St. Luke's ΕΠΙΚΑΛΟΥΜΕΝΟΝ ΚΑΙ ΑΣΟΥΣΤΩΝ.* The word *God* in our text is inserted properly.

the Son," Matt. xxviii. 19. Swearing, that swearing, of which it is said, "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name," Deut. vi. 13, that swearing is an homage rendered to Jesus Christ; "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost," Rom. ix. 1. Benediction, that blessing, of which it is said, "The Lord bless thee and keep thee," Num. vi. 24, that benediction is an homage rendered to Jesus Christ. "Grace be to you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ," Rom. i. 7. In fine, supreme praise, that praise of which it is said, "To the only wise God be honour and glory," 1 Tim. 17, is an homage paid to Jesus Christ. "And I beheld," says our text, "and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the living creatures, and the elders, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, to the Lamb be honour and glory, and blessing for ever." Weigh that expression which God uses to give the greater weight to his command of worshipping him only; "before my face,\* Thou shalt have no other gods before my face," Exod. xx. 3. God would have this always inculcated among the ancient people, that he was among them in a peculiar manner, that he was their head and general, that he marched in the front of their camp, and conducted all their host: he meant by this declaration, to retain them in his service, and to make them comprehend how provoking it would be to him, should they render divine honours in his presence to any besides himself. But here the elders, the angels, the ten thousand, the ten thousand times ten thousands in heaven, in the presence of God, and before the throne of his glory, adore Jesus Christ, and pay no other honours to him who "sitteth on the throne" than they pay to Jesus Christ himself.

Collect now, my brethren, all these reflections into one point of view, and see into what contradictions people fall, who, admitting the divinity of our Scriptures, refuse to consider Jesus Christ as the Supreme God. No, Jesus Christ is not the Supreme God (thus are our opponents obliged to speak,) Jesus Christ is not the Supreme God: but he possesses that eminence of perfections which constitutes the essence of the Supreme God; like him he is eternal, like him he is omnipresent, like him he is almighty, he knows all things like him, he searches the heart and the reins like him, he possesses the fulness of the Godhead like him, and like him merits the most profound homage of the *mind*. No, Jesus Christ is not the Supreme God: but he possesses that goodness, that communication, which is the grand character of the Supreme God; like God supreme, he made heaven and earth, he formed all creatures like him, he wrought miracles like a God, for the ancient church, he enlightens like him, he sanctifies like him, he saves us, he raises us from the dead, he glorifies us like him, and like him merits the most profound homage of the *heart*. No, Jesus Christ

is not the Supreme God: but we are commanded to worship him as if he were. St. Stephen prays to Jesus Christ as if he were God, the faithful confide in Jesus Christ as if he were God, they swear by Jesus Christ as if he were God, they bless in the name of Jesus Christ as if he were God. Who does not perceive these contradictions? Our first proposition is therefore sufficiently established, Jesus Christ is supremely adored by intelligences the most worthy of imitation. But it implies a contradiction, to suppose that the honours of adoration should be communicated to a simple creature. This is our second proposition, and the second part of this discourse.

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

Accordingly, however important our second proposition may be, we should suppose it fully proved, if the Scripture did not seem positively to affirm, that a right to supreme adoration is a right acquired by Jesus Christ, and is ascribed to him, not on account of what he was from eternity, but of what he has done in time. "The Father judgeth no man," says Jesus Christ himself: "but hath committed all judgment to the Son, that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father," John v. 22, 23. Here, it is plain, Jesus Christ does not require men to honour him, as they honour the Father, on account of his own excellent nature: but on account of that power, to "judge the world," which was given him in time. "He made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him," Phil. ii. 7, 9. Here again, Jesus Christ seems to have received this exaltation only in virtue of that profound humiliation, and of that profound obedience, which he rendered to his Father. And in our text it seems as if those acclamations, praises, and adorations, with which the happy spirits in heaven honour the Saviour of the world, are only offered to him on account of that sacrifice which he offered in time; for after these celestial intelligences have said in the following words, "Thou art worthy to take the book and open the seals thereof, for thou wast

\* Mr. S. quotes according to the Hebrew text of Exod. xx. 3.

slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood: they repeat this reason of adoration, and worship Jesus Christ under the idea of a *Lamb*, saying, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, riches, wisdom," and so on.

This difficulty comes from the equivocal meaning of the term *worship*, which may be understood to regard those infinite perfections, which eternally renders him who possesses them, worthy of supreme honours; or that particular honour, which God merits by the performance of some memorable work performed in time. The first sort of adoration cannot be acquired. It is essential to him to whom it is paid; this we have proved. But the second kind of adoration, that part of supreme honour, which is rendered to God, in virtue of some new achievement, that honour he acquires; and far from proving, that he who acquires this new honour, and the homage and consequential of it, does not possess essential deity, it is on the contrary an invincible argument, that divinity is essential to him. God, for example, is essentially adorable, yet every new favour that he grants, is an acquisition of a new title of adoration.

Apply this remark to Jesus Christ. As God, he is essentially adorable. But Jesus Christ, who is supremely adorable as God, may bestow some new favour on us. In this sense, he may acquire a new title of adoration, because he affords us a new motive to adore him. And what more powerful motive can be proposed, than that of his profound abasement for our salvation? now the inspired writers, in the passages which we have cited, speak of this latter kind of adoration. They do not say, Jesus Christ has acquired that divine essence, which renders him who possesses it essentially adorable; for that would imply a contradiction: they only say, that by the benefits which he has communicated to us in time, he has acquired over us in time a new title of adoration. This is evident to a demonstration in regard to the Philippian text, which appears the most difficult. For St. Paul, so far from affirming that Jesus Christ had not those perfections which make any being adorable, till after his humiliation, establishes expressly the contrary. He expressly says, that Jesus Christ, before he was found "in fashion as a man, thought it no robbery to be equal with God;" that, before he took upon him "the form of a servant, he was in the form of God;" but when Jesus Christ was "in the form of God," when "he counted it no robbery to be equal with God," he was supremely adorable. By consequence, Jesus Christ is not adorable only because he was "found in fashion as a man, and took upon him the form of a servant," Phil. ii. 6, &c.

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

III. One of the most celebrated members

of the Romish communion, a man\* who would have been one of the surest guides, who could have been chosen to conduct us through the labyrinths of the first ages, could we have assured ourselves, that the integrity of his heart had been equivocal to the clearness of his understanding, and to the strength of his memory; this man, I say, has been the astonishment of every scholar, for declaring, that after he had made profound researches into antiquity, it appeared to him, the doctrine of Christ's divinity was not generally received in the church, till after the council of Nice. It is yet a problem, what could induce this able Jesuit to maintain a paradox apparently so opposite to his own knowledge. But, leaving this question to the decision of the Searcher of hearts, let us only observe, that this author has been a thousand times answered, both by our own divines, and by those of the church of Rome. A treatise on this subject, by an illustrious prelate of the church of England, is in the hands of all learned men. The author proves there, with the fullest evidence, that the fathers who lived before the council of Nice, did maintain first, that Jesus Christ subsisted before his birth; secondly, that he was of the same essence with his Father; and thirdly, that he subsisted with him from all eternity. To repeat the passages extracted from the fathers by this author is not the work of a sermon. We are going to take a way better proportioned to the limits of these exercises to arrive at the same end.

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

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

1. In order to answer the objections, which may be extracted from the writings of the fathers against our thesis, the same general solution must be admitted, which we oppose to objections extracted from the Scriptures.—Passages of Scripture are opposed to us, in which Jesus Christ speaks of himself as a *simple man*. To this objection we reply, these passages make nothing against us. According to us, Jesus Christ is God and man. We can no more conclude, that he is not God, because the Holy Spirit sometimes speaks of him as a simple man, than we can conclude, that he is not man, because he speaks of him sometimes as God.

2. It must be observed, that though the fathers taught that Jesus Christ was of the same essence with his Father, yet they believed, & know not what, *subordination* among the three persons who are the object of our worship.—They considered the Father as the source of deity, and pretended that the generation of the Son gave the Father a pre-eminence above the Son, and that the procession of the Holy Ghost gave the Son a pre-eminence over the Holy Ghost. "We are not Atheists," says

\* Petavius.

† Bishop Bull.

Justin Martyr, "we religiously adore the Creator of this universe: we put in the second place Jesus Christ, who is the true Son of God, and we place in the third degree the spirit of prophecy."<sup>\*</sup> As these first teachers of the church have sometimes been contradicted on this article, so they have advanced in the heat of the dispute some overstrained propositions, which we cannot adopt; as this of Origen, among many others. "There have been among the multitude of the faithful, some who, departing from the sentiments received by others, have rashly affirmed that Jesus Christ was God over all creatures. In truth, we who believe the word of the Son, who said, "The Father is greater than I," John xiv. 28, do not believe this proposition."<sup>†</sup> The advantages which the Arians gained by this, made many of the fathers after the Nicene council, renounce the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, and explain those passages in which Christ acknowledged himself inferior to the Father of his humanity. This is the method of St. Athanasius, † of St. Cyril of Alexandria, § and of many others. It was particularly St. Augustine's way, who, to prove that these expressions ought to be understood of the humanity only of Jesus Christ, makes this remark, "that they are never used of the Holy Ghost, that it is no where said of the Holy Ghost, that the Father is greater than he."<sup>||</sup>

3. The fathers who lived before the council of Nice, admitted of a generation of the Son of God, before the foundation of the world, and which is no other than that power which proceeded from the Father, when he created the universe. We must take care not to be deceived by arguments taken from such passages. It cannot be concluded, that these fathers denied the existence of Jesus Christ before the foundation of the world, because they said, he then came from the bosom of the Father. Here is an example of their way of expressing this generation. "I am going," says Tatian, "to state more clearly the mysteries of our religion. In the beginning was God. Now we have learnt, that this beginning is the power of the word; for the Lord of all things was then all the substance of the universe, because, having then made no creature, he existed alone. By his simple will his word proceeded from him. Now the word did not advance into the empty void: but was the first work of the Spirit, and we know this is the principle of the world."<sup>¶</sup> This father calls this clearly stating the mysteries of our religion. Perhaps he might find some gainsayers. However, it appears by this passage, and by a great number more, that the ancient doctors of the church thought, Jesus Christ was then produced after a certain manner, which they explained according to their own ideas. We do not deny their holding this opinion. We only say, that what they advanced concerning this production in time,

does not prove that they did not admit the eternal generation of Jesus Christ.

4. We do not pretend, that certain expressions, which the orthodox have affected since the council of Nice, were received in the same sense before that council. We generally see, when two parties warmly controvert a point, they affect certain expressions, and use them as their livery. As we can never find terms proper to express this union, or this ineffable distinction between the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, so we must not be surprised, that the church has varied on this article. "Necessity," says St. Austin, speaking of the terms used in disputing with the Arians, "necessity has given birth to these terms, in order to avoid the snares of heretics in long discussions."<sup>\*\*</sup> We acknowledge then, some of the fathers have advanced that the Father and the Son had two distinct essences, or two different natures. Thus, according to Photius, Pierius, priest and martyr, † and Dennis of Rome, in a letter against the Sabellians, ‡ declaimed against those who divided the divinity into three hypostases; or three persons. And thus also the orthodox, assembled in council at Sardis, complained, that the heretical faction wanted to establish, that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost were three distinct persons: "for," add these fathers, "our ancestors have taught us, and it is the catholic and apostolic tradition, that there is but one person in the Divinity."<sup>§</sup> The question is not whether the fathers of the first ages used the very terms, which succeeding ages have used. We do not say they did.— "We would not excite odious disputes about words provided other syllables include the same opinion;"<sup>||</sup> but the question is, whether they had the same ideas, whether, when they said there were three essences in the Deity and one person, they did not mean by essence what we mean by person, and by person what we mean by essence.

5. We must take care not to lay down for a principle, that the fathers expressed themselves justly, that their words were always the most proper to convey adequate ideas of their sentiments, that they always reasoned in a close uniform manner, that their thesis in some pages of their writings never contradict their thesis in other pages. The sense of a passage in Origen, or Tertullian, divides the learned. Some affirm these fathers meant one thing, others say they meant another thing. Each pretends to define precisely what they intended. Is there not sometimes a third part to take? May we not believe that Origen and Tertullian, in other respects great men, had not distinct ideas of what they meant to express, and did not always rightly understand themselves?

6. In fine, the last precaution which we must use to understand the sentiments of the first ecclesiastical writers, and which demands a very particular attention, is not to be deceived by spurious writings. We know what was the almost general weakness of Christians of those times. We know particularly, what

\* Apol. sec. ad Ant. Pium. p. 60. edit. Paris.

† Origen against Celsus, book 8th.

‡ Athan. Dialog. con. Maced.

§ Cyril Alex. de vera fide. c. 28.

|| August. Ep. 66. et lib. 2. de Trin. c. 6.

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

\* August lib. 7. de. trin. cap. 4.

† Phot. Bib. Cod. i. 9.

‡ Athan. de Syn. Nic. decr.

§ Theod. Hist. Eccl. lib. 2. chap. 8.

|| Greg. Nazianz.



were the secret dealings of the Arians. We know they often substituted power for reason, and craft for power, when authority was wanting. Among spurious writings, those which have the most certain marks of reprobation, are frequently those which have the most venerable titles. Such, among others, is that which bears the fine name of *apostolical constitutions*. It is very surprising, that a man who cannot be justly taxed with ignorance of the writings of the ancient fathers, should advance this unwarrantable proposition, This book is of apostolical authority.\* The doctor threatens the church with a great volume to establish his opinion, and to forward in the end the dreadful design which he has formed and declared of reviving Arianism. Time will convince the learned, on what unheard of reasons this man grounds his pretensions. Who can persuade himself, that a book, the spuriousness of which has been acknowledged, even by those who had the greatest interest in defending its authenticity, by Bellarmine,† Baronius,‡ Peta- vius,§ Du Perron|| and many others; a book, which none of the fathers, none of the councils, even those which have given us lists of the canonical books, have ever comprised in the canon;¶ a book of which there is no trace in the three first centuries, nor hardly any in those which immediately follow; a book full of passages of Scripture misquoted;¶ a book which makes decisions contrary to the inspired writings;\*\*\* as one decision touching the observation of the Sabbath, another concerning women with child, a third, which allows a master a forbidden intercourse with his slave; a book that bestows pompous titles on a bishop, giving him a pre-eminence above magistrates, princes, and kings; a book that prescribes idle ceremonies in baptism, and enjoins the observation of superstitious fasts and festivals; a book which gives an absurd idea of building temples; a book that establishes prayer for the dead, and directs us to offer the sacrament of the Eucharist for them; a book which adopts notorious fables, as the pretended combat between Simon the sorcerer, and Simon Peter; a book where we meet with glaring contradictions, as what it says of St. Stephen in one place, compared with what it says of him in another; a book where we meet with profane things, as the comparison of a bishop with God the Father, of Jesus Christ with a deacon, of the Holy Ghost with a deaconess; who, I say, can persuade himself, that such a book was compiled by apostles or apostolical men.

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

1. The fathers, who followed the doctrine of the Nicene Council, never pretended to

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

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

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

4. When any teachers rose up in the church to injure the doctrine of Christ's divinity, they were reputed heretics, and as such rejected. Witness Artemon, Theodosius, Paul of Samoseta. The latter lifted up a standard against the divinity of the Saviour of the world, and six of the most celebrated bishops were chosen by the synod of Antioch to write him a letter, which we yet have, and in which they profess to believe, that Jesus Christ subsisted from all eternity with his Father.|| To which we

\* Mr. Whiston.

† Bellarm. de script. eccl. sect. 1.

‡ Baron. tom. 1. an. 32.

§ Du Per. de Euch. 1, 2. c. 1.

¶ Conc. Laod. 3d conc. of Carthage.

¶ Book 1. chap. 5. Amst. edit. Frob. p. 221. 214. 402. 293, &c.

\*\* Book 2. chap. 36.

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

\* Athan. lib. 1. de Syn. Nic. dec.

† Theod. Hist. Ec. lib. 1. cap. x. See Sec. Hist. Eccl. lib. 5. cap. 10.

‡ Arnob. lib. 1.

§ Orig. contra Celsum, lib. 3.

¶ Euseb. Eccl. Hist. lib. 5. Athan. de Syn. Arim. et Seleuc. Bibliot. des peres. tom. 2.

add this passage of Origen, "Let us represent as fully as we are able what constitutes heresy. He is a heretic who has false notions about our Lord Jesus Christ. Such as deny that he was the first-born, the God of every creature, the word, the wisdom, the beginning of the ways of God, "formed from the beginning, or ever the world was, begotten before the mountains and hills,"\* Prov. viii.

5. The fathers of the three centuries made an invariable profession of adoring but one God. This was, as it were, the first distinct character of their religion. Yet the primitive Christians adored Jesus Christ; witness Pliny's letter, which says, "they sang hymns to Jesus Christ as to a God."† Witness Justin Martyr, who, in his Apology to Antoninus, expressly says, "Christians religiously worship Father, Son, and Spirit." And in the same apology he assures us, that "the constant doctrine of Christians, which they received from Jesus Christ himself, was the adoration of one only God." Witness that famous letter of the faithful at Smyrna, whom the heathens accused of paying divine honours to Polycarp. "It is impossible," say these believers, "that we should abandon Jesus Christ, or worship any other but him. We worship Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God: but in regard to the martyrs, disciples of Christ, and imitators of his virtues, we respect them for their invincible love to their Master and King." Hence it was, that Paul of Samoseta, who denied the divinity of Christ, would not allow the custom of singing hymns to his honour: and Eusebius uses this argument to prove the doctrine that we are maintaining: "The psalms and hymns," says he, "composed a long time ago by the faithful, do they not proclaim, that Jesus Christ is the Word of God, that he is God?"‡

6. Finally, Among numberless passages in the fathers, which attest the truth in question, there are some so clear and so express, that we ourselves, who would prove their faith in our Saviour's divinity, cannot dictate terms more emphatical than those which they have used. Weigh these words of Tertullian. "Jesus Christ had the substance of the human nature, and the substance of the divine nature; on which account we say, he had a beginning, and he had no beginning; he was natural and spiritual; weak and powerful; mortal and immortal; properties (adds this father) which distinguish his human and divine nature."§ Weigh these words of the same Tertullian. "We have been taught that God brought forth that Spirit, which we call the Word, that God by bringing him forth begat him, that for this reason he is called the Son of God, because his substance and the substance of God is one and the same substance; as a ray proceeding from the body of the sun, receives a part of its light without diminishing the light of the sun, so in the generation of the word, spirit is derived of spirit, and God of God. As the light of a flambeau derived from another does not at all diminish the light whence it is taken, so it is

with God. That which proceeds from him is God, both God and Son of God, one with the Father, and the Father with him. It follows, that this distinction of spirit from spirit, of God from God, is not in substance but in person."\*\* Weigh again these words of Hyppolitus the martyr. "Thou art he, who existeth always. Thou art with the Father without beginning, and eternal as well as the Holy Spirit."† Again, weigh these words of Origen. In examining what doctrines are necessary to salvation, he puts this in the first class: "Jesus Christ, who, being God, became incarnate, did not cease to be God."‡ Again, weigh these of Justin Martyr. "They call us Atheists, because we do not adore their demons. We grant we are such in regard to their gods: but not in regard to the true God, with whom we honour and worship the Son."§ Finally, weigh these of Pope Felix. "We believe, Jesus Christ the Word is the eternal Son of God."||

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

We have endeavoured to prove, that Jesus Christ is supremely adorable, and supremely adored. Christians, what idea do you form of this doctrine? Do we think, we have done all that this doctrine engages us to do, when we have signalized our zeal by affirming and defending it? Shall we be of that number of extravagant people, who, having established the truth with warmth; sometimes with wrath (placing their passions to the account of religion) imagine, they have thereby acquired a right of refusing to Jesus Christ that unlimited obedience which so directly follows the doctrine of his divinity? The sacred authors, whom we have followed in proving this doctrine, draw very different consequences from it. They use it to inflame our love for a God, who "so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son," John iii. 16. They use it to elevate us to the sublimest hopes, declaring it impossible for him "who gave his own Son, not to give us all things freely with him," Rom. iii. 31. They use it to enforce every virtue, particularly humility, a virtue essential to a Christian; and when order requires it, to sacrifice the titles of Noble Sovereign, Potentate, Monarch, after the example of this God-man, who "being in the form of God, and counting it no robbery to be equal with God, humbled himself," Phil. ii. 6. They use it to exalt the evangelical dispensation above the Mosaical economy, and the superiority of the former to prove, that piety should be carried to a more eminent degree now than formerly; for God, "who spake to the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son," Heb. i. 1.—They use it to prove, that the condition of a wicked Christian would be infinitely worse after this life than that of a wicked Jew; for "if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every

\* Apol. Pamph. Mart. in the 4th vol. of St. Jerome's works. Edit. Froben. † Lib. 10. Epist. 97.

‡ Euseb. Hist. Eccl. book 7. chap. 30. book 5. chap. 28.

§ Tertul. de Carne Christi.

\* Tertul. adv. Gen. Apol. cap. 21.

† Bibl. Patr. tom. 12.

‡ Origen cont. Cels. lib. 5.

§ Just. Mart. Apol. 2.

|| Cone. Ephes. act. 1.

transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord?" ii. 2. "He that despised Moses's law, died without mercy, under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be counted worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God?" x. 28, 29. They use it to describe the despair of those, who shall see him come in divine pomp, whom they once despised under the veil of mortal flesh, for "they that pierced him shall see him, and the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every freeman, shall hide themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains, and shall say to the mountains and rocks, fall on us and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?" Rev. i. 7, and vi. 15, &c.

Our second reflection is on that multitude of intelligences, which continually wait around the throne of God. Hear what Daniel says, "Thousand thousands ministered unto him, ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him," vii. 10. Hear what Micaiah says, "I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him, on his right hand and on his left," 1 Kings xxii. 19. Hear what the Psalmist says, "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels," Ps. lxxviii. 17. Hear what St. Luke says, "There was a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest," ii. 13. Hear what Jesus Christ says, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" Matt. xxvi. 53. Hear what our text says, "The number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands." My brethren, one of the most dangerous temptations, to which a believer is exposed in this world, is that of seeing himself despised. He sometimes, like Elias, thinks himself *alone* on the Lord's side, 1 Kings xix. 10. Like Joshua, he is sometimes obliged to say of his duty, "Choose you whom you will serve: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord," xxiv. 15. The church is yet a "little flock," Luke xii. 32, and although we cannot say of the external profession of religion as St. Paul says, "Ye see your calling, brethren, that not many mighty, not many wise, not many noble are called," 1 Cor. i. 26, yet it may be too truly said of the reality and essence of Christianity. No, we have "not many noble." They are called noble in the world, who have, or who pretend to have, some ancient titles, and who are often ashamed of those whom Jesus Christ has ennobled, associated into his family, made "partakers of the divine nature, and changed from glory to glory, by his Spirit," 2 Pet. i. 4. We have very few of these nobles. No, we have not "many mighty," 2 Cor. iii. 18. They are called mighty in the world, who have the art of surmounting every obstacle in the path that leads to fortune, who, in spite of the world of opposers, have the art of arriving

at the pinnacle of worldly grandeur, and making the difficulties opposed to their designs the means of succeeding. These people generally entertain a contemptible idea of such as are concentrated in virtue, who use it both as buckler and sword to conquer flesh and blood, "the prince of the power of the air," and his formidable legions, Eph. ii. 2. We have but few such mighty ones as these. No, we have "not many wise." They are called wise in this world, who, by the impenetrable secrets of a profound policy, find new ways of supporting the state, and of deriving from public prosperity a fund to maintain their own pomp. Those are usually despised, who possess that fear of the Lord, which "is the beginning of wisdom," of that "wisdom among them that are perfect," Prov. i. 7; 1 Cor. ii. 6, which we are taught in the gospel. We have very few of these wise men. What then! have falsehood and vice more partizans than virtue and truth? What then! shall we have less approbation in submitting to God than in submitting to the devil? Far from us be an idea so puerile! Let us cease to consider this little handful of men who surround us, as if they made up the universality of intelligences; and this earth, this point, this atom, as if it were the immensity of space. Let us open our eyes. Let our text produce the same effect in us to-day as Elisha's voice once produced in his servant. All on a sudden they were surrounded with soldiers, armies, and chariots, sent by the Syrian king to carry off Elisha. The servant is frightened; "Alas, my master!" says he, "what shall we do?" "Fear not," answers Elisha, "they that be with us are more than they that be with them." And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And what does he see? "He sees the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha," 1 Kings vi. 15, &c. Believers, ye, who think yourselves alone on the Lord's side, ye who tremble at the sight of the formidable troops which the enemy of your salvation has sent against you, ye, who cry, "What shall we do?" "Fear not, they that are with us, are more than they that are with them. . . . O Lord, open their eyes that they may see." See Christians! see whether ye be alone. See these "ten thousand times ten thousands, that stand before him." See these "heavenly hosts," which surround his throne "on the right hand and on the left." See the "twenty thousand chariots." See legions of angels and elders, "whose numbers are twenty thousand times ten thousand,"\* Rev. ix. 16. These are your companions, these your approvers, these your defenders.

3. But what are the delights of these intelligences? You have heard, my brethren, (and this is our third reflection,) their felicity, their delight, consists in rendering supreme honours to God. "And I beheld and heard the voice of many angels, round about the throne, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength." A reflection very proper to humble and confound us, whose taste

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

is so vitiated and depraved. I am aware, that nothing is less subject to our decisions than taste. I am aware, that what is delicious to one is disgusting to another, and, as it would be stupid to expect a sublime spirit should take pleasure in the gross occupations of a mechanic, so it would be unjust to expect that a mechanic should be pleased with the noble speculations of a sublime genius. I know, the difference between us and these intelligences is such as not to allow our pleasures to be of the same kind. But, after all, is this difference so great as to make such a disproportion in our delights? Do we not aspire to divine happiness as well as they? And if the flesh, which covers that spiritual substance, that animates us, places us so far beneath them, is not the honour, which this flesh has received by the incarnation of the Word, who "took not on him the nature of angels but the seed of Abraham," Heb. ii. 16, is not this more than enough to remove the prodigious distance, which the sublimity of their essence puts between us and them? at least, should it not make us lament the depravity of our taste, if it be not sufficient perfectly to restore it? Christians, the plan of our evangelical felicity is founded on that of celestial felicity. Christians are called, even here below, to taste those noble pleasures, which are so delightful to the blessed above. Let us feel these pleasures, my brethren. Let us feel the pleasure of rendering to God the homage of the mind. Let us soar into a sublime meditation of his essence. Of his perfections let us form the most elevated ideas, that our diminutive capacities can permit. Let us conceive, as far as we possibly can, a wise God, supremely powerful, supremely holy, supremely good.— Let us associate his glorious attribute, and, judging by the splendour of these feeble rays, of some of the beauties of the original, let us adore this Great Supreme. Let us feel the pleasure of rendering to God the homage of the heart. Let us measure the dimensions of love divine. Let us lose ourselves in the "length, in the breadth, in the height, in the depth of that love, which passeth knowledge," Eph. iii. 18. Let us conceive the inexpressible felicity of an intimate union with the *happy God*, 1 Tim. vi. 15. Let us reflect on the happiness of a creature, who has a relation of love to a God, who knows how to love with so much extent, with so much pity, with so much power. Let us feel the pleasure of rendering to God the homage of an entire devotedness, the submission of all our desires. Slaves of the world, let us free ourselves from sensuality and cupidity, let us shake off the yoke of these domineering passions, let us "submit ourselves to God," James iv. 7. Thus let us taste the felicity of returning to order, of obeying that God, all whose commands enforce love to what is supremely lovely.

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

thou also, deceitful "fashion of the world,"\* thou shalt presently pass away! 1 Cor. vii. 31; presently these auditors, who have endeavoured to approach nearest to angelical pleasures, shall approach them entirely. Shortly this flock shall be numbered with the "twenty thousand times ten thousand." Presently the voices, which have made these walls resound the Creator's praise, shall sing it in a nobler manner, and shall make the heavenly arches echo the hymn in my text, "Worthy is the Lamb to receive honour, power, riches, wisdom, strength, glory, and blessing." To him, that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing, and honour, and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

## SERMON XXXIII.

### CHRIST THE SUBSTANCE OF THE ANCIENT SACRIFICE OF THE LAW.

HEBREWS X. 5—7.

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

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

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

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

In these two points of light St. Paul presents our divine Saviour to the view of the Hebrews, in this chapter, from which we have taken the text, and in some following chapters. It was necessary to convince men, educated in Judaism, new converts to Christianity, and greatly prejudiced in favour of the magnificence of the Levitical service, that the most pompous

\* 1 Cor. vii. 31. Fashion of this world. *το σκευος του κοσμου τουτου* Locutio a theatro et scenis desumpta, quæ subito cum personis mutantur. *Figure du monde trompeur.*

parts of the Mosaic ritual, the altars and the offerings, the priests and the sacrifices, the temple and all its ceremonies, were designed to prefigure the sacrifice on the cross. It was necessary to convince men, who were as little acquainted with the morality of the gospel as with the divinity of it, that, far from using this oblation to diminish in the least degree the motives which engage every intelligent creature to devote himself to his Creator, it was employed to give them all new and additional influence. St. Paul intended to convince the Jewish converts of these truths in this epistle in general, and in my text in particular. But is the doctrine of my text addressed to new converts only? Suppose the doctrine addressed particularly to them, does it follow, that it is needless to preach it in this pulpit? We will not examine these questions now. However averse we are to consume the precious moments of these exercises in scholastic debates, the words, that we have read, furnish us with a most specious pretext for a minute discussion of them. Are the words of my text to be considered as the language of Jesus Christ, as the far greater number of expositors, for very strong reasons, maintain? Are they the words of David, who, considering the many reasons, which persuade us to believe, that the dedications of our persons to the service of God are the most acceptable of all sacrifices to him, vows to devote himself to his service? We answer they are the words of Jesus Christ; they are the words of David; and they express the sentiments of all true believers after him. We are going to prove these assertions.

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

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

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

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

tial truths of religion; it must be supported by solid proofs.

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

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

But, if the idiom of the Hebrew language could not furnish us with this solution, we should not think the difficulty sufficient to engage us to erase the fortieth psalm from the list of prophecies, if other solid reasons induced us to insert it there. Jesus Christ on the cross was the substitute of sinners, like the scape-goat, that was accused under the old dispensation, and, as he stood charged with the iniquities of his people, he was considered as the perpetrator of all the crimes of men. The Scripture says in so many words, "he bare our sins." What a burden! What an inconceivable burden! Is the bearer of such a burden chargeable with any exaggeration, when he cries, "My iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head;" 1 Pet. ii. 25. This passage being thus explained, we affirm, there is nothing in this psalm, which does not exactly agree to the Messiah; and if we do not attempt now to prove what we have affirmed on this article, it is partly because such a discussion would divert us too far from our subject, and partly because there seems to be very little difficulty in the application of each part of the psalm to Jesus Christ.

Moreover, the fortieth psalm is parallel to

other prophecies, which indisputably belong to the Messiah. I mean particularly the sixty-ninth Psalm, and the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. Were not the expositions of fallible men grounded on the testimonies of infallible writers, the nature of the thing would oblige us to admit the application. In whose mouth, except in that of the Messiah, could David, with so much reason, have put these words? "For thy sake I have borne reproach; shame hath covered my face," Ps. lxxix. 7. Of whom could Isaiah so justly say as of the Messiah, "He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him: and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all," chap. liii. 5, 6. Now, if you put the chapter and the psalm, which we have quoted, among prophecies of the Messiah, you will find no difficulty in adding the psalm, from which our text is taken, because they need only to be compared to prove that they speak of the same subject.

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

I very well know what the enmities of our mysteries say against this reasoning, and against all our arguments of this kind by which we have usually derived the mysteries of the gospel from the writings of the prophets. Jesus Christ, say they, and his apostles reasoned from the prophecies only for the sake of accommodating themselves to the genius of the Jews, who were always fond of finding mysteries in the writings of their sacred authors, even in the most simple parts of them. What you take, continue they, for explications of prophecies in the writers of the New Testament, are only ingenious applications, or more properly, say they, accommodations. But what! when Philip joined himself to the Ethiopian treasurer, who was reading the fifty-third of Isaiah, and who put this question to him, "I pray thee of whom speaketh the prophet this? of thee, or of some other man?" When "he began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him Jesus," Acts viii. 34, 35, did he mean only to accommodate himself to the genius of the Jewish nation? What! when St. Matthew, speaking of John the Baptist, said, "This is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness," chap. iii. 3, and when John the Baptist, in answer to those questions, which the Jews, whom the priests sent, put to him, "Who art thou? Art thou Elias? Art thou that prophet?" When he replied, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness," John i. 19, 21, 23, did he mean only to accommodate himself to the prejudices of the Jews? What! when Jesus Christ after his resurrection taxed his disciples with folly, because they had not discovered his resurrection in the ancient prophecies: and when, "beginning at Moses, and all the prophets," he derived from thence argu-

ments to prove that Christ "ought to have suffered, and to enter into his glory," Luke xxiv. 25—27, had he no other design than that of making ingenious applications, and of accommodating himself to the prejudices of the Jewish nation? And is this the design of St. Paul in my text? Hear how he speaks, how he reasons, how he concludes. "It is not possible, says he, that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins. Wherefore, when he cometh into the world, he says, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me. In burnt-offerings, and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure; then said I, lo! I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God!" Having said before, "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not," which things are appointed by the law, he adds, "Lo! I come to do thy will, O God! He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." Do people speak in this manner, when they make only ingenious applications, and when reasoning is carried on by dexterity and accommodation?

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

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

The principal difficulty in my present view is in these words, "A body hast thou prepared me." The Hebrew has it, thou hast dug, bored, or opened my ears. The expression is figurative: but it is very intelligible even to those who are but little acquainted with sacred history. None of you can be ignorant, that it is an allusion to a law recorded in the twenty-first chapter of Exodus, where they, who had Hebrew slaves, were ordered to release them in the sabbatical year. A provision is made for such slaves as refused to accept of this privilege. Their masters were to bring them to the doors of their houses, to bore their ears through with an awl, and they were to engage to continue slaves for ever, that is to say, till the year of Jubilee, or till their death, if they happened to die before that festival. As this action was expressive of the most entire devotedness of a slave to his master, it was very natural for the prophet to make it an emblem of the perfect obedience of Jesus Christ to his Father's will. A passage of our Apostle exactly agrees with these words of the prophet. "Jesus Christ made himself of no reputation, took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And, being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of

the cross," Phil. ii. 7, 8. This is the best comment on the words of the Psalmist, "Thou hast bored mine ears."

But why did not St. Paul quote the words as they are in the psalm? Why, instead of rendering the words according to the Hebrew, "Thou hast bored mine ears," did he render them, "Thou hast prepared me a body?" It is plain the apostle followed the *version* commonly called that of the *seventy*. But this remark, far from removing the difficulty, produces a new one. For it may be asked, why did the *seventy* render the original words in this manner? As this is a famous question, and as the discussion of it may serve to cast light on many other passages of Scripture, it will not be an unprofitable waste of time to inquire into the matter. Our people often hear this version mentioned in our pulpits, and they ought to have at least, a general knowledge of it.

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

This narration being favourably received among the Jews, it happened that the superstition of the populace, fomented by their own ignorance, and by the rash decisions of the Rabbins, which were put in the place of solid proofs, added divers circumstances to render the tale more marvellous. Of this kind is the account given by Philo, who says that each of the seventy translators pursued his work separately from the rest, and that when the translations of all came to be compared, there was not the least difference, either in the meaning, or in the expressions. Of the same sort is another circumstance related by Justin Martyr. Each translator, says he, was confined in a little cell, in order to prevent his holding any conversation with the rest of the interpreters; and this good father pretends to have seen the ruins of these cells in the Isle of Pharos. We

will not increase the list of these fabulous tales here, let it suffice to observe, that learned men have long agreed to reject these fables; and have fully shown the paradoxes, the anachronisms, and the contradictions with which they are replete. We proceed now to relate what they have almost unanimously admitted.

That about three hundred years before the advent of Jesus Christ, a Greek translation of the old Testament was made at Alexandria for the use of the descendants of that multitude of Jews, which Alexander the Great had settled there, when he built that famous city in Egypt, to which he gave his own name—That a version was absolutely necessary for those people, because the far greater part of them had lost their native language—that at first the five books of Moses only were translated, because they were the only books, which were then read in the synagogues—that after the tyrannies of Antiochus Epiphanes, the reading of the prophecies being then introduced, the prophecies also, were translated—that this version was spread through all those parts of the world, where the Greek language was used, or where Jews dwelt,—and that the apostles, preaching the gospel in the greatest part of the known world, and the Greek tongue being then every where the favourite of all, who valued themselves on learning and politeness, made use of the version, commonly called the version of the *Seventy*, to convince the pagans, that the different parts of the economy of the Messiah had been foretold by the prophets, and that this version was one of the preparations, which Providence had employed for the call of the Gentiles.

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

Some learned men have pretended, that the translation of our prophecy was altered in our copies of the *Seventy*, and that we should read *ears*, instead of *body*. But the reasons on which this solution is grounded, appear to us so inconclusive, that far from establishing a fixed sentiment, they hardly seem capable of supporting a momentary conjecture.

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

This first solution not appearing defensible to most learned men, they have had recourse to the following. The seventy translators, say they, or the authors of this version, that bears

their name, whoever they were, knew the mystery of the incarnation: they were convinced, that this mystery was foretold in the fortieth psalm; and as Jesus Christ could not perform the functions of a servant, without uniting himself to a mortal body, they chose rather to give the meaning of the prophecy than to render the bare terms of it. Some have even gone so far as to affirm, that the Seventy did this by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. This solution has one great advantage, it favours the theological system of those who admit it, and every solution of this kind, will always have, independently of the accuracy and justness of it, the suffrages of great numbers. This opinion, however, is not free from difficulty. Do not the mistakes of which this version is full, and which the apostles have often corrected in their quotations of it, form insuperable objections against the imaginary doctrine of their inspiration? But if the authors of this version had not been inspired, would it have been possible for them to have spoken of the mystery of the incarnation in a manner more clear than any of the prophets? This difficulty appears to me the greater, because I cannot find any Rabbi (I except none) who ever understood the prophecy in the fortieth psalm of the Messiah. It is St. Paul alone who gives us the true sense of it.

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

I remark first, that the word used by the pretended Seventy, and by St. Paul, and rendered in our language *prepared*, is one of the most vague terms in the Greek tongue, and signifies indifferently, *to dispose*, *to mark*, *to note*, *to render capable*, and so on. This remark is so well grounded, that they, who think the Septuagint reading used the word *ears* instead of *body*, retain, however, the term in question, so that according to them, it may signify *bore*, *cut*, &c.

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

I observe, thirdly, that it was a general custom among the pagans to make marks on the bodies of those persons, in whom they claimed a property. They were made on soldiers, and slaves, so that if they deserted, they might be easily reclaimed. Sometimes they imposed

marks on them who served an apprenticeship to a master, as well as on them who put themselves under the protection of a god. These marks were called *stigmæ*; the word has passed into other languages, and St. Paul, probably, alludes to this custom in his Epistle to the Galatians, where he says, "from henceforth let no man trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus," chap. vi. 17. You may see several such allusions in the ninth of Ezekiel, and in the seventh of Revelations, where they, who had put themselves under the protection of God, and had devoted themselves to his service, are represented as marked in the forehead with a certain mark respected by the messengers of his avenging justice.

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

Thus we have endeavoured to explain the greatest difficulty in the terms of the text. The following words, "In the volume of the book it is written of me," refer to the manner in which the ancients disposed their books. They wrote on parchments, fastened one to another, and made rolls of them. The Hebrew term which St. Paul, and the pretended Seventy, render *book*, signifies a roll; and some think, the Greek term, which we render *beginning*,\* and which properly signifies a *head*, alludes to the form of these rolls: but these remarks ought not to detain us.

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

In order to comprehend the sense in which the Messiah says to God, "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not," we must distinguish two sorts of volition in God, a *willing of a mean*, and a *willing of an end*. God may be said to *will a mean*, when he appoints a ceremony or establishes a rite, which has no

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



intrinsic excellence in itself; but which prepares them, on whom it is enjoined, for some great events, on which their felicity depends. By *willing an end*, I mean a production of such events.

If the word *will*, be taken in the first sense, it cannot be truly said, that God *did not will* or appoint "sacrifices and burnt-offerings." Every one knows he instituted them, and regulated the whole ceremonial of them, even the most minute articles. On this account, St. Paul observes, when God had given Moses directions concerning the construction of the tabernacle, he said to him, "See that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount," Heb. viii. 5.

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

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

But when it was perceived, as it soon was, that the attachment of the Jews to the ceremonies of the law, and particularly to sacrifices, was injurious to the sacrifice of the cross, the apostles thought it their duty vigorously to oppose such dangerous prejudices, and this is the design of the Epistle to the Hebrews, in which St. Paul establishes his thesis, I mean the inutility of sacrifices, on four decisive arguments. The first is taken from the nature of the sacrifices. The second is derived from the declarations of the prophets. The third is inferred from types. And the last arises from the excellence of the gospel-victim.

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

"Behold the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt,"

chap. viii. 8, 9. This is an argument, taken from the *decisions of the prophets*.

Jesus Christ is a "priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation king of righteousness, and after that also, king of Salem, which is king of peace; without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually. The law was a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, chap. vii. 17. 1, &c. and x. 1. This is an argument taken from *types*.

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

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

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

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

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

The fifth character of dignity is the magnificence of that tabernacle into which Jesus Christ entered, and the merit of that blood, which obtained his access into it. "The first covenant had a worldly sanctuary," chap. ix. 1, into the first room of "which the priests went always, accomplishing the service of

God;" and "into the second, the high priest alone went once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people. But Christ, being come a high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, neither by the blood of bulls and calves, but by his own blood, entered not into holy places made with hands, which were figures of the true: but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us," chap. x. 6, 7, 11, 12, 24.

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

Let us justify the second sense of our text. Come, my brethren, adopt the words, say with the prophet, and thus prepare yourselves for the celebration of the festival of the nativity, which is just at hand, "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not; but a body hast thou prepared me. In burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin thou had no pleasure: then said I, Lo! I come, as it is written in the volume of the book, to do thy will, O God!" This is the second part, or rather the application of this discourse.

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

I have been delighted to find this idea developed in the writings of those very Jews, who of all men have the strongest inclination to

exceed in respect for the ceremonies of religion. I have my eye on a work of a Rabbi, the most respectable, and the most respected, of all, who are so called, I mean Moses Maimonides.—The book is entitled, "A guide to doubting souls."\* Under how many faces does he present this distinction? On what solid foundations does he take care to establish it? I should weaken the arguments of this learned Jew, by abridging them, and I refer all, who are capable of reading it, to the book itself. You understand then in what sense God demands only the sacrifice of your persons. It is what he wills as the end; and he will accept neither offerings, nor sacrifices, nor all the ceremonies of religion, unless they contribute to the holiness of the person who offers them.

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

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

But also sacrifice your good things to God. You have genius. Dedicate it to God. Employ it in meditating on his oracles, in rectifying your own ideas, and in diffusing through the world by your conversation and writing the knowledge of this adorable Being. You have the art of insinuating your opinions into the minds of men. Devote it to God, use it to undeceive your acquaintances, to open their eyes, and to inspire them with inclinations more worthy of immortal souls, than those which usually govern them. You have credit. Dedicate it to God, strive against your own indolence, surmount the obstacles that surround you, open your doors to widows and orphans, who wish for your protection. You have a fortune. Devote it to God, use it for the succour of indigent families, employ it for the relief of the sick, who languish friendless on beds of infirmity, let it help forward the lawful desires of them, who, hungering and thirsting for righteousness, wander in the deserts of *Hermon*, and pour out these complaints on the hill *Mi-*

\* More Nevochim.

zar, "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God! My soul thirsteth for God," Ps. xliii. 1, 2, &c. "My flesh crieth out for thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my king, and my God," Ps. lxxxiv. 2, 3.

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

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

The sacrifice required of us is difficult, do you say? I grant it, my brethren, accordingly, far from pretending to conceal it, I make one article of the difficulties and pains that accompany it. How extremely difficult, when our reputation and honour are attacked, when our fidelity, our morals, our conversation, our very intentions, are misinterpreted, and slandered; how extremely difficult, when we are persecuted and oppressed by cruel and unjust enemies;

how hard is it to practice the laws of religion, which requires us to pardon injuries, and to exercise patience and mercy to our enemies!—How difficult is it to imitate the example of Jesus Christ, who, when he hung on the cross, prayed for them who nailed him there; how hard is it thus to sacrifice to God our resentment and vengeance? How difficult is it to sacrifice unjust gains to God, by restoring them to their owners; how hard to retrench expenses, which we cannot honestly support, to reform a table, that gratifies the senses, to diminish the number of our attendants, which does us honour, to lay aside equipages, that surround us with pomp, and to reduce our expenses to our incomes! How difficult is it, when all our wishes are united in the gratification of a favourite passion, O! how hard is it to free one's self from its dominion! How difficult is it to eradicate an old criminal habit, to reform, and to renew one's self, to form, as it were, a different constitution, to create other eyes, other ears, another body! How hard is it, when death approaches, to bid the world farewell for ever, to part from friends, parents and children! In general, how difficult is it to surmount that world of obstacles, which oppose us in our path to eternal happiness, to devote one's self entirely to God in a world, where all the objects of our senses seem to conspire to detach us from him!

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

What *delight*, after we have laboured hard at the reduction of our passions, and the reformation of our hearts: what delight, after we have striven, or, to use the language of Jesus Christ, after we have been in "an agony," in endeavouring to resist the torrent, and to survive, if possible, the dreadful storm, that involves the Christian in his passage; what delight to find, that Heaven crowns our wishes with success!

What delight when on examining conscience preparatory to the Lord's Supper, a man is able to say to himself, "Once I was a sordid, selfish wretch; now my happiness is to assist my neighbour. Formerly, my thoughts were dissipated in prayer, my devotions were interrupted by worldly objects, of which the whole capacity of my soul was full; now, I am enabled to collect my thoughts in my closet, and to fix them on that God, in communion with whom I pass the happiest hours of my life. Once, I relished nothing but the world and its pleasures; now, my soul breathes only piety and religion." What high satisfaction, when old age arrives, when our days are passing "swifter than a weaver's shuttle," to be able to give a good account of our conduct, and, while the last moments fly, to fill them with the remembrance of a life well spent! When our sins present themselves before us in all their enormity; when we find ourselves in the situation mentioned by the Psalmist, "My

sin is ever before me," Ps. li. 3, the image of bloody Uriah haunts me every where, then how happy to be enabled to say, "I have wept for these sins, in the bitterness of penitence I have lost the remembrance of pleasure in sin; and I trust, by the grace of God, I am guarded against future attacks from them."

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

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

Thus, my dear brethren, religion is nothing but gratitude, sensibility and love. God grant we may know it in this manner! May the knowledge of it fill the heart and mouth of each of us during this festival, and from this moment to the hour of death, with the language of my text, "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me. In burnt-offerings for sin, thou hadst no pleasure: Then said I, Lo! I come. I come, as it is written in the volume of the book, to do thy will, O God!" May God condescend to confirm our resolutions by his grace. Amen.

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## SERMON XXXIV.

### THE EFFICACY OF THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

2 CORINTHIANS v. 14, 15.

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

MY BRETHREN,

We have great designs to-day on you, and we have great means of executing them.—

Sometimes we require the most difficult duties of morality of you. At other times we preach the mortification of the senses to you, and with St. Paul, we tell you, "they that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts," Gal. v. 24. Sometimes we attack your attachment to riches, and after the example of our great Master, we exhort you to "lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through, nor steal," Matt. vi. 20. At other times, we endeavour to prepare you for some violent operation, some severe exercises, with which it may please God to try you, and we repeat the words of the apostle to the Hebrews, "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin: wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees," Heb. xii. 4. 12. At other times we summon you to suffer a death more painful than your own; we require you to dissolve the tender ties that unite your hearts to your relatives and friends; we adjure you to break the bonds that constitute all the happiness of your lives, and we utter this language, or shall I rather say, thunder this terrible gradation in the name of the Almighty God, "Take now thy son—thine only son—Isaac—whom thou lovest—and offer him for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains, which I will tell thee of," Gen. xxii. 2. To-day we demand all these. We require more than the sacrifice of your senses, more than that of your riches, more than that of your impatience, more than that of an only son; we demand a universal devotedness of yourselves to "the author and finisher of your faith;" and to repeat the emphatical language of my text, which in its extensive compass involves, and includes all these duties, we require you "henceforth not to live unto yourselves: but unto him, who died and rose again for you."

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

Here are all the attractives of religion.—Here are all the united efforts of your ministers, who unanimously employ on these occasions all the penetration of their minds, all the tenderness of their hearts, all the power of language to awake your piety, and to incline you to render Jesus Christ love for love, and life for life. It is an august ceremony, in which, under the most simple symbols that nature affords, God represents the most sublime objects of religion to you. This is a solemn festival, the most solemn festival that Christians observe, this occasions them to express in songs of the highest joy their gratitude and praise to their deliverer, these are their sentiments, and thus they exult, "The right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly!" Ps. cxviii. 15. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord

Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ," Eph. i. 3. "Blessed be God, who hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead," 1 Pet. i. 3.

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

To all these means add the supernatural assistance that God communicates in a double portion in these circumstances to all those, whom a desire of reconciliation with heaven conducts to this assembly. We have prayed for this assistance at the dawning of this blessed day; we prayed for it as we ascended this pulpit, and again before we began this exercise; with prayer for divine assistance we began this discourse, and now we are going to pray for it again. My dear brethren, unite your prayers with ours, and let us mutually say to God;

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

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

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

There is an ambiguity in the *persons* who are animated with this love. "The love of Christ constraineth us; St. Paul means either

the *ministers* of the gospel, of whom he speaks in the preceding and following verses; or *all believers*, to the instruction of whom he consecrated all his writings.

There is also an ambiguity in the *effects*, which the apostle attributes to this love. He says, "the love of Christ constraineth us," the love of Christ *uniteth*, or *presseth* us. "The love of Christ constraineth us," may either signify, our love to Jesus Christ unites us to one another, because it collects and unites all our desires in one point, that is, in Jesus Christ the centre. In this sense St. Paul says, "Love is the bond of perfectness," Col. iii. 14, that is to say, the most perfect friendships, that can be formed, are those which have love for their principle. Thus if my text were rendered *love uniteth us together*, it would express a sentiment very conformable to the scope of St. Paul in this epistle. He proposes in this epistle in general, and in this chapter in particular, to discourage those scandalous divisions which tore out the vitals of the church at Corinth, where party was against party, one part of the congregation against another part of the congregation, and one pastor was against another pastor.

"The love of Christ constraineth us," may also signify, the love of Christ *transports* us, and carries us, as it were, out of ourselves. In this case the apostle must be supposed to allude to those inspirations, which the pagan priests pretended to receive from their gods, with which, they said, they were filled, and to those, with which the prophets of the true God were really animated. The original word is used in this sense in Acts, where it is said, "Paul was pressed in spirit, and testified to the Jews, that Jesus was Christ," chap. xviii. 5. This explication approaches still nearer to the scope of St. Paul, and to the circumstances of the apostles. They had ecstasies. St. Peter in the city of Joppa was "in an ecstasy." St. Paul also was "caught up to the third heaven," chap. x. 10, not knowing "whether he was in the body, or out of the body," 2 Cor. xii. 2, 3. These ecstasies, these transports, these close communications with God, with which the inspired men were honoured, made them sometimes pass for idiots. This is the sense which some give to these words, "We are fools for Christ's sake," 1 Cor. iv. 10. This meaning of our text well comports with the words which immediately precede, "Whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God; or whether we be sober, it is for your cause;" that is to say, if we be sometimes at such an immense distance from all sensible objects, if our minds be sometimes so absent from all the things that occupy and agitate the minds of other men, that we seem to be entirely "beside ourselves," it is because we are all concentrated in God; it is because our capacity, all absorbed in this great object, cannot attend to any thing that is not divine, or which does not proceed immediately from God.

"The love of Christ constraineth us."—This expression may mean, . . . (my brethren, it is not my usual method to fill my sermons with an enumeration of the different senses that interpreters have given of passages of Scripture: but all these explications, which I repeat, and with which perhaps I may over-

charge my discourse to-day, appear to me so just and beautiful, that I cannot reconcile myself to the passing of them over in silence.—When I adopt one, I seem to myself to regret the loss of another.) This, I say, may also signify, that the love of Jesus Christ to us “surrounds us on every side;” or that our love to him *permeates* and *possesses* all the powers of our souls.

The first sense of the original term is found in this saying of Jesus Christ concerning Jerusalem, “The days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side,” Luke xix. 43. The latter is a still more beautiful sense of the term, and perfectly agrees with the preceding words, already quoted, “If we be beside ourselves, it is to God.” A prevalent passion deprives us at times of the liberty of reasoning justly, and of conversing accurately. Some take these famous words of St. Paul in this sense, “I could wish myself accursed from Christ for my brethren,” Rom. ix. 3, and these of Moses, “Forgive their sin, and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book,” Exod. xxxii. 32. Not that a believer in Christ can ever coolly consent to be separated from Christ, or blotted out of the catalogue of those blessed souls, for whom God reserves eternal happiness: but these expressions flow from “transports of love” in holy men. They were “beside themselves,” transported beyond their judgment. It is the state of a soul occupied with one great interest, animated with only one great passion.

Finally, these words also are equivocal, “If one died for all,” that is to say, if Jesus Christ has satisfied divine justice by his death for all men, then, all they who have recourse to it, are accounted to have satisfied it in his person. Or rather, “If one died for all,” if no man can arrive at salvation but by the grace which the death of Christ obtained for him, “then are all dead,” then all ought to take his death for a model by dying themselves to sin. Agreeably to this idea, St. Paul says, “We are buried with him by baptism into death,” Rom. vi. 4, that is, the ceremony of wholly immersing us in water, when we were baptized, signified, that we died to sin, and that of raising us again from our immersion signified, that we would no more return to those disorderly practices, in which we lived before our conversion to Christianity. “Knowing this,” adds our apostle, “in that Christ died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God,” ver. 10. Thus in my text, “If one died for all, then were all dead,” that is, agreeable to the following words, “He died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves; but unto him, which died for them, and rose again.”

Such is the diversity of interpretations, of which the words of my text are susceptible. Nothing can be farther from my design, nothing would less comport with the holiness of this day, than to put each of these in an even balance, and to examine with scrupulosity which merited the preference. I would wish to unite them all, as far as it is practicable, and as far as the time allotted for this exercise will allow. They, who have written on eloquence,

should have remarked one figure of speech, which, I think, has not been observed, I mean, *a sublime ambiguity*. I understand by this, the artifice of a man, who, not being able to express his rich ideas by simple terms, of determinate meaning, makes use of others, which excite a multitude of ideas; like those war-machines that strike several ways at once. I could show you many examples of these traits of eloquence both in sacred and profane writers: but such discussions would be improper here.

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

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

I. In regard to the vehement desires and sentiments they excite in our hearts. “This love constraineth,” it possesses, it transports us.

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

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

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

After we have considered these ideas separately, I will endeavour to unite them all

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

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

Were the people, whom I oppose, to attribute their coldness and indifference to their own frailty; were they endeavouring to correct it; were they succeeding in attempts to free themselves from it; we would not reply to their pretence: but, when they are systematically cold and indolent; when, not content with a passive obedience to these deplorable dispositions, they refuse to grant the ministers of the gospel the liberty of attacking them; when they pretend that we should meditate on the doctrines of redemption and on a geometrical calculation with equal coolness; that these words, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son to save it," should be pronounced with the same indifference as these, "The whole is greater than a part," this is the height of injustice. We are not obliged, we think, to reason with people of this kind, and while they remain destitute of that faculty, without which they cannot enter into those demonstrations, which we could produce on this article, it would be in vain to pretend to convince them.

After all, we glory in being treated by persons of this kind in the same manner, in which they would have treated saints of the highest order; those eminent pietists, who felt the fine emotions, which they style enthusiasm and fanaticism. What impressions of religion, had Moses, David, Elias, and many other saints, a list of whom we have not time to produce?—

Were the sentiments of those men cold, who uttered their emotions in such language as this? "O Lord! I beseech thee, show me thy glory," Exod. xxxiii. 18. "O Lord! forgive their sin, or blot me, I pray thee, out of the book," chap. xxxii. 32. "I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts," 1 Kings xix. 10. "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up," Ps. lxxix. 9. "How amiable are these tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. When shall I come, and appear before God? Before thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my king, and my God!" Ps. lxxxiv. 1—3. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God! My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God!" chap. xlii. 1, 2. "Love is strong as death. Jealousy is cruel as the grave. The coals thereof are coals of fire. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it," Cant. viii. 6, 7.

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

Ah, sinner! thou miserable victim of death and hell, recollect the means that grace has employed to deliver thee! raised from the bottom of a black abyss, contemplate the love that brought thee up, behold, stretch thy soul, and measure the dimensions of it. Represent to thyself the Son of God enjoying in the bosom of his Father ineffable delights, himself the object of his adorable Father's love.—Behold the Son of God casting his eyes on this earth, touched with a sight of the miseries into which sin had plunged the wretched posterity of Adam; forming from all eternity the generous design of suffering in thy stead, and executing his purpose in the fulness of time. See him, whom angels adore, uniting himself to mortal flesh in the virgin's womb, wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger at Bethlehem. Represent to thyself Jesus suffering the just displeasure of God in the garden of Gethsemane; sinking under the weight of thy sins, with which he was charged; crying, in the extremity of his pain, "O my Father! if it be possible, let this cup pass from me!" See Jesus passing over the brook Cedron, carrying to Calvary his cross, execrated by an unbridled populace, fastened to the infamous instrument of his punishment, crowned with thorns, and rent asunder with nails; losing sight for a while of the love of his Father, which constituted all his peace and joy; bowing under the last stroke, and uttering these tragical words, which ought to make all sinners shed tears of blood, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?"—Ah! philosophical gravity! cool reasoning! how misemployed are ye in meditating these deep mysteries! "How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God!" Ps. xxxvi. 7. "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night-watches," Ps. lxxiii. 5, 6. "The love of God is shed abroad in our

hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us," Rom. v. 5. "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me," Gal. ii. 20. "He that has wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also has given unto us the earnest of his Spirit. The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead." This is the language of a heart inflamed with an idea of the love of Christ.

II. Let us consider the impressions of the love of Jesus Christ in regard to the *different receivers of it*. "The love of Christ constraineth us," us, that is to say us *believers*, whatever rank we occupy in the church: but in a particular manner us *apostles* of the Lord. I have already intimated, that my text may be considered as an explication of what related to the apostles in the foregoing verse. What idea had St. Paul given of apostleship in the preceding verses? He had represented these holy men as all taken up with the duties of their office; as surmounting the greatest obstacles; as triumphing over the most violent conflicts in the discharge of their function; as acquitting themselves with a rectitude of conscience capable of sustaining the strictest scrutiny of men, yea, of God himself; as deeply sensible of the honour that God had put upon them, by calling them to such a work; as devoting all their labours, all their diligence, and all their time, to the salvation of the souls of men. We must repeat all the foregoing chapters, were we to confirm these observations by the apostle's own words. In these chapters we meet with the following expressions.—"Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience," 2 Cor. i. 12. "Thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place," chap. ii. 14. "We are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ," ver. 17. "If the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses, for the glory of his countenance, which glory was to be done away; how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious?" chap. iii. 7, 8. "All things are for your sakes, that abundant grace might redound to the glory of God," chap. iv. 15. To the same purpose are the words immediately preceding the text. "Whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God; or whether we be sober, it is for your cause." What cause produced all these noble effects? What object animated St. Paul, and the other apostles, to fill up the noble character they bore in a manner so glorious? St. Paul tells you in the text, "The love of Christ constraineth us;" that is to say, the love of Jesus Christ to his church makes such deep and lively impressions on our hearts, that we can never lose sight of it.—We think we can never take too much pains for the good of a society, which Jesus Christ so tenderly loves. We are so filled with gra-

itude for his condescension, first for incorporating us into this august body, and next for substituting us to act in his place, that we rejoice in every opportunity of sacrificing all to express our sense of it.

These are the true sentiments of a minister of the gospel. When I speak of a minister of the gospel, I do not mean a minister by trade and profession only, I mean a minister by inclination and affection. For, my brethren, there are two sorts of ministers, the one I may justly denominate trading ministers, the other affectionate ministers. A trading minister, who considers the functions of his ministry in temporal views only; who studies the evidences and doctrines of religion, not to confirm himself, but to convince others, who puts on the exterior of piety, but is destitute of the sentiments of it, is a character sordid and base, I had almost said odious and execrable. What character can be more odious and execrable, than that of a man, who gives evidence of a truth, which he himself does not believe? Who excites the most lively emotions in an auditory, while he himself is less affected than any of his hearers? But there is also a minister by inclination and affection, who studies the truths of religion, because they present to him the most sublime objects, that a reasonable creature can contemplate, and who speaks with eagerness and vehemence on these truths, because, he perceives, they only are worthy of governing intelligent beings.

What effects does a meditation of the love of God in Christ produce on the heart of such a minister? St. Paul mentions the effects in the text, "The love of Christ constraineth, surroundeth, presseth, transporteth, him."—My brethren, pardon me if I say the greatest part of you are not capable of entering into these reflections; for, as you consider the greatest mysteries of the gospel only in a vague and superficial manner, you neither know the solidity nor the beauty of them, you neither perceive the foundation, the connexion, nor the glory of them. Hence it is, that your minds are unhappy, when they attend long to these subjects; reading tires you; meditation fatigues you; a discourse of an hour wears out all your patience; the languor of your desires answers to the nature of your applications, and your sacrifices to religion correspond to the faintness of those desires, and to the dulness of those applications, which produced them. It was not thus with St. Paul, nor is it thus with such a minister of the gospel as I have described. As he meditates, he learns; as he learns, his desire of knowing increases. He sees the whole chain of wonders, that God has wrought for the salvation of men; he admires to see a promise made to Adam renewed to Abraham; he rejoices to find a promise renewed to Abraham confirmed to Moses; he is delighted to see a promise confirmed to Moses, published by the prophets; and long after that publication accomplished by Jesus Christ.—Charmed with all these duties, he thinks it felicity to enter into the views and the functions of Jesus Christ, and to become "a worker together with him," chap. vi. 1; this work engrosses all his thoughts; he lives only to ad-



vance it; he sacrifices all to this great design; he is "beside himself." Why? "The love of Christ constraineth him."

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

By what unheard of secret does the Christian surmount pain? By what unheard of secret does he find pleasure in the idea of death? St. Paul informs us in the text. "The love of Christ possesseth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead. If one died for all, then were all dead:" this is the source of the consolations of a dying man; this is the only rational system that men have opposed against the fears of death. All besides are vain and feeble, not to say stupid and absurd.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Above all, the *idea of a just tribunal*, before which death will place me, terrifies me. My

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

The impressions which an idea of the love of Christ makes upon my soul, efface those gloomy impressions which an idea of death had produced there. "The love of Christ," consoles my soul and dissipates all my fears. "If one died for all, then were all dead," is a short system against the fear of death.

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

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

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

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

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

I make this reflection, in order to prevent

mistakes on this disposition of mind, of which my text speaks. Let us not imagine, that St. Paul, by exhorting us to live only to Christ, intends to dissuade us from living for the benefit of our fellow creatures. On the contrary, I have already recommended that sense of the words which some commentators give; "the love of Christ constraineth us," that is, say some, the love of Christ unites us in bonds of love to one another; and I have already shown, that if this could not be proved to be the precise meaning of St. Paul in the text, it is, however, a very just notion in itself, and a doctrine taught by the apostle in express words in other places. But what I have not yet remarked is this. In the opinion of some interpreters there is a close connection between the words of my text, "the love of Christ constraineth us," and the preceding words, "whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God; or whether we be sober, it is for your cause." According to this notion, St. Paul having described the two parts of devotion, or if you will, the two kinds of Christian devotion, unites both in this general expression, "live unto Christ." The one is the devotion of the closet, the other that of society. Closet devotion is expressed in the words, "whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God." This is expressive of the effusions of a soul, who, having excluded the world, and being alone with his God, unfolds a heart penetrated with love to him. "Whether we be sober, it is for your cause, for the love of Christ uniteth us," signifies the state of a soul, who, having quitted the closet, having returned to his natural course of thought, and having entered into the society in which God has appointed him to live, makes the happiness of his neighbour his principal occupation.

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

Practise private devotion, be *beside yourselves unto God*. Believer! Is it right for thee to indemnify thyself by an immediate communion with thy God for the violence that is done to thine affection, when thou art obliged, either wholly to lose sight of him, or to see him only through mediums, which conceal a part of his beauty? Well then, enter into thy closet, shut thy door against the world, flee from society, and forget it, give thyself up to the delights which holy souls feel when they absorb themselves in God. Beseech him, after the example of inspired men in their private interviews with him, to manifest himself to you in a more intimate manner. Say to him, as they said, "O Lord, I beseech thee, show me thy glory. It is good for me to draw near to God. Whom

have I in heaven but thee? there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee," Exod. xxxiii. 18; Ps. lxxxiii. 28. 25.

But, after thou hast performed the devotion of the closet, practise the devotion of society. After thou hast been *beside thyself to God*, be *sober to thy neighbour*. Let *love unite thee* to the rest of mankind. Visit the prisoner; relieve the sick; guide the doubtful; assist him who stands in need of your credit. Distrust a piety that it is not ingenious at rendering thee useful to society. St. Paul somewhere says, "All the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." This proposition seems hyperbolic. Some expositors have thought it justifiable, by supposing that the apostle speaks here only of the second table of the law. Their supposition is unnecessary. In some respects all virtues are comprised in this command, "thou shalt love thy neighbour." To *love* our neighbour, we must be *humble*. When we have lofty notions of ourselves, it is impossible to pay that attention to a neighbour which his merit demands. To *love* our neighbour we must be *patient*. -When the first obstacle discourages us, or when the least opposition inflames our tempers; it is impossible to enter into those details which love for a neighbour requires. In order to discharge the duty of *loving* a neighbour, we must be *moderate in our pleasures*. When we are devoted to pleasure, it is impossible to endure those disagreeables, which love to a neighbour demands. Above all, to *love a neighbour*, we must *love God*. Remember the saying of St. John, "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar," 1 John iv. 20. For what is love? Is it not that sympathy which forms between two intelligent beings a conformity of ideas and sentiment? And how can we flatter ourselves, that we have a conformity of ideas with a God of love, who has communicated to his creatures a conformity of sentiments and ideas, if we withhold our affection from his creatures, and live only to ourselves? "He then, who saith, I love God, and hateth his brother, is a liar." If thou dost not love him, thou art (permit me to say it,) thou art a visionary, a fanatic.

Who is a visionary? who is a fanatic? He is a man who creates fanciful ideas of God. He is a man who frames an arbitrary morality. He is a man, who, under pretence of living to God, forgets what he owes to his fellow creatures. And this is exactly the character of the man, whose closet devotion makes him neglect social religion. Ah! hadst thou just notions of God, thou wouldst know, that "God is love;" and hadst thou just notions of morality, thou wouldst know, that it is impossible for God, who is love, to prescribe any other love to us, than that which is the essence of all moral duties.

All these ideas, my brethren, would require much enlargement: but time fails. I shall not scruple so much the closing of this subject today, without considering it in every point of view, as I should do in our ordinary exercises. I descend from this pulpit to conduct you to the table of the Lord, on which lie the symbols of that love of which we have been speaking,

and they will exhort you in language more forcible than mine to reduce all the doctrine of this day to practice.

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

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

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

We have been preaching to you that the love of Christ will become to you an inexhaustible source of consolation in the distresses of life, and in the agonies of death. Hear these symbols; they preach these truths to you in language more forcible than ours. Hear them; they say to you in the name of God, "Fear not, thou worm Jacob! When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt," Isa. xli. 14.

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

My dear brethren, I hope so many exhorta-

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

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## SERMON XXXV.

### THE LIFE OF FAITH.

HABAKKUK ii. 4.

*The just shall live by his Faith.*

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

Habakkuk (for I enter into the matter immediately, in order to have full time to discuss the subject,) began to prophecy before the destruction of Jerusalem by the army of Nebuchadnezzar, and he was raised up to announce the progress of that scourge, or, as another prophet calls him, that "hammer of the whole earth," Jer. i. 23. Habakkuk, astonished, and in a manner, offended at his own predictions, derives strength from the attributes of God to support himself under this trial, and expresses himself in this manner; "Art thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God, mine holy one? We shall not die, O Lord! thou hast ordained them for judgment, and, O mighty God! thou hast established them for correction. Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil," chap. i. 12, 13.

The prophet goes farther. Not content with vague ideas on a subject so interesting, he entreats God to give him some particular knowledge by revelation of the destiny of a tyrant, who boasted of insulting God, pillaging his temple, and carrying his people into captivity: "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me." The Rabbies give a very singular exposition of the words, "I will stand upon my watch;" and they translate them, "I will confine myself in a circle." The prophet, say they, drew a circle, and made a solemn vow, that he would not go out of it till God had unfolded those dark dispensations to him, which seemed so injurious to his perfections. This was almost like the famous consul, who, being

sent by the Roman senate to Antiochus, made a circle round that prince, and said to him, "either you shall accept the conditions of peace which I offer you, before you go out of this circle, or in the name of the senate I will declare war against you.\*

God yielded to the desire of his servant; he informed him of the dreadful vicissitudes which Nebuchadnezzar should experience; and of the return of the Jews into their own country: but at the same time he assured him, that these events were at a considerable distance, that no man could rejoice in them except he looked forward into futurity, but that faith in the accomplishment of these promised blessings would support believers under that deluge of calamities which was coming on the church. "The vision is yet for an appointed time. At the end it shall speak and shall not lie." If the Lord seem to you to defer the accomplishment of his promises too long, wait for it with all the deference, which finite creatures owe to the Supreme Intelligence that governs the world. He, you will find, "will not tarry" beyond his appointed time. "The soul, which is lifted up," that is to say, the man who would fix a time for God to crush tyrants, "is not upright," but wanders after his own speculations: but the "just shall live by his faith."

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

But these words also have a theological meaning, which regards those great objects on which believers have fixed their eyes in all ages of the church. This is the sense which St. Paul gives the words in his Epistle to the Romans. "The righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel from faith to faith: as it is written, the just shall live by faith," chap. i. 17. In the same sense he uses the passage in the Epistle to the Galatians, "That no man is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident; for the just shall live by faith," chap. iii. 11. In this sense I intend to consider the text now, and to apply all the time allotted for this discourse to this view of it.

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

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

II. Prove the truth of it.

III. Endeavour to remove the difficulties which may attend the subject to some of you.

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

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

By righteousness after the law, I understand that which man wishes to derive from his own personal ability. By the righteousness of faith, I understand that which man derives from a principle foreign from himself. A man who is just, or to speak more precisely, a man who pretends to be just according to this first righteousness, consents to be examined and judged according to the utmost rigour of the law. He desires the justice of God to discover any thing in him that deserves punishment; and he has the audacity to put himself on such a trial as justice pronounces in these words of the law, "If a man do these things, he shall live in them," Lev. xviii. 5. He, on the contrary, who is just according to the righteousness of faith, acknowledges himself guilty of many and great sins, which deserve the most rigorous punishment: but he does not give himself up to that despair, into which the idea of his criminality would naturally hurry him; he is not afraid of those punishments, which, he owns, he deserves; he hopes to live, because he expects God will deal with him, not according to what he is in himself, but according to his relation to Jesus Christ.

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

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

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

The variety of this signification arises from this consideration; faith is a disposition of mind, that changes its nature according to the various objects which are proposed to it. If the

\* M. Popilius Læna a Antiochus Epiphanes dans Vellei Paero. Hist. Rom. l. i.

object presented to faith be a particular object, faith is a particular disposition; and if the object be general, faith is a general virtue. If we believe a past event, we are said to have faith, for "through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God," Heb. xi. 3. If we believe a future event, we are said to have faith, for "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," ver. 1. When the woman of Canaan believed that Jesus Christ would grant her petition, she was said to have faith: "O woman, great is thy faith," Matt. xv. 28. In a similar case, our Lord says, "I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel," chap. viii. 10. When the disciples believed, that they should work miracles in virtue of the name of Jesus Christ, it was called a having of faith, "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, remove hence to yonder place, and it shall obey you," chap. xvii. 20. In a word, every act of the mind acquiescing in a revealed truth is called faith in the style of Scripture.

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

The great and principal object, which is presented to the faith that justifies, without doubt is Jesus Christ as dying and offering himself to the justice of his Father. On this account St. Paul says to the Corinthians, "I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified," 1 Epist. ii. 2. Faith contemplates the objects that are displayed in the cross of Jesus Christ, and persuades the Christian, that there is no other way of obtaining salvation, or, to use the language of Scripture, that "there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved," Acts iv. 12. 'It inspires him with a sincere desire of lodging under the shadow of his cross, or, to speak in plain Scripture language without a figure, of being "found in him, not having his own righteousness, which is of the law: but that, which is through the faith of Christ." This is a general vague account of the nature of faith.

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

We must, therefore, distinguish two sorts of desires to share the benefits of the death of Christ. There is a desire unconnected with all the acts, which God has been pleased to require of us, of this we are not speaking.—There is also another kind of desire to share the benefits of the death of Christ, a desire that animates us with a determination to participate these benefits, whatever God may re-

quire, and whatever sacrifices we may be obliged to make to possess them. This desire, we think, constitutes the essence of faith.

The true believer inquires with the strictest scrutiny what God requires of him, and he finds three principal articles. Jesus Christ, he perceives, is proposed (if you allow me to speak thus) to his mind, to his heart, and to his conduct. Faith receives Jesus Christ in all these respects; in regard to the mind, to regulate its ideas by the decisions of Jesus Christ alone; in regard to the heart, to embrace that felicity only, which Jesus Christ proposes to its hope; in regard to the conduct, to make the laws of Jesus Christ the only rules of action. Faith, then, is that disposition of soul, which receives Jesus Christ wholly, as a teacher, a promiser, a legislator. Faith will enable us to admit the most incomprehensible truths, the most abstruse doctrines, the most profound mysteries, if Jesus Christ reveal them. Faith will engage us to wish for that kind of felicity which is the most opposite to the desires of flesh and blood, if Jesus Christ promise it.—Faith will inspire us with resolution to break the strongest ties, to mortify the most eager desires, if Jesus Christ commanded us to do so. This, in our opinion, is the only true notion of saving faith.

The terms of the proposition being thus explained, we will go on to explain the whole proposition, "the just shall live by his faith." All depends on one distinction, which we shall do well to understand, and retain. There are two kinds, or causes of justification. The first is the fundamental or meritorious cause; the second is the instrumental cause. We call that the fundamental cause of our justification, which requires, merits, and lays the foundation of our justification and salvation. By the instrumental cause, we mean those acts which it has pleased God to prescribe to us, in order to our participation of this acquired salvation, and without which "Christ becomes of no effect to us," according to the language of Scripture, Gal. v. 4. The fundamental cause of our justification is Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ alone. It is Jesus Christ independently of our faith and love. If Jesus Christ had not died, our faith, our repentance, and all our efforts to be saved, would have been in vain, "for other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ," 1 Cor. iii. 11. "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved," Acts iv. 14. Verily, if any thing could conciliate God to men, ye execrating agonies of my Saviour! thou perfect satisfaction! thou bloody death! sacrifice proposed to man immediately after his fall! ye only, only ye, could produce this great effect! Accursed, accursed be he who preaches another gospel! "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world," Gal. vi. 14.

But when we inquire how we are justified, we do not inquire the meritorious cause of salvation; we suppose salvation already merited; but we ask, what is essential to our participation of it? To this we reply, faith, faith alone, but such a faith however, as we have describ-

ed, a living faith, faith as a principle of renovation; faith, which receives the decision of Jesus Christ, embraces his promises, and enables us to devote ourselves to his service.— This is the sense in which we understand the proposition in the text, “the just shall live by his faith.” It is not sufficient to explain the propositions, we must prove, and establish it against erroneous divines, and loose casuists. This is our second article.

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

In order to understand this controversy clearly, we must observe, that the members of the church of Rome are divided into two classes on this article. In the first class we place those divines, who without any restrictions or qualifications, maintain this unwarrantable thesis, good works merit heaven, as bad ones deserve hell. The second affirm, that good works do, indeed merit heaven; but in virtue of the mercy of God, and of the new covenant, that he has made with mankind.— When we dispute against the errors of the church of Rome we should carefully distinguish these opinions. It must be granted, protestants have not always done so. We speak as if the church of Rome as a body held this thesis, good works merit heaven, as bad ones deserve hell: whereas this is an opinion peculiar to only some of their divines; it has been censured and condemned by a bull of Pius V. and Gregory XIII. as one of our most celebrated divines has proved, whom, although his pious design of conciliating our disputes may have made him rather exceed his evidence in some of his affirmations, we cannot contradict on this article, because he proves it by incontestable evidence.\* But the second opinion is professedly that of the whole church of Rome. This canon, which I am going to repeat to you, is the decision of the council of Trent. “Eternal life is to be proposed to the children of God both as a gift mercifully offered to them through Jesus Christ, and as a promised reward equitably rendered to their merits and good works in virtue of this promise.”†

We oppose our system against both these opinions. To say, with the first of these divines, that good works merit heaven, as bad works deserve hell, is to affirm a proposition, which Rome itself denies. What! works that bear no proportion to objects of our hope, a few meditations, a few prayers, a few alms-deeds! What! would the sacrifice of our whole selves merit that “eternal weight of glory,” which is to be revealed in us? What! can works,

that are not performed by our power, works, that proceed from grace, works, which owe their design and execution to God, who “worketh to will, and to do,” as St. Paul expresses it, Phil. ii. 13, can these attain, do these deserve a “weight of glory” for us? Does not the whole that we possess come from God? If we know the doctrines of revelation, is it not because “the Father of glory hath enlightened the eyes of our understanding?” Eph. i. 17, 18. If we believe his decisions, is it not because he gave us faith? If we suffer for his gospel, is it not because “he gives us strength to suffer?” Phil. i. 29. What! works, that are of themselves inseparably connected with our stations, and therefore duties, indispensable engagements, debts, and debts, alas! which we discharge so badly, can these merit a reward? God forbid we should entertain such an opinion! Even Cardinal Bellarmine, after he had endeavoured more than any other writer to establish the merit of good works, with one stroke of his pen effaced all his arguments, for, said he, on account of the precariousness of our own righteousness, and the danger of vain glory, the safest method is to have recourse to the mercy of God, and to trust in his mercy alone.\*

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

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

2. This opinion furnishes a pretext to human pride, and whether this be not sufficiently evident, let experience judge. Do we not often see people, who not being capable of entering into these theological distinctions, which are contained in the writings of their teachers, think by their good works, and often by their superstitions, so to merit eternal felicity, that God cannot deprive them of it without subverting the laws of justice? Has not the church of Rome other doctrines, which lead to this error? Is not supererogation of this kind? According to this a man may not only fully perform all his engagements, but he may even exceed them. Is not the doctrine, that excludes merit, considered by many of the Roman community as a mark of heresy? If we believe an anecdote in the life of Charles V. it was principally for having written on the walls of his room several passages of Scripture excluding the merit of works, that he was suspected of adhering to our doctrines, and that the inquisition deliberated on punishing him after his death as a heretic. The inquisitors would certainly have proceeded against him, had not Philip II. been given to understand that the son of a heretic was incapable of succeeding to the crown of Spain.†

\* See the Thesis of M. Louis Le Blanc.

† Proponenda est vita eterna, et tanquam Gratia: filiis dei per Christum Jesum, misericorditer promissa et tanquam mercies ex ipsius Dei promissione, bonis ipsorum operibus et meritis fideliter reddenda. Concil. Trid. Sess. vi. c. 16

\* Card. Bell. Controvers. T. iv. De Justificatione Lib. 1.  
† L'Abbe de S. Real, Histoire de Don Carlos.

Against this system we oppose that which we have established. We consider Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ alone, as the meritorious cause of our justification. If faith justifies us, it is as an instrument, that of itself can merit nothing, and which contributes to our justification only as it capacitates us for participating the benefits of the death of Christ. These were the ideas of the ancient church. The divines of primitive times taught that men were righteous, who acknowledged their guilt, and that they had nothing of their own but sin, and who, although they were saints, yet attributed nothing to their own merit. On those principles, we find, in an ancient work attributed to Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, the sick were comforted in this manner. "Dost thou trust in the merit of Jesus Christ alone for salvation?" The sick person replied, *I do*. The assistant then added, "Praise God to the last moment of your life; place all your confidence in him; and, when the Supreme Judge of the world calls you to his tribunal, say to him, Lord! I interpose between thy righteous judgment and myself the death of thy Son, and I ascribe no merit to any good work of my own."

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

Against these ideas we again oppose our system of justification. We affirm, that justifying faith is a general principle of virtue and holiness; and that such a recourse to the mercy of God, as wicked Christians imagine, does not justify in any sense. It does not justify as the meritorious cause of our salvation; for to affirm this is to maintain a heresy. We have said Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ alone, is the foundation of our salvation, and our most ardent desire to participate the benefits of it is incapable of deserving them. It does not justify as a condition. To affirm, that to have recourse to the grace of Jesus Christ is the only condition that the gospel requires, is to mutilate the gospel, apparently to widen beyond all Scriptural bounds the way to heaven, and really to open a large and spacious road to eternal perdition.

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

1. Justifying faith is lively faith, a believer cannot live by a dead faith: but "faith without works is dead," James ii. 20. Conse-

quently the faith that gives life is a faith containing, at least in principle, all virtues.

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

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

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

5. Justifying faith must enter into the spirit of the mystery, that acquires justification for us; I mean the mystery of the satisfaction of Jesus Christ. What is the system of our churches on the mystery of satisfaction?—Some divines among us have ventured to affirm, that God was entirely free either to exact the punishment due to sin, or to release mankind from all obligation to suffer it. He required a satisfaction, say they, because of its greater fitness to express to the whole universe his just abhorrence of sin.

But the generally received doctrine among us, is, that although God was entirely free when he punished sin, yet he was necessarily inclined to do it, by the perfection of his nature; and that, as being a uniform Spirit, it was "impossible for him to lie," Heb. vi. 18; and contradict himself, so, being a just and holy Spirit, it was impossible for him to pardon

sinners without punishing sin on some victim substituted in their stead.

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

In regard to the first, it may be justly said, What! has God, think ye, so much love for holiness, and so much hatred of sin, that although he was not inclined to exact a satisfaction by necessity of nature, yet he chose rather to do so than to let sin pass unpunished? Has God, think you, sacrificed his Son, on account of the fitness of his sufferings, to remove every shadow of tolerating sin! Do you believe this, and can you imagine, that a God, to whom sin is so extremely odious, can approve of a faith that is compatible with sin, and which never gives vice its death-wound.

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

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

To all these considerations, add one more on the unanimous opinion of all your ministers. In vain do you attempt to seek pretexts for sin in those scholastic disputes, and in those different methods which divines have struck out in establishing the doctrines of faith, and justification. Your divines, I grant, have used expressions capable of very different meanings, on these articles. They are men, their geniuses, like those of the rest of mankind, are finite, and they have discovered in the far greater part of all their systems the narrow limits of their minds. Intelligences, confined like ours, are necessarily stricken with a first truth more than with another truth, no less important and clear than the first. Every science, every course of study, afford proofs of the truth of this remark; but the present subject of our inquiry abounds with evidence

of this sort. Some have been more struck with the necessity of believing the truths of speculation, than with that of performing the duties which belong to these truths. Others have been more affected with the necessity of performing the duties of religion, than with that of adhering to the speculative truths of it. Some, having lived among people believing the merit of works, have turned all their attention against the doctrine of merit, and have expressed themselves perhaps without design, in a manner, that seemed to enervate the necessity of good works. Others on the contrary having lived among libertines, who did not believe, or who affected not to believe the necessity of good works, have turned all the point of their genius against this pernicious doctrine, and in their turn have expressed themselves, perhaps without design, in a manner that seemed to favour the notion of merit. Nothing is so rare as a genius comprehending at once the whole of any subject. As nothing in the military art is so rare as that self-possession, which enables a general to pervade a whole army, and to be present, so to speak, in every part of the field of battle; so in the sciences, nothing is so uncommon as that kind of comprehensive attention, which enables a man always to think and speak in perfect harmony with himself, and so to avoid destroying one part of his thesis, while he establishes another part of it. But, after all, there is no real difference among your ministers on this article. Whatever method they take, they all agree, that no man can be a true Christian, who does not receive Jesus Christ as his prophet, priest, and king; that as faith unites us to Jesus Christ, it is impossible for the members of a head so holy to continue in sin. Now does not all this amount to a demonstration that saving faith transforms the heart?

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

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

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

Dost thou add, that our system is contrary to experience, and dost thou allege the examples of many, who have been justified without performing one good work, and by the bare desire of being saved by Jesus Christ, as the converted thief, and many others, who have turned to God on a death-bed? But *O vain man!* What have we been establishing? Have we said, that a faith, which had not produced good works, was not a true faith? No, we have only affirmed, that a true faith must necessarily be a principle of good works. It may happen, that a man may have this principle,



and may not have any opportunity of expressing it by practice, and of bringing it into action; he has it, however, in intention. In this sense we admit the maxims of St. Augustine, and if he did not understand it in our sense, it ought to be understood so; "Good works," says he, "do not accompany justification; but they follow it." The thief, in one sense, strictly speaking, did no good work: but in another sense, he did all good works. We say of him, as we say of Abraham, he did all in heart, in intention. Abraham, from the first moment of his vocation, was accounted to have abandoned his country, sacrificed his son Isaac, and wrought all those heroic actions of Christian faith, which made him a model for the whole church. In like manner, the converted thief visited all the sick, clothed all the naked, fed all the hungry, comforted all the afflicted, and was accounted to have done all the pious actions, of which faith is the principle, because he would infallibly have done them, had God afforded him opportunity.

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

Dost thou still object, that, although our system is true in the main, yet it is always dangerous to publish it; because man has always an inclination to "sacrifice unto his own net, and burn incense unto his own drag," Hab. i. 16, that by pressing the necessity of works, occasion is insensibly given to the doctrine of merit? But, allow me to ask, Is there no danger in the opposite system? If ours seem to favour one vice, does not the opposite system favour all vices? If ours seem to favour pride, does not the opposite system favour that, and with that all other vices, revenge, calumny, adultery, and incest? And, after all, should the abuse of a holy doctrine, prevent the use of it? Where, pray, are the men among us, who think to merit heaven by their good works? For our parts, we protest, my brethren, that having examined a great number of consciences, we find the general inclination the other way; people are in general more inclined to a careless reliance on a kind of general grace than to an industrious purchase of happiness by good works. What is it, after all, that decoys thousands before our eyes into the broad way of destruction? Is it an opinion, after they have been very charitable, that they merit by charity? Is it an opinion, after they have been very humble, that they merit by humility? Ah! my brethren! the greatest part of you have so fully proved by your indisposition to piety, that you have no idea of the merit of good works, that there is no fear of ever establishing this doctrine among you. But, to form loose actions of obedience, to

mutilate the covenant of grace, to render salvation the easiest thing in the world, to abound in flattering ourselves with hopes of salvation, although we live without love, without humility, without labouring to be saved; these are the rocks against which we split; these are the dangers from which we would free you; this is the monster that we would never cease to attack, till we have given it its death-wound.

I would then abhor myself, deplore my frailty, blush at the remembrance of my best duties, cast myself into the arms of divine mercy, and own all my felicity derivable from grace. I would own, it is grace that elects; grace which calls; grace that justifies; grace which sanctifies; grace that accepts a sanctification always frail and imperfect: but at the same time, I would watch over myself, I would arouse myself to duty, I would "work out my salvation with fear and trembling," Phil. ii. 12, and, while I acknowledge grace does all, and my works merit nothing, I would act as if I might expect every thing from my own efforts.

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

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

Hide, hide thyself in the dust, miserable man! smite thy breast, fix thine eyes on the ashes, from which thou wast taken. Lift up thy

voice in these penitential cries, "If thou, Lord! shouldst mark iniquities: O Lord! who shall stand?" Ps. cxxx. 3. "O Lord! righteousness belongeth unto thee; but unto us confusion of face," Dan. 9. 7. "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ," Gal. vi. 14. Lay thy pretensions, thy virtues, thy merits, at the foot of this cross. Divest thyself of thyself, and tear from thy heart, if possible, the last fibre of that pride, which would obstruct thy salvation, and ensure thy destruction.

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

But you have heard the maxim of St. James, "faith without works is dead," chap. ii. 21. This maxim is a touchstone by which you ought to try yourselves.

One of you believes there is a God: "faith without works is dead." Art thou penetrated with veneration for his perfections, admiration of his works, deference to his laws, fear of his judgments, gratitude for his bounties, and zeal for his glory?

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

Thou believest there is a future state: "faith without works is dead." Dost thou place thy heart where thy treasure is? Dost thou anticipate by faith and hope the blessed period of thine admission to future felicity? Dost thou "desire to depart and to be with Christ?" Phil. 1. 23. Is thy "soul athirst for God?" Dost thou

"pant after him, as the hart panteth after the water-brooks?" Ps. xlii. 1, 2.

Ah formidable maxim! Ah dreadful touchstone! We wish God had not only fitted religion, so to speak, to our frailties and infirmities, we want him also to accommodate it to our inveterate vices. We act as if we desired, that the sacrifice, which was once offered to free us from the punishment of sin, and to merit the pardon of it, had been offered again to free us from the necessity of subduing it, and to merit a right for us to commit it. What madness! From the days of Adam to this moment conscience has been the terror of mankind; and this terror, excited by an idea of a future state, and by the approach of death, has inclined all men to seek a remedy against this general and formidable evil. Philosophers, divines, libertines, worldly heroes, all have failed in this design. Jesus Christ alone has succeeded in it. Only Jesus Christ presents to us this true remedy so ardently desired, and so vainly sought; and we still refuse it, because our vices, fatal as they have been to us, are still the objects of our most eager desires.

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

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## SERMON XXXVI.

### REPENTANCE.

2 CORINTHIANS vii. 10.

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

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

Our apostle had scarcely planted the gospel at Corinth, and formed the professors of it into a Christian church, before one of the most atrocious crimes was committed in the community. Ought we to be surprised that we, inferior disciples of the apostles, fail in attempting to prove or to correct some excesses? Churches founded and edified by inspired men were not

exempt from them. In the church of Corinth we see impure, and even incestuous practices. How abominable soever the crime was, St. Paul was less chagrined at it than at the conduct of the Corinthian church towards the perpetrators of it. It is not astonishing to find some in large congregations, who are the execration of nature. Of the twelve disciples whom Jesus Christ chose for apostles, one was a devil, John vi. 70. But that a whole congregation, a Christian congregation, should consider such a monster with patience, and instead of punishing his crime, should form pretences to palliate, veils to conceal it, is surely the height of depravity. Such, however, were the Corinthians. Our apostle says, "ye are puffed up," 1 Cor. v. 2. With what pride does he reproach them? How could any man possibly derive a glory from an abomination which naturally inspires mortification and shame? The *pride* with which he reproaches them, is a disposition too well known among Christians. It is the disposition of a man who pretends to free himself from the ordinary laws of moral rectitude, and to leave that path in which the gospel requires all Christians to walk; to the vulgar, who treats the just fear of a well regulated conscience, that trembles at the approach of sin, as meanness of soul, and pusillanimity; and who accommodates the laws of religion to the passions that govern him, and to the seasons in which he has or has not an opportunity of being wicked. These were the dispositions of the Corinthians in regard to the incestuous person. Perhaps they derived some exculpating maxims from the Jews. The Jews thought, that a man who became a proselyte to their religion, was thereby freed from those natural ties which before united him to his relations, so that a man might innocently espouse his sister, or his mother, and so on. The pagans reproached the Jewish nation with this; and this perhaps might furnish Tacitus with a part of the character, that he gave the Jews.\* What is considered by us as sacred, says this celebrated historian, they treat as profane; and incestuous marriages, which shock us, they think lawful.

St. Paul rebukes the Corinthians for marking with a character of infamy, not only their own church, but in a manner the whole Christian world. Do you, as if he had said, consider a crime with indifference, which is unknown even among heathens? "It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named amongst the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife," 1 Cor. v. 1. Indeed there are in pagan writings most severe laws against incest, and what is very remarkable, the apostle seems to allude in the words just now cited, to a passage in Cicero, who, speaking of incest, calls it *scelus inauditum*, an unheard of crime. Accordingly, we find in Tertullian, in Minutius Felix, and in other famous apologists for Christianity, that incest was one of the disorders with which the pagans reproached the primitive Christians; the heathens either did what has been too often done, charge a whole family, sometimes a

whole city, sometimes a whole nation, with the fault of one member; or they thought nothing could blacken Christians more than taxing them with a vice, although falsely, which was held in the utmost detestation by all professors of paganism.

The apostle tells the Corinthians, that instead of having adopted, as they had, maxims which seemed to palliate incest, they should have imitated the conduct of the Jews, when they were obliged to excommunicate any scandalous offenders from their community. On these sad occasions, it was customary with the Jews to fast, to weep, and to put on mourning, as if the person were dead. "Ye are puffed up, and have not mourned, as if he who had done this deed had been taken from you," ver. 2. This custom was followed afterward by Christians, witness a famous passage in the book entitled *apostolical constitutions*;<sup>\*</sup> witness also these words of Origen, Christians mourn as over the dead, for those whom they are obliged to separate from them; however odious and infectious a member of our body may be, we always do violence to ourselves, when we are under the necessity of cutting it off.†— This is not all. St. Paul, not content with general censures and reproofs, thought this one of the extreme cases, in which the honour of his apostleship would oblige him to take his ecclesiastical rod, and to perform one of those formidable miracles, which God enabled the primitive Christians to work. You cannot but know, that among other miraculous gifts which God communicated for the establishment of Christianity, that of inflicting remarkable punishments on some offenders, was one of the most considerable. St. Peter employed this power against Ananias, whom he caused to fall dead at his feet; and against the wife of this miserable prevaricator, to whom he said, "Behold! the feet of them which have buried thy husband, are at the door, and shall carry thee out," Acts v. 9. St. Paul speaks of this power in this style, "The weapons of our warfare are mighty through God, in readiness to revenge all disobedience," 2 Cor. x. 46. Our apostle used this power against Elymas the sorcerer, and against Hymeneus and Alexander; he thought he ought also to use it against the incestuous Corinthian, and to "deliver him to Satan," 1 Cor. v. 5; thus was this terrible dispensation described.

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

\* Constit. Apostol. lib. ii. cap. 41.  
† Orig. lib. iii. count. Celsum.

\* Hist. v. 4.

soul of the incestuous sinner, or, as he expresses it, that he would be "swallowed up with overmuch sorrow," ver. 7.

He goes farther in my text, and in the whole chapter, from which I have taken it. He wishes to indemnify himself for the violent anguish that he had suffered, when he was obliged to treat his dear Corinthians with extreme rigour. He comforts himself by recollecting the salutary effects which his zeal had produced: "Though I made you sorry with a letter," says he, in the words immediately before the text, "I do not repent; though I did repent; because ye sorrow to repentance, for ye were made sorry after a godly manner."—In the text he establishes this general maxim for all Christians: "Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of; but the sorrow of the world worketh death."

The connexion of the text with the whole subject, that we have been explaining, was, as I said before, the best comment that we could propose to explain the text itself. By what we have heard, it is easy to understand what godly sorrow is, and what the sorrow of the world. *Godly sorrow* has for its object sin committed against God; or, rather, *godly sorrow* is the grief of a man who repents of his sins as God would have him repent; it is the sorrow of a man who afflicts himself, not only because he is miserable, but because he deserves to be so; and because he has violated those laws of righteousness and holiness which his own conscience approves. *The sorrow of the world* is that which has worldly blessings for its object; or it is the grief of a man who repents of his sins as worldly men repent; it is the sorrow of one who is more concerned for his misery than for sin, the cause of it, and who would even increase his crimes to get rid of his troubles. The ground of St. Paul's reasoning is this: "Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation;" or, as it may be rendered, "saving repentance not to be repented of;" that is to say, a man who afflicts himself on the accounts which we have mentioned, will be exercised at first, indeed, with violent anguish; but in a little time he will derive from this very anguish substantial comfort and joy; because his sorrow for sin will induce him to subdue it, and to pray for the pardon of it. On the other hand, "the sorrow of the world worketh death," that is to say, either the sorrow which is occasioned by the loss of earthly enjoyments is fatal to him who gives himself up to it; for, as the Wise Man says, "a broken spirit drieth the bones," Prov. xvii. 22; or, the sorrow of the world worketh death," because such a repentance as that of worldlings will never obtain the forgiveness that is promised to those who truly repent. In this latter sense I take the words here.

This is a general view of the scope of the apostle, and of his ideas in the text; ideas which we must develop in order to lead you into the spirit of the holy supper of the Lord, that so the sermon may contribute to the devotion of the day. I speak of those ideas which St. Paul gives us of "godly sorrow, saving repentance, not to be repented of;" for we cannot enlarge on that which he calls "sorrow of the world," without diverting

your attention from the solemn service of this day. We will, therefore, content ourselves with tracing a few characters of it in the body of this discourse, that you may perceive how different the virtue which the apostle recommends is, from the vice which he intends to destroy.

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

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

But there is another period which I called a time of after reflection on his sinful conduct. Then the remembrance of sin is cutting.—Then his soul is full of fears, regrets, griefs, remorse, reproach. Then that sin, like the book that St. John ate, which had been sweet as honey in his mouth, becomes bitter in his

belly, Rev. x. 10. Then the sinner beholding himself, and entering into his heart, finds himself wounded with seven darts:—with the number of his sins—with the enormity of them—with the vanity of the motives, which induced him to commit them—with their fatal influences on the minds of his neighbours—with that cruel uncertainty, into which they have deluded his own conscience—with the horrors of hell, of which they are the usual causes—and with those sad reflections with which they inspire an ingenuous loving heart.

1. The sinner is affected with the number of his sins. When we reflect on our past lives, sins arise from all parts, and absorb our minds in their multitude. We owe all our existence to a Supreme Being, and we are responsible to him for every moment of our duration. There are duties of age, obligations that belong to childhood, youth, manhood, and old age. There are duties of fortune, obligations that lie upon people, rich, poor, or in the middle station of life. There are civil obligations which belong to magistrates and subjects. There are domestic duties, which belong to us as parents or children, masters or servants. There are ecclesiastical duties belonging to us as pastors or people, preachers or hearers. There are duties of circumstance, binding on us as sick or well, in society or in solitude. Each of these is a class of obligations, and almost each of them is a list of crimes. Most men deceive themselves on this subject; they contract their notion of morality, maim the religion of Jesus Christ, reduce their duties to a small number, which they can easily perform, and at length form their idea of repentance by that which they imagine of their obligations. But we are to suppose that the penitent in question free from these prejudices, and finding his guilt every where, pronouncing himself guilty as a magistrate, and as a subject; as a father and as a son; as a servant and as a master; as a youth and as an old man; as a rich and as a poor man; as enjoying his health, and as pining in want of it; as pastor, and as one of the people, as preacher and as hearer. People sometimes affect to be astonished, and to complain, because we say in our confession of sin, that we have sinned from the moment of our nativity, and that the number of our sins is greater than that of the hairs on our heads. However, these are not hyperbolic expressions; the greatest saints have used them; and a close examination of our lives will convince us of their exact conformity to truth. "Every imagination of the thoughts of the heart of man are only evil continually," Gen. vi. 5, "Our iniquities are increased over our heads, and our trespass is grown up into the heavens," Ezra ix. 6. "Who can understand his errors?" Ps. xix. 12. "O Lord, let thy loving kindness preserve me, for innumerable evils have compassed me about, they are more than the hairs of mine head," Ps. xl. 11, 12.

2. The true penitent adds, to a just notion of the number of his sins that of their enormity. Here again, we must remove the prejudices that we have embibed concerning the morality of Jesus Christ; for here also we have altered his doctrine, and taken the world for our casuist, the maxims of loose worldlings

for our supreme law. We have reduced great crimes to a few principal enormous vices, which few people commit. There are but few murderers, but few assassins, but few highway robbers, strictly speaking: other sins, according to us, are frailties incidental to humanity, necessary consequences of human infirmity, and not evidences of a bad heart. But undeceive yourselves, lay aside the morality of the world, take the law of Jesus Christ for your judge, and consider the nature of things in their true point of light. For example, what can be more opposite to the genius of Christianity than that spirit of pride which reigns over almost all of us, which disguises us from ourselves, which clothes us with, I know not what, phantom of grandeur, and self-importance, and which persuades us, that a little money, a distant relation to a noble family, a little genius, a little countenance and applause, entitle us to an elevation above the rest of mankind, and to the fantastic privilege of considering ourselves as men made of a mould different from that of the rest of mankind? What can be more criminal than those calumnies and slanderous falsehoods, which infect the greatest part of our conversations; to maintain which, we pretend to penetrate the most hidden recesses of a neighbour's heart, we publish his real faults, we impute others to him, of which he is perfectly innocent, we derive our happiness from his misery, and build our glory on his shame? What more execrable than habitual swearing, and profaning the name of Almighty God? Is it not shocking to hear some who profess Christianity, daily profane religion, revile its institutions, blaspheme their Creator for an unfavourable cast of a die, or turn of a card? In general, can any thing be more injurious to Jesus Christ, than that attachment which most of us have to the world, although in different degrees? What more fully proves our light estimation of his promises, our little confidence in his faithfulness? My brethren, we tremble when we hear of a wretch, whom hunger had driven to commit a robbery on the highway; or of a man mad with passion, who, in a transport of wrath had killed his brother! But, would we enter into our own hearts, would we take the pains to examine the nature of our sins, we should find ourselves so black and hideous, that the distance which partial self-love puts between us and the men at whom we tremble, would diminish and disappear.

3. A third idea that afflicts a penitent, is that of the fatal influence which his sins have had on the soul of his neighbour. My brethren, one sin strikes a thousand blows, while it seems to aim at striking only one. It is a contagious poison, which diffuses itself far and wide, and infects not only him who commits it, but the greatest part of those who see it committed. You are a father, you cannot sin without dragging your children down the gulf into which you precipitate yourself. Hence we generally see, if a father be ignorant of religion, his children are ignorant of religion; if a mother be a mere worldling, her children are infatuated with love to the world. You are a pastor, you cannot fall into sin without inducing some of your flock to sin too; there are

always some people so weak or so wicked, as to think they cannot do wrong, while they imitate you, while they take those for their examples who profess to regulate the conduct of others. St. Jerome says, The house and the conduct of a bishop are considered as a mirror of public discipline, so that all think they do right when they follow the example of their bishop. You are a master, you cannot sin without emboldening your apprentices and workmen to sin, nor without making your families schools of error, and your shops academies of the devil. Dreadful thought! too capable of producing the most exquisite sorrow! What can a man think of himself, who, considering those unhappy creatures who are already victims to the just displeasure of God in hell, or who are likely to become so, is obliged to say to himself, agreeably to the divers circumstances in which Providence has placed him, Perhaps this church, which has produced only apostates, might have produced only martyrs, had I "declared the whole counsel of God" with plainness and courage? Acts xx. 27. Perhaps this family that is plunged into ignorance, fallen from ignorance to vice, and from vice into perdition, might have produced an "Onesimus, a partner of the saints," Philem. 10. 17, had I caused the spirit of piety and virtue to have animated the house! Perhaps this child, given me to be made an offering to the Lord, and so to become "my joy and crown," Phil. iv. 1, through all eternity may execrate me as the author of his misery; he perhaps may justly reproach me, and say, unworthy parent, it was by imitating thy fatal example that I was brought into this intolerable condition; they were thine abominable maxims, and thy pernicious actions, which involved me first in sin and then in punishment in hell.

4. The weakness of *motives* to sin is the fourth cause of the sorrow of a penitent. When people find themselves deceived in the choice of one out of many objects, they comfort themselves by reflecting, either that all the objects had similar qualifications to recommend them, or that their dissimilarity was difficult to be known. But what proportion is there between motives to vice and motives to virtue? Attend a moment to motives to sin. Sometimes a vapour in the brain, a rapidity in the circulation of the blood, a flow of spirits, a revolt of the senses, are our motives to sin. But after this vapour is dissipated, after this rapidity is abated, after the spirits and senses are calmed, and we reflect on what induced us to offend God, how can we bear the sight of ourselves without shame and confusion of face? Motives to sin are innumerable and very various: but what are they all? Sometimes an imaginary interest, an inch of ground, and sometimes a sceptre, a crown, the conquest of the universe, "the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them," Matt. iv. 10. There comes, however, a moment, in which all these different motives are alike. When a man lies on a death-bed, when all terrestrial objects are disappearing, when he begins to consider them in their true point of light, and to compare sceptres, conquests, crowns, and kingdoms, with the ideas of his own mind, the immense desires of his

heart, and the large plans of felicity that religion traces, he finds he has been dazzled and misled by false lights, and how in such an hour can he bear to reflect on himself without shame and confusion?

5. I make a fifth article of the penitent's *uncertainty* of his state. For although the mercy of God is infinite, and he never rejects those who sincerely repent, yet it is certain, the sinner in the first moments of his penitence has reason to doubt of his state, and till the evidence of his conversion becomes clear, there is almost as much probability of his destruction as of his salvation. Terrible uncertainty! so terrible, that I am not afraid of affirming, except the torments of hell, it is the most cruel condition into which an intelligent being can be brought. Represent to yourselves, if it be possible, the state of a man who reasons thus. When I consider myself, I cannot doubt of my guilt. I have added crime to crime, rebellion to rebellion. I have sinned not only through infirmity and weakness, but I have been governed by principles horrible and detestable; incompatible with those of good men, and with all hopes of paradise. I deserve hell, it is certain, and there are in that miserable place, sinners less guilty than myself. My sentence, indeed, is not yet denounced: but what proof have I, that I have not sinned beyond the reach of that mercy which is held forth to sinners in the gospel? The gospel says plainly enough, "If any man sin, there is an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous," 1 John ii. 1; but the same gospel declares as plainly, that "it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, if they fall away, to renew them again unto repentance," Heb. vi. 4. 6. I see, indeed, in the New Testament a Peter, who repented and was pardoned, after he had denied his Saviour: but the same book shows me also a Judas, who died in despair. On this side of a crucified Christ I see a converted thief: on the other hangs one, who persisting in impenitence expires in guilt unpardoned; and the blood of the Saviour flowing all warm and propitious from his veins, obtains in his sight pardon for his partner, but none for him. I see indeed in the gospel, that God invites the sinner, and waits awhile for his return: but I see also, that this time is limited; that it is a fine day succeeded by a terrible night; that it is a measure which the obstinacy of a sinner fills up. O happy days! in which I saw the face of my God, in which I could assure myself of my salvation, in which I cheerfully waited for death as my passage to glory. Ah! whither are you fled! Now, what must I think of myself? Have I committed only pardonable offences, or have I been guilty of those crimes for which there is no forgiveness? Shall I be forgiven as Peter was, or shall I be abandoned to desperation like Judas? Shall I ascend to paradise with the converted thief, or must I with his impenitent partner be cast into the flames of hell? Will my Redeemer deign to raise me by his life-giving voice from my grave to the resurrection unto life, or will he doom me to destruction? "Are the riches of the goodness and forbearance of God," yet open to me, or are they closed against me? Am I a

real penitent, or am I only an apparent one? Shall I be damned?—Shall I be saved?—Perhaps the one.—Perhaps the other.—Perhaps heaven.—Perhaps hell.—O fatal uncertainty!—Dreadful horror!—Cruel doubt!—This is the sixth arrow of the Almighty, that wounds the heart of a repenting sinner.

6. Perhaps *hell*. This is my sixth reflection. Hell is an idea, against which there is no philosophy to comfort, no profaneness to protect, no brutality to harden; for if we every day see men, who seem to be got above the fear of future punishment, it is because we see at the same time men, who have found the art either of stupifying themselves by the tumultuous noise of their passions, or of blinding themselves by their infidelity. The very skepticism of these men marks their timidity. The very attempts, which they make to avoid thinking of hell, are full of proofs that they cannot bear the sight of it. Indeed, who can support the idea of the torments of hell, especially when their duration is added? Yet this is the idea that strikes a penitent, he condemns himself to suffer this punishment, he places himself on the edge of this gulf, and if I may be allowed to speak so, draws in the pestilential vapours, that arise from this bottomless abyss. Every moment of his life, before he beholds God as his reconciled Father, is a moment, in which probably he may be cast into hell, because there is no period in the life of such a man, in which it is not probable that he may die, and there is no death for one who dies in impenitence, which will not be a death in a state of reprobation.

7. In fine, the last arrow that wounds the heart of a penitent, is an arrow of divine *love*. The more we love God, the more misery we endure when we have been so unhappy as to offend him. Yes, this love, which inflames seraphims, this love, which makes the felicity of angels, this love, which supports the believer under the most cruel torments, this love is more terrible than death, and becomes the greatest tormentor of the penitent. To have offended a God whom he loves, a God whom so many excellences render lovely, a God whom he longs again to love, notwithstanding those terrible looks which he casts on the sins that the penitent deploras; these thoughts excite such sorrows in the soul, as nothing but experience can give men to understand.

The union of all these causes, which produce sorrow in a true penitent, forms the grand difference between that which St. Paul calls *godly sorrow*, and that which he calls the *sorrow of the world*, that is to say, between true repentance and that uneasiness which worldly systems sometimes give another kind of penitents. The grief of the latter arises only from motives of self-interest, from punishments they feel, or from consequences they fear.

We have seen, then, the true causes of *godly sorrow*, and we are now to attend to its effects; they constitute a second remarkable difference between *godly sorrow* and the *sorrow of the world*.

II. St. Paul speaks of the *effects of godly sorrow* only in general terms in our text, he says, it "worketh repentance to salvation:" but in the following verses he speaks more particularly; "Behold, this self-same thing,

that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge!" Some of these terms may perhaps be equivocal, however, we do not intend at present to inquire into the various senses of them: but will take them in that sense which seems most obvious, most agreeable to the style of St. Paul, and to the subject of which he is speaking.

There is also in the language of the apostle, in what he calls the "working of godly sorrow," something relative to the state of the Corinthian church in regard to the case of the incestuous person; and this seems particularly clear in the expression, "yea, what revenge!" St. Paul very likely referred to the excommunication of this person by the Corinthian church. He had directed them in a former epistle, "when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver such a one unto Satan," 1 Cor. v. 4, 5. We have seen that the punishments inflicted on such persons are called *vengeance*, and of this *revenge*, or *vengeance*, the apostle speaks. Let us omit every thing personal, and let us attend only to that part of the subject which regards ourselves.

The first effect of *godly sorrow* is what our apostle calls carefulness, or, as I would rather read it, *vigilance*, "yea, what vigilance!" I understand by this term the disposition of a man, who feeling a sincere sorrow for his sins, and being actually under the afflicting hand of God, is not content with a few general notions, and a little vague knowledge of his own irregularities: but uses all his efforts to examine every circumstance of his life, and to dive into the least obvious parts of his own conscience, in order to discover whatever is offensive to that God, whose favour and clemency he most earnestly implores. The penitence of worldlings, or as St. Paul expresses it, "the sorrow of the world," may indeed produce such general notions, and such a vague knowledge of sin, as I just now mentioned. Afflicted people very commonly say, We deserve these punishments, we are sinners, very great sinners: but those penitents are rare, very rare indeed, who possess what our apostle calls *carefulness*, or *vigilance*. A Christian, who is truly affected with having offended God, labours with the utmost earnestness to find out all that can have contributed to excite the anger of God against him, and to engage him to redouble the strokes of a just displeasure. Perhaps it may be some connexion attended with dangerous influences, which I had not perceived. Perhaps it may be the retention of some ill-acquired property, the injustice of acquiring which I have refused to acknowledge, lest my conscience should drive me to make restitution. Perhaps I may have omitted some virtue essential to Christianity. God has taken away my fortune; but perhaps I abused it, perhaps it excited my pride, and made me forget my infirmities, my dust and ashes. God took away my child, the whole comfort of my life; but probably he saw, I made an idol of it, and suffered it to fill a place in my heart, which ought to have been reserved for God alone. God sent a sickness, which I

should not have naturally expected; but perhaps, health was a snare to me, and held me from considering my last end. In view of such a person our apostle would exclaim, "Behold, this self-same thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you!"

"What clearing of yourselves!" adds St. Paul. The Greek word signifies *apology*, and it will be best understood by joining the following expression with it, *yea, what indignation!* In the sorrow of the world apology and indignation are usually companions; indignation against him who represents the atrocity of a sin, and apology for him who commits it. In what odious colours does this artful indignation describe a man, who freely preaches the whole counsel of God," Acts xx. 27; representing to every sinner in its own point of light the crime of which he is guilty! Sometimes we accuse him of rashness, as if a man ought never to reprove the vices of others unless he believes his own conduct is irreprehensible. Sometimes we reproach him with the very sins which he censures in others, as if a man ought to be perfect himself, before he pretends to reprove the imperfections of his brethren. Sometimes we account him a maintainer of heresies, as if it were impossible to press home the practice of religion without abjuring the speculative doctrines that are revealed in the same gospel. St. Paul experienced this indignation as much as any minister of the gospel. Indeed it seems impossible, that a ministry so popular as his should not expose itself to slander from the abundant malignity of the age in which it was exercised. And this will always be the fate of all those who walk in the steps of this apostle, and take his resolution and courage for a model.

The same principle that produces *indignation* against those who reprove our disorders, inspires us with *apologies* to excuse ourselves.—The reprovèd sinner is always fruitful in excuses, always ingenious in finding reasons to exculpate himself, even while he gives himself up to those excesses which admit of the least excuse; one while, his time of life necessarily induces him to some sins; another time, human frailty is incompatible with perfect piety; now he pleads the vivacity of his passions, which will suffer no control; and then he says, he is irresistibly carried away with the force of example in spite of all his efforts.

Now, change the objects of *indignation* and *apology*, and you will have a just notion of the dispositions of the Corinthians, and of the effects which *godly sorrow* produces in the soul of a true penitent. Let your *apology* have for its object that ministry which you have treated so unworthily, let your *indignation* turn against yourselves, and then you will have a right to pretend to the prerogatives of true repentance. What sins have you lamented last week? Your excessive love of the world? Let this *sorrow* produce an apology for the holy ministry; let it excite indignation against yourselves; acknowledge that we had reason to affirm "the friendship of the world is enmity with God," Jam. iv. 4; that "no man can serve two masters," Matt. vi. 24; that some amusements, some ostentatious airs, some liveries of the

world, ill become a Christian; and blame yourselves, if you be incapable of relishing this doctrine. What sin have you been lamenting? Avarice? Let this sorrow apologize for the holy ministry, and let it excite indignation against yourselves. Acknowledge, we had reasons sufficient for saying, that "the love of money is the root of all evil," 1 Tim. vi. 10; that "covetousness is idolatry," Col. iii. 5; that "the covetous shall not inherit the kingdom of God," 1 Cor. vi. 10; that such mean, low, sordid sentiments are unworthy of those, whom Jesus Christ has received into communion with himself, whom he has brought up in a school of generosity, disinterestedness, and magnanimity: who have seen in his person examples of all these noble virtues; and now find fault if you can, with any besides yourselves, if you be incapable of digesting this doctrine. "Behold this self-same thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what apology, yea, what indignation!"

The apostle adds, "yea, what fear." By fear, in this place, we understand that self-diffidence, which an idea of the sins we have committed, ought naturally to inspire. In this sense, St. Paul says to the Romans, "be not high-minded; but fear," chap. xi. 20. *Fear*, that is to say, distrust thyself. I do not mean a bare speculative diffidence, that persuades the mind: I understand a practical fear, which penetrates the heart, inspires us with salutary cautions against the repetition of such sins as we are most inclined to commit. This effect produced by godly sorrow, is one of the principal characters that distinguishes it from the sorrow of the world, from that repentance, which is often found in false penitents. It is one of the surest marks of real repentance, and one of the best evidences, that it is not imaginary. Let the occasion of your penitential sorrows in the past week teach you to know yourself, and engage you to guard those tempers of your hearts, the folly of which your own experience has so fully taught you. Here you suffered through your inattention and dissipation; *fear* lest you should fall by the same means again; guard against this weakness, strengthen this feeble part, accustom yourself to attention, examine what relation every circumstance of your life has to your duty. There you fell through your vanity; *fear* lest you should fall again by the same mean; guard against this weakness, accustom yourself to meditate on your original meanness, and on whatever can inspire you with the grace of humility. Another time you erred through excessive complaisance; *fear* lest you should err again by the same mean; guard against this weakness, accustom yourself to resist opportunity, when resistance is necessary, and never blush to say, "It is right in the sight of God, to hearken unto God, more than unto you," Acts iv. 19. In such a case, St. Paul would exclaim, "behold, this self-same thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what fear it wrought in you!"

In the fifth place, "What vehement desire?" This is another vague term. *Godly sorrow* produces divers kinds of desire. Here I confine it to one meaning; it signifies, I think, a desire of participating the favour of God, of becom-



ing an object of the merciful promises, which he has made to truly contrite souls, and of resting under the shade of that cross, where an expiatory sacrifice was offered to divine justice for the sins of mankind. A penitent, who sees the favourable looks of a compassionate God intercepted; a penitent, who cannot behold that adorable face, the smiles of which constitute all his joy; a penitent, who apprehends his God justly flaming with anger against him, *desires* only one thing, that is, to recover a sense of the favour of God. "If thy presence go not with me carry us not up hence," said Moses once, Exod. xxxiii. 15; should we conquer all the land of promise, and possess all its treasures, and not enjoy thy love, we would rather spend all our days here in the desert. "I will arise, and go to my Father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, make me as one of thy hired servants," Luke xv. 18, 19; this was the language of the prodigal son.—And the prayer of the Psalmist is to the same purpose, "Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy holy spirit from me, restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, uphold me with thy free spirit," Ps. li. 11, 12.

Finally, *zeal* is the sixth effect of *godly sorrow*, and it may have three sorts of objects, God, our neighbours, and ourselves. But, as the time is nearly elapsed, and as I have shown you in general what *godly sorrow* is, and what effects are wrought in a penitent by it, I shall proceed to close this discourse by describing the benefits that accompany it.

III. St. Paul expresses himself in a very concise manner on this article: but his language is full of meaning; repentance produced by *godly sorrow*, says he, "is not to be repented of." This is one of those tours of expression, by which, while a subject seems to be diminished, the highest ideas are given of it. "Godly sorrow worketh repentance not to be repented of;" that is to say, it is always a full source of consolation and joy. Let us adapt ourselves to the shortness of our time. *Godly sorrow* reconciles us to three enemies, which, while we live in sin, attack us with implacable rage. The first is divine justice; the second our own conscience; the last death.

1. The first enemy who attacks us while we live in sin, with implacable rage, is the justice of God. There can be no other relation between God and an obstinate sinner than that which subsists between judge and criminal; "God is of purer eyes than to behold evil," Hab. i. 13; and his justice points all his thunders against the devoted head of him who gives himself up to the commission of it. *Godly sorrow* reconciles us to divine justice. This is perhaps of all propositions the least disputable, the most clear, and the most demonstrable.

Consult your own reason, it will inform you, God is good; it will prove, by all the objects which surround you, that it is not possible for God to refuse mercy to a penitent, who weeps, and mourns for sin, who prays for mercy, who covers himself with sackcloth and ashes, who dares not venture to lift up his eyes to heaven, who would shed all his blood to atone for the sins that he has committed, and who would not

for the whole universe allow himself to commit them again.

To reason add *authority*, and it will appear, that all mankind profess to be guilty of sin, and to adore a God of pardoning mercy, and although numbers remain ignorant of the nature of true repentance, yet allow it is attended with excellent prerogatives.

To reason and authority add *revelation*. But how is it possible for me at present even to hint all the comfortable testimonies of revelation on this article? Revelation gives you ideas of the mercy of God the most tender, the most affecting, the most sublime; it speaks of "bowels troubled, repentings kindled together," at the sound of a penitent's plaintive voice, Jer. xxxi. 20; Hos. xi. 8. Revelation speaks of oaths uttered by God himself, whose bare word is evidence enough, "As I live, saith the Lord," Ezek. xxxiii. 11. (St. Paul tells us, "because God could swear by no greater, he swore by himself;" Heb. vi. 13; and in the text now quoted God employs this kind of speaking, an appeal to the most excellent of all beings, in order to satisfy the trembling conscience of a penitent.) "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked: but that the wicked turn from his way and live." Revelation opens to you those "fountains of life which were opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and leads to the blood of the Saviour of the world, which flows for penitent sinners," Zech. xiii. 1.

Consult *experience*, and it will show you a cloud of witnesses, whose repentance was accepted. Witness many a time the whole people of Israel, witness Moses, witness David, witness Hezekiah, witness Manasseh, witness Nebuchadnezzar, witness Nineveh, witness that prostitute who wept in Simon's house, witness the poor publican, witness the converted thief, witness every penitent in this assembly, for what would become of you, I speak of the holiest of you, what would become of you, were not God good, were he not infinitely good, were he not merciful to wait while we fall into sin until we rise again by repentance?

2. As *godly sorrow* reconciles us to divine justice, so it reconciles us to our own consciences. We sometimes lull conscience into a deep sleep; but it is very difficult to keep it from starting and waking. We be to them who throw it into a dead sleep to wake no more! But when it awakes, how dreadful does it arise from its sleep? What blows does it strike! What wounds does it make! What pains and horrors does it excite, when it says to a sinner, Miserable wretch! what hast thou done? from what dignity art thou fallen! into what deep disgrace and distress art thou plunged! "My punishment is greater than I can bear! Mountains! cover me! Hills! fall upon me," Gen. iv. 13; Hos. x. 8. Ah! ye empty sounds of worldly pleasure! ye tumultuous assemblies! ye festival and amusive scenes! how feeble are ye against an enemy so formidable! It is repentance only, it is only *godly sorrow* that can disarm conscience. A soul reconciled to God, a soul made to hear this comfortable language, "thy sins be forgiven thee," Matt. ix. 2, passes, so to speak, all on a sudden from a kind of hell to

a sort of heaven; it feels that "peace of God which passeth all understanding," Phil. iv. 7; it enters into that "joy unspeakable and full of glory," 1 Pet. i. 8, which has supported the greatest saints under the most infamous calumnies that ever were invented to blacken them, and the sharpest punishments that ever were devised to torment them.

3. In fine, *godly sorrow* reconciles us to death. While we live without repentance, yea, while there remains any doubt of the sincerity or truth of our repentance, how can we sustain the thoughts of a just tribunal, an exact register, an impartial sentence, all ready to unfold and decree our future fate? How can we hear this summons, "Give an account of thy stewardship?" Luke xvi. 2. *Godly sorrow*, reconciles us to this enemy, "the sting of death is sin," 1 Cor. xv. 55, and sin has no sting for a penitent. Death appears to the repenting sinner as a messenger of grace, sent to conduct him to a merciful God, and to open to him ineffable felicity flowing from boundless mercy.

Ah! my brethren, would to God it were as easy to prove that you bear the marks of true repentance, as it is to display its prerogatives! But alas!—I dare not even move this question—And yet what wait you around the pulpit for? Why came you to hear this sermon? Would you have me to close the solemnity as usual by supposing that you have understood all, and referred all to the true design; that last week you all very seriously examined your own hearts; that you all prepared for the table of the Lord by adopting such dispositions as this holy ceremony requires of you; that this morning you all received the communion with such zeal, fervour, and love, as characterize worthy communicants; that in the preceding exercise you all poured out your hearts before God in gratitude and praise; and that nothing remains now but to congratulate you on the holiness and happiness of your state?

But tell me, in what period of your lives (I speak not of you all, for thanks be to God, I see many true penitents in this assembly; men, who "shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation," Phil. ii. 15, and who may perhaps have obtained to-day by the fervour of their zeal forbearance for all the rest. But I speak of a great number, and of them I ask,) In what period of your lives were you in possession of all those characters of *godly sorrow*, of which we have been speaking?

Was it in your choice? What! that trifling examination, that rapid reading, those superficial regrets, those hasty resolutions, was this your course of repentance?

Was it in company? But what! that commerce with the world, in which you were not distinguished from other worldlings, and where after the example of your company you put on their livery, and pursued their pleasures, was this your course of repentance?

Was it at the table of Jesus Christ? But, what! those communions, to which you came rather to acquire by some slight exercises of devotion a right to commit more sin, than to lament what you had committed; those communions, which you concluded as devoutly as you began; those communions, that pro-

duced no reformation in you as men of the world, members of the church, or of private families; those communions, after which you were as proud, as implacable, as sordid, as voluptuous, as envious, as before; do these communions constitute the course of your repentance?

Perhaps, we may repent when we are dying! What! a forced submission; an attention extorted in spite of ourselves by the prayers and exhortations of a zealous minister; resolutions inspired by fear; can this be a safe course of repentance?

Ah! my brethren, it would be better to turn our hopes from the past; for past times offer only melancholy objects to most of us, and to confine our attention to future, or rather to the present moments, which afford us more agreeable objects of contemplation. O may the present proofs, the glorious proofs, which God gives us to-day of his love, make everlasting impressions upon our hearts and minds! May the sacred table, of which we have this morning participated, be for ever before our eyes! May this object every where follow us, and may it every where protect us from all those temptations to which a future conversation with the world may expose! May our prayers, our resolutions, our oaths, never be effaced from our memories! May we renew our prayers, resolutions, vows, and oaths, this moment with all our hearts! Let each of us close this solemnity by saying, "Thou art my portion, O Lord! I have said, that I would keep thy words! I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments," Ps. xix. 57. 106. I have sworn to be more exact in all thy service, more attentive to thy voice, more sensible to thine exhortations. And to unite all my wishes in one, may that sincerity and integrity, with which we take this oath, be accompanied with all the divine assistance, which is necessary to enable us never, never to violate it. Amen and Amen!

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## SERMON XXXVII.

### ASSURANCE.

ROMANS vii. 38, 39.

*I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

It is a circumstance of sacred history well worthy of our reflections, my brethren, that Moses and Joshua, being yet, the one beyond Jordan, the other hardly on the frontiers of Palestine, disposed of that country as if they had already subdued it. They made laws concerning kings, subjects, priests, and Levites; they distributed towns and provinces; and they described the boundaries of every tribe. It should seem, their battles had been all fought, and they had nothing remaining now but the pleasure of enjoying the fruit of their victories. Yet war is uncertain, and the success of one day does not always ensure the success of the next. Hence the ancient proverb, "Let

not him that girdeth on his harness, boast himself as he that putteth it off," 1 Kings xx. 11.

Certainly, my brethren, these leaders of the people of God would have been chargeable with rashness, had they founded their hopes only on their own resolution and courage, had they attacked their enemies only "with a sword and with a spear; but they went in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel," 1 Sam. xvii. 45, for he had said to them, "Arise, and go, for I do give this land to the children of Israel," Josh. i. 2.—Resting on these promises, and possessing that "faith, which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen," Heb. xi. 1, they thought themselves in the land of promise; they tasted the milk and honey, and enjoyed all the privileges of it.

Christians, there is a greater distance between heaven and earth, than there was between the wilderness and the land of promise. There are more difficulties to surmount to arrive at salvation, than there were formerly to arrive at Canaan. Notwithstanding, my text is the language of a Christian soldier, yet in arms, yet resisting flesh and blood, yet surrounded by innumerable enemies conspiring against his soul; behold him assured, triumphing, defying all the creatures of the universe to deprive him of salvation. But be not surprised at his firmness; the angel of the Lord fights for him, and says to him, "Arise, and go, for I do give the land to thee," Josh. i. 3; and his triumphant song is full of wisdom, "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Let us examine the steadfastness of St. Paul, and let the words of our text decide two disputed points. Some divines pretend, that believers ought always to remain in a state of doubt and uncertainty concerning their salvation. Our first dispute is with them. Our second is with some false Christians, who, pretending that assurance of salvation is taught in the holy Scriptures, arrogate to themselves the consolations afforded by this doctrine, even while they live in practices, inconsistent with a state of regeneration. With a view to both, we will divide this discourse into two general parts. In the first we will prove this proposition; a believer may arrive at such a degree of holiness as to be assured of his salvation. "I am persuaded," says St. Paul; he does not say, I think, I presume, I conjecture: but "I am persuaded," I am assured, "that neither death nor life shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." In the second place, we will prove, that no one has a right to assure himself of his salvation, any farther than he has a right to assure himself, that he shall persevere in faith and obedience. I am persuaded; of what? Is it that, live how I will, I shall be saved? No. But I am persuaded, that neither death nor life shall separate me from the love of God; that is to say, I am persuaded, I shall triumph over all temptations. The first of these articles shall be directed to confirm our consciences,

and to explain our divinity. The second to justify our morality, and to destroy that false system of confidence which carnal security aims to establish.

I. A believer may carry his faith and holiness to a degree which will assure him of his salvation. This is our first proposition, and there is as much necessity of explaining it clearly as of solidly proving the truth of it; for if there be an article, that is rendered obscure by disputes about words, and by the false consequences which different authors impute to each other, it is certainly this. If we clearly state the question, and omit what is not essential to the subject, although it may have some distant relation to it, we shall preclude a great many difficulties, and the truth will establish itself.

First, then, when we affirm, there is such a blessing as assurance of salvation, we do not mean that assurance is a duty imposed on all mankind, so that every one, in what state soever he may be, ought to be fully persuaded of his salvation, and by this persuasion to begin his Christianity. We are well assured, that all those who are out of the road of truth and virtue, can have no other assurance than what is false, rash, and injurious to religion. By this we get rid of all those calumnies, by which some attempt to blacken our doctrine. It has been pretended, that we require false Christians, wicked and abandoned people, persisting in error and vice to believe that they are justified, and that they have nothing more to do, in order to arrive at salvation, than to persuade themselves that they shall be saved. Indeed we allow, obligations to faith and holiness, by which we arrive at assurance, lie upon all men, even the most unbelieving and profane; but while they persist in unbelief and profaneness, we endeavour to destroy their pretences to assurance and salvation.

2. We do not affirm, that all Christians, even they who may be sincere Christians, but of whose sincerity there may be some doubt, have a right to assurance. Assurance of our justification depends on assurance of our bearing the characters of justified persons. As a Christian in his state of infancy and novitiate, can have only mixed and doubtful evidences of his Christianity, so he can have only mixed and doubtful evidences of his certainty of salvation. In this manner we reply to those who reproach us with opening a broad way to heaven not authorized by the word of God.

3. Less still do we affirm, that they who for a considerable time seemed to give great proof of their faith and love, but who have since fallen back into sin, and seem as if they would continue in it for the remaining part of life, ought, in virtue of their former apparent acts of piety, to persuade themselves that they shall be saved. Far from pretending that these people ought to arrogate to themselves the prerogatives of true believers, we affirm, they were never partakers of the first principles of true religion, according to this saying of an apostle, "If they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us," 1 John ii. 19. In this manner we reply to the difficulties, which some passages of Scripture seem to raise against our doctrine; as this of St.

Paul, "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were partakers of the Holy Ghost, if they shall fall away, to renew them again to repentance," Heb. vi. 4. 6. And this of the prophet, "When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done, shall not be mentioned, in his trespass shall he die," Ezek. xviii. 24.

4. We do not say that they who have arrived at the highest degree of faith and holiness, can be persuaded of the certainty of their salvation in every period of their lives. Piety, even the piety of the most eminent saints, is sometimes under an eclipse. Consequently, assurance, which piety alone can produce, must be subject to eclipses too. Thus we answer objections taken from such cases as that of David. After he had killed Uriah, he was given up to continual remorse; the shade of Uriah, says Josephus, all covered with gore, for ever haunted him, broke his bones, and made him cry most earnestly for a restoration of the joy of salvation, Ps. li. 8. 12. In some such circumstances the prophet Asaph was, when he exclaimed, "Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" Ps. lxxvii. 7. 9. These were moments of suspension of divine love; these were the sad remains of sin in these holy men.

5. We do not say that the greatest saints have any right to persuade themselves of the certainty of their salvation in case they were to cease to love God. Certainty of salvation, supposes perseverance in the way of salvation. Thus we reply to objections taken from the words of St. Paul, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast away," 1 Cor. ix. 27. We are persuaded St. Paul, all holy as he was, had he ceased to have been holy, would have been obliged to doubt of his salvation. Thus also we account for the threatenings which are denounced in Scripture, and for this command of an apostle, "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure," 2 Pet. i. 10. And by this also we get rid of the unjust reproaches which some cast on the doctrine of assurance, as favouring indolence and licentiousness.

6. We do not affirm, that any man, considered in himself, employing only his own strength, and unassisted by grace, can hope to persevere in holiness. We suppose the Christian assisted by the power of God, without which no man can begin the work of salvation, much less finish it. Thus our doctrine frees itself from rashness and presumption.

7. We do not pretend to affirm, that doubts exclude men from salvation. Faith may be sincere, where it is not strong. All the children of Abraham are not like Abraham "fully persuaded."

Finally, While we maintain the doctrine of assurance, we wish to have it distinguished from the doctrine of perseverance. It is a doctrine of our churches, once a child of God,

and always a child of God. But, although these two doctrines seem to be closely connected together; although the same arguments which establish the one, may be of use to prove the other; yet there is a considerable difference between the two. We are not considering to-day so much the *condition* of a Christian, as the *judgment* which he ought to make of it. Let it not surprise you then, if, while we press home the article of assurance, we do not speak much on the faithfulness of God in his promises, or the irrevocable nature of his eternal decrees; for we are not inquiring in this discourse, whether the promises of God be faithful, or, whether his decrees be inviolable; but whether we can arrive at a persuasion of our own interest in these promises, and whether we be included in the eternal decrees of his love. Our question is not, May true believers fall away into endless perdition? but, Have we any evidence that we are among the number of those saints who can never perish?

These elucidations and distinctions are sufficient at present. Were we to compose a treatise on the subject, it would be necessary to explain each article more fully; but in a single sermon they can only be just mentioned. These hints, we hope, are sufficient to give you a clear state of the question, and a just notion of the doctrine of our churches. We do not say every man, but a believer; not every pretended believer, but a true believer; not a believer in a state of infancy and noviciate, but a confirmed believer; not a believer who backslides from his profession, but one who perseveres; not a believer during his falls into sin, but in the ordinary course of his life; not a believer considered in himself, and left to his own efforts, but a believer supported by that divine aid which God never refuses to those who ask it; such a believer, we say, may persuade himself, not only that the promises of God are faithful, and that his decrees are irrevocable, but that he is of the number of those whom faithful promises and immutable decrees secure. Not that we pretend to exclude from salvation those who have not obtained the highest degree of assurance: but we consider it as a state to which each Christian ought to aspire, a privilege that every one should endeavour to obtain. It is not enough to advance this proposition, we must endeavour to establish it on solid proof.

We adduce in proof of this article, first, the experience of holy men; next, the nature of regeneration; then, the privileges of a Christian; and lastly, the testimony of the Holy Spirit; each of which we will briefly explain.

1. We allege the *experience* of holy men. A long list of men persuaded of their salvation might here be given. A few follow.—Job says, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself," chap. xix. 25—27. David says, "O Lord, deliver my soul from men of the world, who have their portion in this life. As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness, I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness," Ps. xvii. 14, 15. So Asaph, "It is my happiness to draw near to God. I am continually with thee, thou hast holden

me by thy right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory," Ps. lxxiii. 28, 23, 24. But not to multiply examples, let us content ourselves with the words of the text, and in order to feel the force of them, let us explain them.

"I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." What is this love of God, of which our apostle speaks? The expression is equivocal. It either signifies the love of Jesus Christ to us, or our love to him. Both come to the same; for as St. Paul could not persuade himself that God would always love him, without at the same time assuring himself that he should always love God; nor that he should always love God, without persuading himself that God would always love him; so that it is indifferent which sense we take, for in either sense the apostle means by the love of God in Christ Jesus, his communion with God in Jesus Christ. What does he say of this communion? He says, he is "persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate it." This enumeration includes all, and leaves no room for addition. In effect, what are the most formidable enemies that conspire against our souls?

Are they the sophisms with which Satan gives a gloss to error? There is an art of enveloping the truth; there is a superficial glare that may render false religions probable, and may dazzle the eyes of inquirers. St. Paul defies not only the most accomplished teachers, and the most refined sophists: but the very devils also, *neither angels*, says he, that is, fallen angels.

Are they the dissipations of life, which by filling all the capacity of the soul, often deprive it of the liberty of working out his salvation? or are they the approaches of death, the gloom of which intercepts the light and obscures the rays of the Sun of righteousness? St. Paul is superior to both, "neither death, nor life," says he.

Are they worldly pomps and grandeurs? A certain love of elevation, inseparable from our minds, prejudices us in favour of whatever presents itself to us under the idea of grandeur. St. Paul dares all the pomps, and all the potentates in the world, "neither principalities, nor powers, nor height," adds he.

Are the impressions that present objects always make on us enemies to us? The idea of a present benefit weighs much with us. The sacrifice of the present to the future is the most difficult of all the efforts of our hearts. St. Paul knows the art of rendering present objects future, and of annihilating the present, if I may venture to say so, by placing it in future prospect; "neither things present, nor things to come."

Are they the most cruel torments? How difficult is it to resist pain! In violent sensations of pain the soul itself retires into concealment, and surrounded with excruciating

maladies can scarcely support itself by reflection. St. Paul can resist all torment, "distress and persecution, famine and nakedness, peril and sword."

Is contempt an enemy? Many who have withstood all other trials, have sunk under that unjust scandal which often covers the children of God in this world. St. Paul entertained rectified ideas of glory, and found grandeur in the deepest abasement, when religion reduced him to it. "Neither," says he, "shall death be able to separate." "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth;" and lest the imperfection of his enumeration should excite any suspicion concerning his perseverance, he adds, "nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

In vain it will be objected, that this assurance was grounded on some extraordinary revelation, and on some privileges peculiar to the apostles; for it is clear by the preceding verses, that the apostle grounds his assurance of salvation on promises made to all the church. On this account some duties are enjoined on all Christians, which suppose that all Christians may arrive at this assurance; these duties are thanksgiving, joy, and hope. Nothing then, can invalidate our arguments drawn from the examples of holy men. Thus the question of assurance is not a question of right, subject to objections and difficulties; it is a question of fact, explained by an event, and decided by experience.

2. Let us attend to the nature of *regeneration*. A regenerate man is not one who lightly determines his choice of a religion; he is not a child tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, Eph. iv. 14; but he is a man who has studied Christianity, weighed its arguments, seen its evidences, and felt all their force, so that he is persuaded by demonstration, that there is a God, a providence, another life, a judgment, a heaven, a hell, and so on.

A regenerate man is one, who, by continual meditations and pious actions, has surmounted his natural propensities to sin. He is a man, whose constitution, so to speak, is new cast and refined, so that instead of being inwardly carried away to sin by his own violent passions, he is inwardly moved to the practice of piety and virtue.

A regenerate man is one, who in pious exercises, has experienced that satisfaction which a rational mind tastes, when inward consciousness attests a harmony between destiny and duty. He is a man, who has felt "that peace which passeth all understanding; that joy unspeakable, and full of glory," Phil. iv. 7; 1 Pet. i. 8, which the presence of God produces in the soul. He is a man, whose life has abounded with those happy periods, in which the soul loses sight of the world, holds communion with its God, foretastes eternal felicity, finds itself, as St. Paul expresses it, "raised up from the dead, and made to sit in heavenly places with Christ Jesus," Eph. ii. 6.

A regenerate man is one who has meditated

on the attributes of God, his wisdom, his omnipresence, and his justice; and particularly on those depths of mercy which inclined him to redeem a fallen world, and to ransom it by a sacrifice, the bare idea of which confounds imagination, and absorbs all thought.

A regenerate man is one, whose own ideas of God have produced love to him, a love the more fervent because it is founded on his own perfections and excellencies, a "love strong as death, a love that many waters cannot quench, neither can the floods drown," Cant. viii. 6, 7.

This is a fair account of a regenerate man. Now, it is certain, such a man has a right to be persuaded that he shall triumph over all his temptations; he may say, "I am persuaded that no creature shall separate me from the love of God."

Let us consider things at the worst with this man. It may happen to him, that a complex sophism, or an ingenious objection, may for a moment becloud his faith, and excite some doubt in his mind; but as we suppose him enlightened, guarded, and grounded in the truth, it is impossible his persuasion of these great truths, truths so well understood and established, should ever be totally effaced from his mind.

Indeed, it may happen, that such a man through a revolt of his senses, or a revolution of his spirits, may fall into some excesses: but as his constitutional turn is reformed, his propensity to sin surmounted, and his habits of piety established, it is impossible he should not know that his senses and spirits will return to their usual calm.

It may happen, that such a man through the allurements of a present pleasure, through the enticement of a temptation, through the false attractives of the world, may for a few moments be imposed on, and betrayed away: but a remembrance of the pleasures of piety, a contrast between them and the pleasures of the world, will soon recover him to such religious exercises as before gave him real pleasures and pure joy.

Remark here, that by proposing this reasoning, we have granted our opponents all which they can reasonably require; we have placed things at the worst. But, including all our ideas, we affirm, the principles of regeneration are such, that he who possesses them, will not only arise from his falls, should he sometimes fall into sin under violent temptations; but he will avail himself of these very temptations to confirm his faith and obedience. The same objects produce different effects, according to the different dispositions of the persons to whom they are offered. What serves to confirm a wicked man in sin, serves to confirm a good man in virtue, and, if he has fallen, to reclaim him to God.

Propose to a regenerate man the most artful sophism of error, he will take occasion from it to attach himself more earnestly to the study of truth; he will increase his knowledge, and he will never find a more sincere attachment to religion than after discovering the nullity of the objections that are made against it. Surround him with worldly pomp, it will elevate his mind to that glory which God has reserved for his children in the other world.

Put him in a state of meanness and misery, it will detach him from the world, and enliven him in searching felicity in another life. Lay him on a death-bed, even there he will triumph over all. The veils that concealed the supreme good from him, will begin to fall in pieces, and he will become inflamed with the desire of possessing it. Suppose him even fallen into sin, an experience of his frailty will animate him to vigilance; he will hereafter doubly guard the weak passes of his soul; and thus he will gain by his losses, and triumph in his very defeats.

It is too little to say, "No creature shall separate him from the love of God;" all creatures shall serve to unite him more closely to his Lord. Thus St. Paul says, "All things work together for good to them that love God; in all things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us," Rom. viii. 28. 37. Observe these expressions, not only nothing can hurt a true believer: but "all things work together for his good;" not only, we are conquerors: but we are "more than conquerors through him that loved us." Nothing is hyperbolical here. Every thing actually contributes to the salvation of a believer. In this sense, "all are his, Paul, Cephas, and the world," 1 Cor. iii. 22. In this sense he "spoil eth principalities and powers," and, like his Saviour, "makes a show of them openly," Col. ii. 15. And this is a reason for a believer's continual joy, because, in whatever circumstances Providence may place him, all conduct him to the one great end. Were his chief aim health, sickness would deprive him of it; were it elevation, meanness would thwart him; were it riches, poverty would counteract his design: but as his chief aim is salvation, all things, sickness and health, majesty and meanness, poverty and riches, all contribute to his salvation. "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. All things work together for good to them that love God. We are more than conquerors through him that hath loved us."

The prerogatives of a Christian afford a third class of arguments for assurance of salvation. This appears by two propositions. A Christian may know, that he has a true faith. When a person is persuaded, that he has a true faith, he may assure himself of obtaining assistance to persevere, and consequently of arriving at salvation.

The first proposition is incontestable. True faith has proper characters. It consists in some ideas of the mind, in some dispositions of heart, and in some action of life, each of which may be described, if not with facility, yet with certainty, when the laws of self-examination are obeyed. The Scripture puts these words into the mouths of true believers: We know that we have passed from death unto life; we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him," 1 John iii. 14. 19. Agreeably to which St. Paul says, "Hold fast the confidence, and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end," Heb. iii. 6. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your

own selves; know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

Here lies the difficulty: I have faith to-day, how can I assure myself that I shall have it to-morrow? I am sure to-day I am in a state of grace, how can I be sure I shall be so to-morrow? Our second proposition is intended to remove this difficulty. When we are sure faith is true and genuine, we may be sure of assistance to persevere. We ground this on the privileges of true faith. One of these is the pardon of all the sins that we have committed in the whole course of our lives, provided we repent. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins," 1 John ii. 1. A second privilege is the acceptance of sincerity instead of perfection. "A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench," Matt. xii. 20. Another privilege is supernatural grace to support us under trials: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally," James i. 5. One privilege is the connexion of all benefits with the one great gift, "God who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Rom. viii. 32. Another privilege is the gift of perseverance, "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my people," Jer. xxxi. 33. "I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them," Ezek. xxxvi. 27. Another privilege is an interest in the intercession of Jesus Christ, which God never rejects. "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not," Luke xxii. 31, 32. "Holy Father! keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. Neither pray I for these alone; but for them also, which shall believe on me through their word," John xvii. 11, 20. "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you for ever," chap. xiv. 16. These privileges, in a word, consist in being "loved of God unto the end," chap. xiii. 1; having been loved from the beginning, and in receiving from God "gifts and calling without repentance," Rom. xi. 29.

Do not attempt, then, to overwhelm me with a sense of my own frailty and sin. Do not allege my natural levity and inconstancy. Do not oppose against me the rapid moments, in which my passions sport with my real happiness, and change me in an instant from hatred to love, and from love to hatred again. Do not produce, in the sad history of my life, the mortifying list of so many resolutions forgotten, so many unreal plans, so many abortive designs. The edifice of my salvation is proof against all vicissitudes; it is in the hand of him who changes not, who is "the same yesterday, to-day and for ever," Heb. xiii. 8. To him I commit the preservation of it; because I am a Christian, and because it is the privilege of a Christian to say, according to the beautiful expression of St. Paul, "I know whom I have

believed, and I am persuaded, that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day," 2 Tim. i. 12.

Finally, the inward testimony of the Spirit of God puts the doctrine of assurance out of all doubt. We propose this argument with trembling, so excessively has human fancy abused it! Enthusiasm defiles the church of God.—The world, always fantastic, and full of visionary schemes, seems now-a-days to be superannuated. We almost every where meet with, what shall I call them? weak heads, or wicked hearts, who, being destitute of solid reasons to establish their reveries, impute them to the Spirit of God, and so charge eternal truth with fabulous tales, that make reason blush, and which are unworthy of the meanness of mankind.

It is true, however, that the believer has in his heart a testimony of the Spirit of God, which assures him of his salvation; and the abuse of this doctrine ought not to prevent a sober use of it. This testimony is a kind of demonstration superior to all those of the schools. It is an argument unknown to philosophers, and Supreme Wisdom is the author of it. It is a lively apprehension of our salvation excited in our hearts by God himself. It is a powerful application of our mind to every thing that can prove us in a state of grace. It is an effect of that supreme power, which sound reason attributes to God over the sensations of our souls, and according to which he can excite, as he pleases, joy or sorrow. It is a Christian right founded on Scripture promises. "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us," Rom. v. 5. "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear: but ye have received the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father." The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God, chap. viii. 15, 16. "He which establisheth us with you in Christ, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts," 2 Cor. i. 21, 22. "Hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the spirit which he hath given us," 1 John iii. 24. "To him that overcometh, will I give a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it," Rev. ii. 7. We see the glorious effects of these promises in some believers, who, although they live in meanness and indigence, enjoy such pleasures as all the riches and grandeur of the world cannot give. We see the effects of them in some dying persons, who, at the sight of death, experience consolations, which change their beds of sickness into fields of victory and triumph. We see them again in many martyrs, who are happier on racks and burning piles than tyrants on their thrones, environed with all the possible pomp of a court.

Such are the arguments which establish the doctrine of assurance. But shall I tell you, my brethren, a thought that has run in my mind all the time of this exercise? In our general preaching, we fear our arguments may seem inconclusive, and may but half convince our auditors. In this discourse we have been afraid they would appear too convincing, and carry the subject beyond our intention. Each hearer will perhaps indiscreetly arrogate to

himself the particular privileges of believers. Having, therefore, preached the doctrine, it is necessary to guard you against the abuse of it by a few precautions. Having proved that there is a well-grounded assurance, it is necessary to attack security, and to show, that the consolations which result from our doctrine, belong to the real Christian only, and are privileges to which unregenerate persons, yea, even they whose regeneration is uncertain, ought not to pretend. We will not produce new objects, we will consider the articles that have been already considered, in a new point of light: for what serves to establish true confidence serves at the same time to destroy carnal security. We have been convinced, that a believer may assure himself of his salvation by four arguments, by the experiences of holy men, by the nature of regeneration, by the prerogatives of a Christian, and by the testimony of the holy Spirit. These four arguments support what we just now affirmed; that assurance is a privilege, to which unregenerate men, and suspected Christians, have no right, and thus the sophisms of sin demonstrate the necessity of vigilance.

II. The first argument that establishes the assurance of a believer, the first argument which we employ against the carnal security of a sinner, is the experience of the saints. Of all sophistical ways of reasoning, is there one that can compare with this? Job, a model of patience, who adored God under all his afflictions, was persuaded of his salvation; therefore I, who rage under trials, who would, if it were possible, deprive God of the empire of the world, which he seems to me to govern partially and unjustly, I may persuade myself of my salvation. David, "a man after God's own heart," 1 Sam. xiii. 14, David, whose whole "delight was in the law of the Lord," Ps. i. 2, was persuaded of his salvation; therefore I, whose every devotional exercise savours of nothing but languor and lukewarmness, I, who can hardly drag myself to hear the word of God, I may persuade myself of my salvation. St. Paul, that wise proselyte, that zealous minister, that bleeding martyr, was persuaded of his salvation; therefore I, who profess the religion in which I was educated, without knowing why . . . . it is hardly worth while to refute these unnatural and inconclusive consequences.

Farther, these eminent saints not only avoided grounding their assurance of salvation on your principles; but they were persuaded, if they lived as you live, they should be consigned to destruction. What said Job on this article? "Let me be weighed in an even balance. If I despise the cause of my man-servant or of my maid-servant, if I have withheld the poor from their desire, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail; if I have made gold my hope, or have said to the fine gold, thou art my confidence; what then shall I do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him?" chap. xxxi. 6. 13. 16. 24. 14. That is to say, if he had practised any of the vices, or neglected any of the virtues, which he enumerated, God would have rejected him. This now is your case; you are haughty towards your inferiors; if not cruel, yet strait-handed to

the poor; gold is your god; and, consequently, if your ideas of assurance be regulated by those of Job, you ought not to persuade yourself of your salvation. What says St. Paul? "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself may be a cast away," 1 Cor. ix. 27. That is to say, St. Paul was persuaded, if he relaxed his piety, if he were not to account all he had done nothing, if he were not to attend to what remained to be done, God would reject him. This is your case; you live a life of security and indolence, and making all your vocation consist in barely avoiding notorious crimes, you do not even see the necessity of making a progress in holiness; consequently, if you regulate your ideas of assurance of salvation on these of St. Paul, you ought not to pretend to be sure of being saved.

Moreover, when these eminent saints fell by sudden surprise into those sins in which nominal Christians coolly and deliberately persist, they did not imagine, that a recollection of former virtue, or even of that faith and piety, the seeds of which none of their falls eradicated, was a sufficient ground of solid peace and joy. They complained they had lost the "joy of salvation," Ps. li. 14; and under such complaints they continued till they were restored to communion with God, and till, by reciprocal acts of love, they were convinced that sin was pardoned. But if these saints, in some single improper actions, reasoned thus; what ought to be the dispositions of those who consume their whole lives in vicious habits?

Let us add one word more. What mean these words of my text, of which false Christians make such a criminal abuse? "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, shall separate." Does this text mean to affirm, if a man begin to surmount temptation, he shall be infallibly saved, although he cease to resist, and temptations prevail over him in the end? The words mean the direct contrary. St. Paul promises himself, that he shall always believe, not that he shall be saved if he fall into infidelity, but that he shall always resist sin, as far as human frailty will allow; not that he shall be saved if sin triumph over him. "I am persuaded, death shall not separate me from the love of God;" that is to say, the love of God has struck such deep root in my soul, that death cannot eradicate my love to him. "I am persuaded, life shall not separate me from the love of God;" that is, the love of God has struck such deep root in my soul, that all the charms of life can never prevent my loving him. "I am persuaded angels shall not separate me from the love of God;" that is to say, the love of God has struck such deep root in my soul, that I defy all the power and policy of wicked angels to prevent my loving him. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" that is to say, the love of God has made impressions on our souls so deep, that should he cause us to suffer the most cruel persecutions, should he command us to die with hunger, should we be slaughtered for his sake, we would not cease to love him. These are



the sentiments of St. Paul in the text, and in the preceding verses. But you, whom death or life, angels, principalities, or powers, separate every day from loving God, what right have you to say, "We are persuaded, that neither death, nor life, shall separate us from the love of God?"

I freely own, my brethren, I have not patience to hear nominal Christians, unregenerate persons, appropriate to themselves the words and sentiments of eminent saints. If this abuse be deplorable through life, is it not most of all so at the hour of death? We often hear people, whose whole lives had been spent in sin, speak the very language of others, whose whole days had been devoted to virtue. One says, with St. Paul, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness," 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8. But who are you talking thus? Do you know who uttered these words? Do you know who St. Paul was? He was a man filled with divine love; a man burning with love to the church; a man inviolably attached to all the rights of God and men. But you who sell justice for a bribe; you who stain the character of every neighbour; you who exercise a faithless ministry; do you adopt the style of this apostle? Instead of saying, "I have fought the good fight;" you ought to say, I have fought a bad fight: instead of saying, "I have kept the faith;" you ought to say, I have betrayed the faith: instead of saying, "I have finished my course," you ought to say, I have not yet begun to set a step in it: instead of saying, "A crown of righteousness is laid up for me," you ought to say, There are laid up for me chains of darkness, I am on the brink of hell, and I am looking, my God, whether there be any possible way of escaping it. But to say, with St. Paul, "I am persuaded," a man must be, if not in degree, at least in sincerity and truth, a saint as St. Paul was.

A second argument which establishes the doctrine of assurance, and destroys a system of carnal security, is the nature of regeneration. Recollect the reasons assigned before to show, that a confirmed Christian might persuade himself he should triumph over all his trials; these reasons all prove, that unregenerate men, and suspected Christians, have just grounds of fear. An unregenerate man has only a few transient acts of virtue, and he has paid very little attention to the mortification of his natural propensities to sin; consequently he ought to fear, that habits of vice, and inward propensities to sin, will carry his superficial virtue away. An unregenerate man has very little apprehension of the joy of salvation; consequently he ought to dread the influence of sensual pleasures. An unregenerate man has but a few seeming sparks of divine love, and if he thinks them real, he ought to fear the extinction of them. A light so faint, a spark so small, are not likely amidst so many obstacles to continue long.

This fear is the more reasonable, because the church abounds with nominal Christians, who, after a shining profession of piety and sanctity, have forsaken truth and virtue. We have seen righteous men turn away from their

righteousness, as the prophet Ezekiel expresses it, chap. xviii. 24. We have seen temporary professors, who, after they have received the word with joy, have been offended when persecution arose, as Jesus Christ speaks, Matt. xii. 20, 21. We have seen such as Hymeneus and Philetus, who have made "shipwreck of faith and a good conscience," as St. Paul words it, 2 Tim. ii. 17. We have seen some like Demas, after they had adhered awhile to the truth, forsake it, having loved this present world, as the same apostle speaks, chap. iv. 10. We have seen people, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, again entangled therein, and overcome, as St. Peter says, 2 Epist. ii. 20. We have seen Christians, in appearance, of the highest order, who, after they had been once enlightened, and had tasted of the heavenly gift, and had tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, fall away, Heb. vi. 4. We have seen Judases, who after they had been in the sacred college of Jesus Christ, shamefully betray him. While our knowledge is so small, and our virtue so feeble, we have great reason to apply these examples, and to tremble for ourselves.

The third argument by which we establish the doctrine of assurance, and which also militates against carnal security, is Christian prerogative. Two propositions are contained in it. First, We may be persuaded that we have true faith. Next, We may be sure true faith will be assisted to persevere. These propositions, which assure the believer, ought to alarm a nominal Christian.

Here let us develope an ambiguity too common in our churches. For as we affirm, on the one side, that a believer has characters proper to himself; and by which he may determine his state; and as, on the other side, we assert, that they who have these characters, can never cease to be true believers; a nominal Christian may imagine the following sophism: I fast, I pray, I give alms; these are the virtues of a believer; I may then persuade myself, that I am a believer. Now, it seems, he who once becomes a true believer, can never cease to believe; consequently, I who have fasted, prayed, and given alms, can never cease to be a believer.

What is still more astonishing, this ridiculous reasoning is often applied to others as well as to ourselves. A loose casuist asks his penitent, Do you repent of your sins? The penitent answers, I do repent. Have you recourse to the divine clemency? The penitent replies, I have recourse to it. Do you embrace the satisfaction of Christ? The penitent says, I do embrace it. On this slight foundation our casuist builds his system. Publications of grace are lavished, sources of mercy pour forth in abundance, and the penitent may, if he please, take his seat in heaven. My God! in what a manner they enter into the spirit of thy gospel!

But first, when we affirm, that only the true believer can perform acts of faith, and that the least good work supposes regeneration: we do not affirm, that there are not many actions common to both real and nominal Christians.

A nominal Christian may pray; a nominal Christian may fast; a nominal Christian may give alms. It may even happen that men may embrace religion on base principles. Religion commands a subject to obey his king; a king may embrace religion on this account, and he may place his supreme happiness in the obedience of his subjects. Religion discovers to us a merciful God; a wicked man may embrace religion on this account, for the sake of calming those fears which his vicious practices excite, by ideas of divine mercy. The same may be said of other men. A man cannot conclude then, that he is a believer from his performance of virtuous actions, common to believers and unbelievers. He must have peculiar light into the deep depravity of his own heart; he must be placed, at least in design, in circumstances that distinguish a good from a bad man.

Again when we say a believer can never cease to believe, we do not mean to say, a Christian attached to religion only by external performances, and by appearances of piety, can never cast off his profession. The finest appearances of piety, the greatest knowledge, the most liberal alms-deeds, the most profound humiliations, may be succeeded by foul and fatal practices.

Moreover, great knowledge, generous charity, profound humiliation, will aggravate the condemnation of those who cease to proceed in virtue, and to purify their motives of action; because the performance of these virtues, and the acquisition of this great knowledge, suppose greater aid, and more resistance. Hear St. Peter: "It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it to turn from the holy commandment." 2 Epist. ii. 21. The case of those who commit the unpardonable sin, attests the same. Hear these thundering words: "If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries," Heb. x. 26.

Finally, The argument from the testimony of the Spirit of God for the assurance of a true believer, ought to trouble the security of a nominal Christian. In effect, how does the Holy Spirit work in our hearts? Does he operate by magic? Does he present phantoms to our view? Does he inculcate propositions contrary to truth? This is all enthusiasm.—The Holy Spirit bears witness in us in a manner conformable to our state and to the nature of things in general. If then the Spirit of God testify in your hearts while you are unregenerate, he will testify that you are unregenerate. If he bear witness while you are nominal Christians, he will bear witness that you are nominal Christians. If he bear witness while your faith is doubtful, he will bear witness to the doubtfulness of your faith. Such a testimony may be ascribed to the Spirit of God. But an assurance of salvation, which exceeds your evidences of Christianity, must be a vision, a fancy, a dream; and to suppose the Holy Spirit the author of such an assurance, is to suppose in the same Spirit testimony against testimony; it is to make the Spirit of

God "divided against himself," Matt. xii. 26, and so a destroyer of his own kingdom; it is to make his testimony in the heart contradict his testimony in Scripture. In Scripture he declares, "No man can serve two masters," chap. vi. 24; in your hearts he declares, A man may serve two masters. In Scripture he attests, There "is no concord between Christ and Belial," 2 Cor. vi. 15; in your hearts he attests, There is concord between Christ and Belial. In Scripture he affirms, "Neither fornicators, nor covetous, nor revilers, shall inherit the kingdom of God," 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10; in your hearts he affirms, Such shall inherit the kingdom of God. Thus the four arguments, that prove the doctrine of assurance in favour of true believers, destroy the security of a mere nominal Christian.

The consolations which arise from the doctrine of assurance, are not then for all Christians indifferently: They are only for those who continually study obedience; they are for those only who have seen into a "heart deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," Jer. xvii. 9, and have found even there marks of regeneration; they are for those only, who, by a life entirely devoted to the service of God, have demonstrated that they bear the characters of his children.

Is this your condition? The sophisms of sin that we have endeavoured to refute, these portraits of rash confidence, these false titles of virtue and regeneration, these images that we have traced, whence have we taken them? Have we gathered them from books? have we invented them in our closets? have we derived them from the study of theology? have we drawn them from monuments of ancient history? No, no, we have learnt them in the world, in the church, in your families, in your sick beds, where nothing is so common as this false peace, nothing so rare as the true.

Whence the evil comes, I know not: but the fact is certain. Of all the churches in the world, there are none which abuse the doctrine of Christian assurance, and which draw consequences from it directly contrary to those which ought to be drawn, like some of ours. We lull ourselves into a fanciful confidence: we place on imaginary systems an assurance which ought to be founded only on *the rock of ages*; we scruple, even while we are engaged in the most criminal habits, to say, we doubt of our salvation; and, as if a persuasion of being saved, dispensed with the necessity of working out our salvation, we consider an assurance of arriving at heavenly felicity as a privilege, that supplies the want of every virtue.

Certainly nothing is more great and happy than the disposition of a man who courageously expects to enjoy a glory to which he has a just title. A man who knows the misery of sin; a man who groans under the weight of his own depravity, and enters into the sentiment, while he utters the language of the apostle, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Rom. vii. 24; a man, who, after he had experienced the terrible agitations of a conscience distressed on account of sin, has been freed from all his sins at the foot of the cross, has put on the yoke of Christ his Lord; a man, who having

seen in himself the true characters of a Christian, and the never failing graces annexed to evangelical mercy, has learned at length to pierce through all the clouds which Satan uses to conceal heaven from the Christian eye, to lay all the ghosts, that the enemy of souls raises to haunt mankind into terror; a man who rests on that "word of God, which standeth for ever, even when heaven and earth pass away," may say with St. Paul, "I am persuaded;" such a man may assure himself that only glorified spirits enjoy a happiness superior to his; he is arrived at the highest degree of felicity, to which in this valley of tears men can come.

But to consider religion always on the comfortable side; to congratulate one's self for having obtained the end before we have made use of the means; to stretch the hands to receive the crown of righteousness, before they have been employed to fight the battle; to be content with a false peace, and to use no efforts to obtain the graces, to which true consolation is annexed; this is a dreadful calm, like that which some voyagers describe, and which is a very singular forerunner of a very terrible event. All on a sudden, in the wide ocean, the sea becomes calm, the surface of the water clear as crystal, smooth as glass, the air serene; the unskilled passenger becomes tranquil and happy; but the old mariner trembles. In an instant the waves froth, the winds murmur, the heavens kindle, a thousand gulfs open, a frightful light inflames the air, and every wave threatens sudden death. This is an image of most men's assurance of salvation.

So then, instead of applying the words of our text to a great number of you, we are obliged to shed tears of compassion over you. Yes, we must lament your misery. You live under an economy in which the most transporting joys are set before you, and you wilfully deprive yourselves of them. Yes, we must adopt the language of a prophet, "O that my people had hearkened unto me!" We must say with Jesus Christ, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!" Ps. lxxx. 13; Luke xix. 42.

What can be happier, amidst the numberless vanities and vexations which accompany worldly pleasures, than to be able to derive from an assurance of our salvation pleasures suitable to intelligent creatures, immortal souls? What can be happier, amidst all the pains, labours, and miseries, with which life abounds, than to enjoy the plentiful consolations, that issue from a well-grounded hope of eternal felicity? Above all, what can be more capable of supporting us against the fear of death? Mortal and dying as we are, in a state, where the smallest alteration in the body reminds us of death, what can we wish for more conformable to our wants than to find, in a firm hope of eternal felicity, a shield to secure us against the enemy, and a sword to destroy him? let us strive, let us pray, let us venture all, my brethren, to arrive at this happy state. And if, after we have believingly and sincerely laboured in this good work, there remain any doubt and suspicion, let us assure ourselves, that even our suspicions and fears shall contribute to our

confirmation. They will not be accounted crimes, they will at most be only frailties; they will be infirmities productive of motives to go on in virtue, and to establish peace in the conscience. So be it. To God be honour and glory. Amen.

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## SERMON XXXVIII.

### JUDGMENT.

HEBREWS ix. 27.

*It is appointed unto men once to die: but after this the judgment.*

THE second proposition in my text conveys terror into the first. Judgment to come makes death terrible. I own, it is natural to love life. The Creator, it should seem, has supplied the want of satisfactory pleasures in the world, by giving us, I know not what, attachment to it. But when reason rises out of nature, when the good and evil of life are weighed, evil seems to outweigh good, and we can hardly help exclaiming with the wise man, "The day of death is better than the day of one's birth! I hate life because of the work that is wrought under the sun!" Eccles. vii. 1, and ii. 17.

But to go from a bed of infirmity to a tribunal of justice; to look through the languors of a mortal malady to torments that have no end; and, after we have heard this sentence, "Return to destruction, ye children of men," Ps. xc. 3, to hear this other, "Give an account of thy stewardship," Luke xvi. 2, these are just causes for intelligent beings to fear death.

Let us, however, acknowledge, although this fear is just, yet it may be excessive; and, though it be madness to resist the thought, yet it would be weakness to be overwhelmed with it. I would prove this to-day, while in this point of light I endeavour to exhibit to your view the judgment that follows death.

We will not divert your attention from the chief design. We will only hint, that the proposition in the text is incidental, and not immediately connected with the principal subject, which the apostle was discussing. His design was to show the pre-eminence of the sacrifice of the cross over all those of the Levitical economy. One article, which argues the superiority of the first, is, that it was offered but once, whereas the Jewish sacrifices were reiterated. Christ does "not offer himself often, as the high-priest entereth into the holy place every year with the blood of the other sacrifices: but once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." For, "as it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many."

Nor will we detain you longer by inquiring whether St. Paul speaks here of the particular judgment that each man undergoes immediately after death, or of that general judgment day, of which Scripture says, "God hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness," Acts xvii. 31. Whatever difference there may seem to be between these two hypotheses, it is easy to harmonize them. The general judgment will be a confirmation

and a consummation of each particular judgment, and we ought to consider both as different parts of one whole.

Once more, I repeat it, we will not divert your attention from the principal design of this discourse. I am going first, not to allege arguments in proof of a judgment to come, I suppose them known to you, and that I am not preaching to novices: but I am going to assist you to carry them farther than you usually do, and so to guard you against skepticism and infidelity, the pest of our days, and the infamy of our age. In a second article, we will inquire, what will be the destiny of this assembly in that great day, in which God will declare the doom of all mankind. We discuss this question, not to indulge a vain curiosity: but to derive practical inferences, and particularly to moderate the excessive fear, that an object so very terrible produces in some minds, and at the same time to trouble the extravagant security in which some sleep, in spite of sounds so proper to awake them.

I. We have three directions to give you. The first regards the arguments for judgment taken from the disorders of society. The second regards that which is taken from conscience. The third that which is taken from revelation.

1. Our first direction regards the argument taken from the *disorders of society*. Do not confine your attention to those disorders which strike the senses, astonish reason, and subvert faith itself. Reflect on other irregularities, which, although they are less shocking to sense, and seemingly of much less consequence, are yet no less deserving the attention of the Judge of the whole earth, and require, no less than the first, a future judgment.

I grant, those notorious disorders, which human laws cannot repress, afford proof of a future judgment. A tyrant executes on a gibbet a poor unhappy man, whom the pain of hunger, and the frightful apprehension of sudden death, forced to break open a house. Here, if you will, disorder is punished, and society is satisfied. But who shall satisfy the just vengeance of society on this mad tyrant? This very tyrant, at the head of a hundred thousand thieves, ravages the whole world; he pillages on the right and on the left; he violates the most sacred rights, the most solemn treaties; he knows neither religion nor good faith. Go, see, follow his steps, countries desolated, plains covered with the bodies of the dead, palaces reduced to ashes, and people run mad with despair. Inquire for the author of all these miseries. Will you find him, think you, confined in a dark dungeon, or expiring on a wheel? Lo! he sits on a throne, in a superb royal palace; nature and art contribute to his pleasures; a circle of courtiers minister to his passions, and erect altars to him, whose equals in iniquity, yea, if I may be allowed to say so, whose inferiors in vice, have justly suffered the most infamous punishments. And where is divine justice all this time? what is it doing? I answer with my text, "After death comes judgment. So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty," James i. 12.

But, though the argument taken from the disorders of society is full and clear, when it

is properly proposed, yet such examples as we have just mentioned do not exhaust it. It may be extended a great deal farther, and we may add thousands of disorders, which every day are seen in society, against which men can make no laws, and which cannot be redressed until the great day of judgment, when God will give clear evidence of all.

Have human laws ever been made against hypocrites? see that man artfully covering himself with the veil of religion, that hypocrite, who excels in his art! behold his eyes, what seraphical looks they roll towards heaven! observe his features, made up, if I may venture to say so, of those of Moses, Ezra, Daniel, and Nehemiah! see his vivacity, or his flaming zeal shall I call it? to maintain the doctrines of religion, to forge thunderbolts, and to pour out anathemas against heretics! Not one grain of religion, not the least shadow of piety, in all his whole conversation. It is a party spirit, or a sordid interest, or a barbarous disposition to revenge, which animates him, and produces all his pretended piety. And yet I hear every body exclaim, He is a miracle of religion! he is a pillar of the church! I see altars every where erecting to this man; panegyrist, I see, are composing his encomium; flowers are gathering to be strewed over his tomb. And the justice of God, what is it doing? My text tells you, "After death comes judgment."

Have human laws ever been made against the ungrateful? While I was in prosperity, I studied to procure happiness to a man, who seemed entirely devoted to me; I was happier in imparting my abundance to him than in enjoying it myself; during that delightful period of my life he was faithful to me: but when fortune abandoned me, and adopted him, he turned his back on me; now he suffers me to languish in poverty; and, far from relieving my wants, he does not deign so much as to examine them. And divine justice, where is it? who shall punish this black crime? I answer again, "After death comes judgment."

Have men made laws against cowards? I do not mean cowardice in war; the infamy that follows this crime, is a just punishment of it. I speak of that mean cowardice of soul, which makes a man forsake an oppressed innocent sufferer, and keep a criminal silence in regard to the oppressor. Pursue this train of thought, and you will every where find arguments for a future judgment; because there will every where appear disorders, which establish the necessity of it.

Our second direction regards the argument taken from *conscience*. Let not your faith be shaken by the examples of those pretended superior geniuses; who boast of having freed themselves from this restraint. Tell them, if they have no conscience, they ought to have; and affirm, the truer their pretensions, the stronger your reason for taxing them with rage and extravagance. There is no better mode of destroying an objection than by proving, that he who proposes and admits it is a fool for admitting and proposing it. If, then, I prove that a man, who, to demonstrate that conscience is a fancy, declares, he is entirely exempt from it; if I prove, that such a man is a fool for proposing and admitting this proposi-

tion, shall I not subvert his whole system? Now I think I am able to prove such a man a fool, and you will admit the truth of what I say, if you will give a little attention to the nature of conscience, a little closer attention, I mean, than is usually given to sermons.

What is conscience? It is difficult to include an adequate idea of it in a definition. This appears to me at once the most general and the most exact: conscience is that faculty of our minds, by which we are able to distinguish right from wrong, and to know whether we neglect our duties, or discharge them.

There are, I grant, some operations of conscience, which seem to be rather instinct and sentiment than cool judgment arising from a train of reflections. Yet, we believe, all the operations of conscience proceed from judgment and reflection. But it sometimes happens, that the judgment of the mind is so ready, and its reflections so rapid, that it hardly sees what it judges, and reflects on, so that it seems to act by instinct and sentiment only. Thus when the mind compares two simple numbers together, the comparison is so easily made, that we think we know the difference by a kind of instinct belonging to our nature; whereas when we compare complex numbers, we feel, so to speak, that our minds inquire, examine, and labour. In like manner in morality. There are some duties, the right of which is so clear and palpable; and there are some conditions, in which we, ourselves, are in regard to these duties which are so easy to be known, that the mind instantly perceives them without examination and discussion. But there are some duties, the right of which is so enveloped in obscurity; and there are some stations, which are so very doubtful, that the mind requires great efforts of meditation before it can determine itself. For example, *Ought a subject to obey his lawful sovereign?* On this question, the mind instantly takes the affirmative side, on account of the clearness of the duty, and it seems to act by instinct, and without reflection. But here is another question, *Is it lawful for subjects to dethrone a tyrant?* Here the mind pauses, and before it determines enters into long discussions, and here we perceive, it acts by judgment and reflection. In both cases reflection and judgment are the ground of its operations. In the first case judgment is more rapid, reflection less slow: but it is reflection however. We have, then, rightly defined conscience, that faculty of our souls, by which we are capable of distinguishing right from wrong, and of knowing whether we neglect our duties, or discharge them.

But this is too vague, we must go farther. We must examine the principles on which we ground our judgment of ourselves in regard to right and wrong. We must prove, by the nature of these principles, the truth of what we have affirmed; that is, that a man, who calls conscience a fancy, and who boasts of an entire freedom from it, is a fool for admitting and proposing this objection.

The judgment that constitutes the nature of conscience, is founded on three principles, either fully demonstrable or barely probable.

First, I am in a state of dependance.

Second, There is a supreme law; or what is

the same thing, there is something right, and something wrong.

Third, I am either innocent or guilty.

On these three principles an intelligent spirit grounds a judgment, whether it deserves to be happy or miserable; it rejoices, if it deserves to be happy; it mourns, if it deserves to be miserable; and this judgment, and this joy, or sorrow, which results from it, constitutes what we call conscience.

But that which deserves particular regard, and in which partly consists the force of our reasoning, is, that it is not necessary to be able to demonstrate these principles, in order to prove, that conscience is not a fancy; if they be probable, it is sufficient. We cannot reasonably free ourselves from conscience, till we have demonstrated the falsehood of these principles, and proved that the consequences drawn from them are chimerical. For, if these principles be only probable; if it be probable I may be happy, I have some reason to rejoice; as I have some reason for uneasiness if my misery be probable. If the enjoyment of a great benefit be probable, I have some reason for great pleasure; and I have some reason for extreme distress, if it be probable, that I shall fall into extreme misery. It is not necessary, therefore, in order to establish the empire of conscience, that the principles on which it is founded should be demonstrable; it is sufficient that they are probable. Now I affirm, that every man who maintains the improbability of these principles, and the vanity of the consequences that are drawn from them, is a fool and a madman, whose obstinate attachment to vice has blinded his eyes, and turned his brain. Consequently I affirm, that every man who maintains that conscience is a fancy, and who boasts of having shaken off the restraint of it, is a fool and a madman.

Take the first principle. *I am, in a state of dependance.* I am subject to a Supreme Being, to whom I owe my existence, and who holds my destiny in his mighty hands. Do we exceed the truth when we say, a man who ventures to affirm this principle is neither demonstrable nor probable, is a madman and a fool? I told you at the beginning of this discourse, that I intended to speak to you, not as scholars and novices: but as well-informed Christians, who have made some considerable progress in the knowledge of those truths which equally support natural and revealed religion. But if you have any just notion of these truths, how can you form any other opinion of these men, of whom I am speaking, than that which I have formed? A man who pretends that arguments drawn from the order of the seasons, from the arrangements of the various parts of the universe, from the harmony of the members of our bodies, and all the other works of nature, by which we have so often established the doctrine of the being and attributes of God; a man who affirms, that all these demonstrate nothing; what am I saying? a man who affirms that all these prove nothing; what am I saying again? a man who affirms that all these do not afford the least degree of probability in favour of the existence and perfections of a Supreme Being; who for his part is sure, for he has evidence to a demonstration that all

these originated in chance, and were not formed by the intervention of any intelligent cause; such a man, what is he but a madman and a fool? and consequently, is it not madness and folly to deny this first principle, *I am in a state of dependance?*

Try the second principle, *There is a supreme law*, or, what comes to the same, there is something just, and something unjust. Whether this just and right be founded in the nature of things, or whether it proceeds from the will of a superior Being, is not needful to examine now; be it as it may, there is a supreme law, there is something right and something wrong. A man who pretends that this proposition is evidently false; a man who affirms, that all arguments brought in favour of this proposition are evidently false; a man who forms such an idea of all arguments drawn from the nature of intelligent beings, from the perfections of a first cause, from the laws that he has given, and which constitute the body of religion; a man who pretends, that all these arguments do not afford the least degree of probability, that a wise man ought to infer nothing from them to direct his life: and that for his part, it is clear to a demonstration to him, that what is called just and unjust, right and wrong, is indifferent in itself, and indifferent to the first cause: that it is perfectly indifferent in itself whether we love a benefactor, or betray him, whether we be faithful to a friend or perfidious, whether we be tender parents or cruel, whether we nourish our children or smother them in the cradle; and that all these things at the most, relate only to a present interest; a man who advances such propositions, what is he but a fool and a madman? Is it necessary to reason to discover the extravagance and madness of these positions? Is it not sufficient to name them?

Take the third principle . . . . But, it is enough to have pointed out the most proper method of answering the objections of a man who pretends conscience is a fancy, and who boasts of having none.

Let us pass then to our third direction. It concerns the proof taken from revelation. Do not rest the arguments drawn from this source on any particular passages, which, although they may be very full and explicit, may yet be subject to some sophistical exception: but rest them on the general design and scope of religion; this method is above all objections, and free from every difficulty. If this way be adopted, it will presently appear, that the doctrine of a future judgment is contained in a manner clear and convincing, not only in the writings of the apostles and evangelists, but also in the revelations, with which God honoured the patriarchs, many ages before he gave a written law.

Yea, were we to allow that we have no formal passage to produce, in which this truth was taught the ancient servants of God (which we are very far from allowing,) we might still maintain, that it was included in the genius of those revelations, which were addressed to them. Jesus Christ taught us to reason thus on the doctrine of future rewards, and we may fairly apply the same method to the doctrine of future punishments. The doctrine of future

rewards is not contained in the formal terms, but in the general design of this promise, "I am the God of Abraham," Matt. xxii. 32. However splendid the condition of Abraham might have been, however abundant his riches, however numerous his servants, this promise proceeding from the mouth of God, "I am the God of Abraham," could not have accomplished in the temporal prosperity of a man who was dead, when the words were spoken, and whom death should retain in durance. As God declared himself "the God of Abraham," and as Abraham was dead, when he declared it, Abraham must necessarily rise again. And this is our Saviour's reasoning. "God is not the God of the dead: but of the living."

Let us say the same of those punishments, which God has denounced against sin, in regard to those ancient sinners, of whom God declared himself the judge; "God is not the judge of the dead: but of the living." The wicked, during this life, are often free from adversity: but were they even miserable all the time of their abiding on earth, their miseries would not sufficiently express God's hatred of sin. Asaph renders to divine justice only one part of its deserved homage when he says, in order to justify it for tolerating some criminals, "surely thou didst set them in slippery places. thou castedst them down into destruction.—How are they brought into desolation as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors! As a dream, when one awaketh, so, O Lord, thou shalt despise their image," Ps. lxxiii. 18—20. No! the unexpected vicissitudes that sometimes confound the devices of the wicked, the fatal catastrophes in which we sometimes see them enveloped, the signal reverses of fortune, by which they are often precipitated from the highest elevation to the deepest distress; all these are too imperfect to verify those reiterated threatenings which the Judge of mankind denounced against primitive criminals, to teach them that he was a just avenger of sin. To display this fully there must be a resurrection and a judgment. In this manner, even supposing there were no formal passages in proof of future judgment (which we do not allow:) the genius, the drift and scope of religion would be sufficient to convince us of the truth of it.

II. What has been said shall suffice for proof of this truth, *after death comes judgment*. But what shall be the destiny of this audience? What sentence will the judge of the world pronounce on us in that formidable day, when he shall judge the world in righteousness? Will it be a sentence of mercy? will he pronounce our absolution? will he say to us, "Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels?" or will he say to us, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom?" Matt. xxv. 41. 34.

This is a difficult question: however, it is not so difficult as some of us may imagine. St. Paul lays down a principle that casts light on the inquiry; that is, that men will be judged according to the economies under which they lived. "As many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law," Rom. ii. 12; that is to say, as having

lived under the Levitical economy. "They who have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law;" to which we may fairly add, they who have lived under the gospel, shall be judged by the gospel. Now the gospel is an economy of light, an economy of proportion, an economy of mercy. These three rules, by which God will regulate our eternal destiny, should quiet the excessive fears, which an idea of future judgment excites in some pious, but timorous souls. And, at the same time, they ought to disturb the false peace of those who sleep in indolence amidst objects so proper to awake them.

1. We shall be judged as having lived under an economy of *light*. This proposition has a comfortable aspect on a good man. We shall be judged according to what is clear in the gospel itself; and not according to what is abstruse and impenetrable in the systems of the schools. What inducement could we possibly have to endeavour to inform ourselves, were we prepossessed with a notion, that our sentence would be regulated by our ideas on a thousand questions which some men have boldly stated, rashly decided, and barbarously enforced on others? Were it necessary to have clear and complete ideas of the arrangement of the first decrees of the first cause, of the nature of the divine essence, of the manner in which God foresees contingent events, and of many other such questions as obscure as useless; were it necessary, in order to receive a favourable sentence, to be able to decide some cases of conscience, which have always been indeterminable by the ablest casuists; were these necessary, who dare examine these questions? But, Christian soul! banish thy scruples. Thy God, thy Judge, is the sovereign of his creatures: but he is not their tyrant. Thou art free: not a slave. The economy according to which thou shalt be judged, is an economy of light; and whatever is impenetrable and undecided in the gospel, has no relation to that trial which thou wilt undergo.

But if this truth be amiable and comfortable to good people, it is also formidable, terrifying, and desperate, to people of an opposite character. You will be judged as reasonable beings, who had it in their power to discover truth and virtue. In vain will you pretend ignorance of some articles. Your Judge will open this sacred book in my hand, in which the decision of these articles is contained; the elucidation of all the truths, of which you are wilfully ignorant. Will not your ignorance appear voluntary, when God judges you with the light of this gospel in his hand?

Nothing is more common in the world, than to hear men exculpate their errors by pleading their sincerity. "If I be deceived," says one, "in taking the book which you call *Scripture* by excellence, for a mere human compilation, I am very sincere in my error, and it does not depend on me to alter my ideas." And why does it depend on you to change your ideas? Have you examined those evidences of the divinity of the book, which shine in every part of it? Have you once in your life thoroughly examined the sense of any prophecy, to find out whether a spirit of prophecy inspired the sacred writers? Is it a sincere mistake to deceive one's self, rather than apply to this im-

portant question that study, that time, and that examination, which it demands?

"If I be in an error," says another, "in adhering to a particular communion, I err very sincerely, and I cannot change my ideas." And why cannot you change your ideas? Have you availed yourself of the light of the times, in which you live? Have you consulted those ministers, who can inform you? Have you risen from that state of indolence, ease, and prudence, which inclines people rather to take it for granted, that they were born in a true church, than to examine whether they were so? Does it require more sagacity, more genius, more labour to find out, that in our Scriptures worshipping before images of wood or stone is forbidden; that purgatory is a mere human invention; that the traffic of indulgences is a mercenary scheme; that the authority of the Roman pontiff is founded only on worldly policy? I ask, is more penetration necessary to determine these articles, than to command an army, to pursue a state intrigue, to manage a trade, or to cultivate an art or a science?

In like manner, we every day see people in society, who while they boldly violate the most plain and allowed precepts of the gospel, pretend to exculpate themselves fully by saying, "We do not think such a conduct sinful; what crime can there be in such and such a practice?"

An obstinate gamester says, "I think, there is no harm in gaming." And why do you think so? Is not the gospel before your eyes? Does not the gospel tell you, it is not allowable to deceive? Does not the gospel clearly prohibit a waste of time? Does not the gospel forbid you to ruin your neighbours? Does not the gospel plainly forbid you to cheat? And you obstinate gamester! do not you deceive in gaming? Do not you waste your time? Do not you do all in your power towards the ruin of your neighbour? Do not you cheat, while you play, and defraud them who play with you, and practise a thousand other artifices which it would be improper to relate here: but which God will one day examine at his just tribunal?

Thus a miser exclaims, "O, there can be no harm in loving the world as I love it." And what makes you think so? Could you not easily undeceive yourself by casting your eyes on the gospel? Does not the gospel clearly say, "The covetous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?" 1 Cor. vi. 10. Is it not clearly revealed in the gospel, that "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, the love of God doth not dwell in him?" 1 John iii. 17. Does not the gospel plainly tell you, that God will one day say to those, who have been devoid of charity, "Depart ye cursed, into everlasting fire! for I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat" Matt. xxv. 41, 42.

Thus a time-server says to us, "I think there is no sin in living where liberty of conscience is not allowed, provided I make no profession of superstition and idolatry." And why do you think so? Does not the gospel clearly require you "not to forsake the assembling of yourselves together," Heb. x. 25; and

do not you forsake our public assemblies? Does not the gospel expressly require you to "come out of Babylon," Rev. xviii. 4; and do you not abide there? Are you not informed in the gospel, that "he who loveth father, or mother, or son, or daughter more than Jesus Christ, is not worthy of the name of a Christian?" Matt. x. 37. And pray, do you prefer your relations before Jesus Christ?

"I do not think," adds one, who maintains an illicit commerce, "there can be any harm in indulging those passions which arise from the fine feelings of our own hearts." And why do you not think so? Does God forbid impurity only when it is unconstitutional? In the general rule, which excludes the unclean from the kingdom of heaven, has the legislator made an exception in favour of those who follow the emotions of an irregular heart?

2. We shall be judged as having lived under an economy of *proportion*; I mean to say, the virtues which God requires of us under the gospel, are proportioned to the faculties that he has given us to perform them. Let us not enfeeble this maxim by theological opinions, which do not belong to it. Let us not allege, that all duty is out of our power, that of ourselves we can do nothing. For when we say, the laws of God are proportioned to our weakness, we speak of persons born in the church, instructed in the truths of revelation, and who are either assisted by spiritual succours, or may be, if they seek for these blessings as they ought to be sought. In regard to these persons, we affirm, that the gospel is an economy of proportion, and this is the great consolation of a good man. I grant the perfection, to which God calls us, is infinitely beyond our natural power, and even beyond the supernatural assistance, that he imparts to us. But we shall be judged by the efforts we have made to arrive at this end. Endeavours to be perfect will be accounted perfection.

This very law of proportion, which will regulate the judgment of us, will overwhelm the wicked with misery. It is always an aggravation of a misery to reflect, that we might have avoided it, and that we brought it upon ourselves. The least reproach of this kind is a deadly poison, that envenoms our sufferings; and this will constitute one of the most cruel torments of the damned. Ye devouring fires, which the justice of God has kindled in hell, I have no need of the light of your flames to discover to me the miseries of a reprobate soul! Ye chains of darkness, which weigh him down, I have no need to examine the weight of you! The criminal's own reproaches of himself are sufficient to give me an idea of his state. He will remember, when he finds himself irretrievably lost, he will remember the time, when he might have prevented his loss. He will recollect how practicable those laws were, for violating which he suffers. He will recollect the mighty assisting power which he once despised. Thou! thou wilt recollect the sage advice, that was given thee. Thou! this sermon, which I have been addressing to thee. Thou! thine education. Thou! the voice of the Holy Spirit, that urged thee to change thy

life. "O Israel! thou hast destroyed thyself." Hos. xiii. 9. This, this is the excruciating reflection of a nominal Christian condemned by divine justice to everlasting flames. Such a Christian suffering the vengeance of eternal fire will incessantly be his own tormentor. He will say to himself, I am the author of my own destruction! I might have been saved! I, I alone condemned myself to everlasting confinement in these dungeons of horror to which I am now consigned.

3. Finally, We shall be judged as having lived under an economy of *mercy*. What can be more capable at once, of comforting a good man against an excessive fear of judgment, and of arousing a bad man from his fatal security?

All the sentiments of benevolence that you can expect in an equitable judge; we say more, all the sentiments of tenderness, which you can expect in a sincere friend; we say more still, all the sentiments of pity, compassion, and love, that can be expected in a tender parent, you will find in the person of the Judge, who will pronounce your eternal doom.

Let us not elevate our passions into virtues. Fear of the judgments of God, which, carried to a certain degree is a virtue, becomes a condemnable passion, at least a frailty that ought to be opposed, when it exceeds due bounds. Do you render an acceptable homage to Almighty God, think you, by distrusting his mercy, the most lovely ray of his glory? Do you render a proper homage to God, think you, by considering him as a tyrant? Do you, think you, render homage to the Deity by doubting his most express and sacred promises? Do you believe you pay an acceptable tribute to God by professing to think, that he will take pleasure in eternally tormenting the poor creature, who used all his efforts to please him; who mourned so often over his own defects; who shed the bitterest tears over the disorders of his life; and who, for the whole world (had the whole world been at his disposal,) would not have again offended a God, whose laws he always revered, even while he was so weak as to break them?

But this thought that Christians shall be judged by an economy of mercy; this very thought, so full of consolation to good men, will drive the wicked to the deepest despair. The mercy of God in the gospel has certain bounds, and we ought to consider it, as it really is, connected with the other perfections of his nature. Whenever we place it in a view incongruous with the other perfections of the Supreme Being, we make it inconsistent in itself. Now this is done when it is applied to one class of sinners. I repeat it again, it is this that fills up the bad man's measure of despair.

Miserable wretch! how canst thou be saved, if the "fountain opened to the House of David" be shut against thee, if that love, which created the world, if that love which inclined the Son of God, ("the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person,") to clothe himself with mortal flesh, and to expire on a cross; if this love be not sufficient to save thee, if this love be slighted by thee, by what means must thou be wrought on, or in what way must thou be saved? And



if the Redeemer of the world condemn thee, to what judge canst thou flee for absolution?

Let us, my dear brethren, incessantly revolve in our minds these ideas of death and judgment. Let us use them to calm those excessive fears, which the necessity of dying, and being judged, sometimes excite in our souls.

But excessive fear is not the usual sin of this congregation. Our usual sins are indolence, carnal security, sleeping life away on the brink of an abyss, flames above our heads, and hell beneath our feet.

Let us quit this miserable station. "Happy is the man that feareth always!" Prov. xxviii. 14. Happy the man, who in every temptation by which he is annoyed, in a world where all things seem to conspire to involve us in endless destruction: happy the man, who in all his trials knows how to derive consolation from this seemingly terrible truth. "It is appointed unto men once to die: but after this the judgment!" To God be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

## SERMON XXXIX.

### HEAVEN.

1 JOHN iii. 3.

*We know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*

ONE of the most beautiful ideas that can be formed of the gospel, is that which represents it as imparting to a Christian the attributes of God. St. Peter and St. Paul both express themselves in a manner truly sublime and emphatical on the subject. The first of these holy men says, the end of the promises of God is to make us "partakers of the divine nature," 2 Pet. i. 4. The second assures us, that all Christians "beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord," 2 Cor. iii. 18. If we believe some critics, the original terms may be rendered, *we all become as mirrors*. A mirror, placed over against a luminous object, reflects its rays, and returns its image. This is agreeable to Christian experience under the gospel. Good men, attentive to the divine attributes, bowing like the seraphim, towards the mystical ark, placed opposite to the Supreme Being, meet with nothing to intercept his rays; and, reflecting in their turn this light, by imitating the moral attributes of God, they become as so many mirrors, exhibiting in themselves the objects of their own contemplation. Thus God, by an effect of his adorable condescension, after having clothed himself with our flesh and blood, after having been "made in the likeness of men," Phil. ii. 7, in the establishment of the gospel, transforms this flesh and blood into a likeness of himself. Such is the sublimity and glory of the Christian religion! We are "partakers of the divine nature;" we are "changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." My brethren, we have often repeated a famous maxim of the schools, and we adopt it now, *grace is glory begun*. One of the most beautiful ideas that we can form

of that ineffable glory, which God reserves for us in heaven, is that which the sacred authors give us of Christianity. Heaven and the church, the Christian in a state of grace, and the Christian in a state of glory, differ only in degree. All the difference between the two changes is, that the first, I mean a Christian in a state of grace, retains the imperfection, which is essential to this life, whereas the other, I mean the Christian in a state of glory, is perfect in his kind, so that both are changed into the image of the Deity, as far as creatures in their conditions are capable of being so.

This is the difficult, but interesting subject which we are now going to discuss. We are going to inquire into the question so famous, I dare not say so developed in the schools, concerning the beatific vision of God. We will endeavour to explain how we see God in heaven, and how this happy vision will render us like him, who will be the object of it. St. John supplies us with these images. He displays the happiness of Christians thus: "Behold," says he, "what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." But while he passes encomiums on the mercy of God, he observes, that we have only yet enjoyed foretastes of it; "we know," adds he, "that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

Our text has two senses; the first regards the human nature of Jesus Christ, and the second the Deity. The first of these senses is very easy and natural: "when the Son of God shall appear, we shall see him as he is;" that is to say, when Jesus Christ shall come to judge mankind, we shall see his glorified body. "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; that is, our bodies, having acquired at the resurrection the properties of glorified bodies, like that of Jesus Christ, shall have the faculty of contemplating his body. This sense deserves examination.

We have no distinct idea of what Scripture calls "a glorious body," Phil. iii. 21. The most abstruse metaphysics, the most profound erudition, and the most sublime theology cannot enable us fully to explain this remarkable passage of St. Paul; "There are celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars. So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body," 1 Cor. xv. 40—44.

But how difficult soever this passage may be, we know by experience there are bodies to which our senses bear no proportion; and, if I may be allowed to speak in this manner, there are bodies inapprehensible by our faculty of seeing. There is no proportion between my eyes and bodies extremely small. My faculty of seeing does not extend to a mite; a mite is a nonentity to my eye. There is no proportion between my eyes, and bodies which have not a certain degree of consistence. My seeing

faculty does not extend to an aerial body; an aerial body is a mere nonentity in regard to my sight. There is very little proportion between my eyes, and bodies extraordinarily rapid. My faculty of seeing does not extend to objects moving at a certain rate; a body must move so slow as to make a kind of rest before my eye in order to be perceived by it; and, as soon as a greater force communicates a quicker motion to it, it recedes, diminishes, disappears. But were the faculties of my body proportioned to these objects; had my body qualities similar to theirs; I should then be able to see them; "I should see them as they are, for I should be like them."

Let us apply these general reflections to our subject. There may be perhaps no proportion between our bodies in their present earthly state and what the Scripture calls "glorious bodies." Our faculty of seeing perhaps may not extend to glorious bodies. Were the gross terrestrial bodies to which our souls are united, all on a sudden translated to that mansion of glory, in which the bodies of Enoch and Elias wait for the consummation of all things, probably we might not be able to see them clearly, and perhaps we might be quite blinded with the glory of them. The reasons just now mentioned may account for what we suppose; as any who have habituated themselves to reflection may easily comprehend. But when our bodies shall be "changed, when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality," 1 Cor. xv. 51. 54; in a word, when our bodies shall have the same faculties as the glorious body of Jesus Christ, "we shall see him as he is, for we shall be like him." This is the first sense given to the words of the text, a sense that may serve to preclude a part of the difficulties which may arise; a sense entirely conformable to the analogy of faith, and to a great many other passages of holy Scripture, such as these, "Our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body," Phil. iii. 20, 21. "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God; when Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory," Col. iii. 3, 4. "The first man is of the earth, earthly; the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthly, such are they also that are earthly: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly," 1 Cor. xv. 47, &c.

Grand idea of heavenly felicity, my brethren! Glorified believers shall see with their eyes the glorious body of Jesus Christ. Yea, these eyes, restored to sight, and endowed with new powers, shall see the God-man; they shall see that body of the Saviour of the world, which once "increased in favour" here below, Luke ii. 52; and which is now arrived at the highest pitch of glory in heaven. They shall see those "lips into which grace is poured," Ps. xlv. 2. They shall see that Son of man, who is "fairer than all the rest of the children of men." What joy to accomplish

this object! What delight, if I may speak so, when the rays of the Deity, always too bright and confounding for mortal eyes to behold, shall be softened to our sight in the person of Jesus Christ! What transporting joy to see the greatest miracle that was ever included in the plans of the wisdom of God! What felicity to behold in the body of Jesus Christ a right of approaching with confidence to a familiarity with God! "We know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

But, although this may be one meaning of our apostle, yet it is neither the only sense of his words, nor does it seem to be the principal one. Should any one doubt what I now affirm; should any affirm, that when the apostle says, "we shall see him as he is," he only means to speak of the body of Jesus Christ; I would beg leave to observe, that St. John evidently intends by the vision of which he speaks, that which consummates our happiness. Now our happiness will not be consummated by only seeing the body of the Son of God, nor by the glorification of our bodies only. Another idea, therefore, must be included in the words of the text.

Besides, the original does not say, "When Jesus Christ shall appear, but when he shall appear we shall see him as he is;" which may be referred to God, of whom the apostle had been speaking in the preceding verses. We shall "see God," and this sight will render us "like him."

I even suppose the words of my text are a kind of quotation of an opinion advanced by some ancient Jewish Rabbies. We have found, as it were by chance, and when we were not studying this text, an opinion taken from the writings of the Jews, which seems either to allude to the words of the text, or, being more ancient than the text, to be alluded to by the apostle. A Consul of Rome required a Rabbi to explain the names of God to him. This is the answer of the Rabbi: "You ask me the meaning of the name of four letters, and the name of twelve letters, and the name of forty letters. (In this manner, my brethren, the Jews speak of the terms expressive of the attributes of God.) But, I must inform you, these are mysteries altogether divine, and which ought to be concealed from the generality of mankind. However, as I have been credibly assured, that you have rendered many good services to learned men, and as nothing ought to be concealed from such persons, it is requisite I should endeavour to answer your question to your satisfaction. I declare then, that, strictly speaking, there is no name given to God, by which we can be made fully to comprehend what he is. His name is his essence, of which we can form no distinct idea; for could we fully comprehend the essence of God, we should be like God."<sup>\*</sup> These words are full of meaning; and, were it necessary to explain them, they would open a wide field to our meditation. They lay down a principle of momentary use to us; that is, that we must be infinite, in order fully to comprehend an in-

\* Rabbi Nehemias in Epistola sanctor ad filium suum Hacanam.

finite being. We will, however, take a slight cursory view of the subject. We will examine how we shall "see God," and at the same time, how we shall be rendered like him by seeing him; for in the sense now given, we understand the text.

God is an *immaterial* being. This principle is unanimously established both by the light of nature, and by revealed religion. An immaterial being cannot be seen by material eyes. This is another incontestable principle. It must be, then, with the mind that "we shall see God as he is," that is to say, we shall "know" him. It must be the mind, therefore, that must be rendered "like him."—This consequence immediately follows from both our principles; and this consequence is one ground of our reflections.

God is an *infinite* being. This also is a principle established by both natural and revealed religion. The soul of man is finite, and, to whatever perfection it may be advanced, it will always continue to be so. This is another indisputable principle. It would imply a contradiction to affirm that an infinite Spirit can be seen, or fully known, in a strict literal sense, "as it is," by a finite spirit.—The human soul, therefore, being a finite spirit, can never perfectly see, that is, fully comprehend, "as he is," God, who is an infinite spirit. The proposition in our text then necessarily requires some restriction. This inference arises immediately from the two principles now laid down, and this second consequence furnishes another ground of our reflections.

But, although it would be absurd to suppose that God, an infinite spirit, can be fully known by a finite human spirit, yet there is no absurdity in affirming, God can communicate himself to man in a very close and intimate manner, proper to transform him. This may be done four ways. There are, we conceive, four sorts of communications; a communication of ideas, a communication of love, a communication of virtue, and a communication of felicity. In these four ways "we shall see God," and by thus seeing him "as he is, we shall be like him" in these four respects. We will endeavour, by discussing each of these articles, to explain them clearly; and here all your attention will be necessary, for without this our whole discourse will be nothing to you but a sound destitute of reason and sense.

The first communication will be a communication of *ideas*. We "shall see God as he is," because we shall participate of his ideas; and by seeing God as he is, we shall become "like him," because the knowledge of his ideas will rectify ours, and will render them like his. To know the ideas of an imperfect being, is not to participate his imperfections: an accurate mind may know the ideas of an inaccurate mind without admitting them.—But to know the ideas of a perfect spirit, is to participate his perfections; because to know his ideas, is to know them as they are, and to know them as they are, is to perceive the evidence of them. When, therefore, God shall communicate his ideas to us, "we shall be like him," by the conformity of our ideas to his.

What are the ideas of God? They are clear

in their nature; they are clear in their images; they are perfect in their degree; they are complex in their relations; and they are complete in their number. In all these respects the ideas of God are infinitely superior to the ideas of men.

1. Men are full of *false* notions. Their ideas are often the very reverse of the objects, of which they should be clear representations. We have false ideas in physics; false ideas in polity; false ideas in religion. We have false ideas of honour and of disgrace, of felicity and of misery. Hence we often mistake fancy for reason, and shadow for substance. But God has only *true* ideas. His idea of order is an exact representation of order. His idea of irregularity exactly answers to irregularity; and so of all other objects. He will make us know his ideas, and by making us know them he will rectify ours.

2. Men have often *obscure* ideas. They see only glimmerings. They perceive appearances rather than demonstrations. They are placed in a world of probabilities, and, in consideration of this state, in which it has pleased the Creator to place them, they have more need of a course of reasoning on a new plan, to teach them how a rational creature ought to conduct himself, when he is surrounded with probabilities, than of a course of reasoning and determining, which supposes him surrounded with demonstration. But God has only *clear* ideas. No veil covers objects; no darkness obscures his ideas of them. When he shall *appear*, he will communicate his ideas to us, and they will rectify ours; he will cause the scales that hide objects from us, to fall from our eyes; and he will dissipate the clouds which prevent our clear conception of them.

3. Men have very few ideas perfect in *degree*. They see only the surface of objects.—Who, in all the world, has a perfect idea of matter? Who ever had perfect ideas of spirit? Who could ever exactly define either? Who was ever able to inform us how the idea of motion results from that of body; how the idea of sensation results from that of spirit? Who ever knew to which class space belongs? It would be very easy, my brethren, to increase this list, would time permit; and were I not prevented by knowing, that they, who are incapable of understanding these articles, have already in their own minds pronounced them destitute of all sense and reason. But God has *perfect* ideas. His ideas comprehend the whole of all objects. He will communicate to us this disposition of mind, and will give us such a penetration as shall enable us to attain the knowledge of the essence of beings, and to contemplate them in their whole.

4. Men have very few ideas *complex* in their relations. I mean, their minds are so limited, that, although they may be capable of combining a certain number of ideas, yet they are confounded by combining a greater number. We have distinct ideas of units, and we are capable of combining a few: but as soon as we add hundred to hundred, million to million, the little capacity of our souls is overwhelmed with the multitude of these objects, and our weakness obliges us to sink under the weight. We have a few ideas of motion. We know

what space a body, to which a certain degree of velocity is communicated, must pass through in a given time: but as soon as we suppose a greater degree of motion, as soon as we imagine an augmentation of velocity to this greater degree; as soon as we try to apply our knowledge of moving powers to those enormous bodies, which the mighty hand of God guides in the immensity of space, we are involved in perplexity and confusion. But God conceives *infinite combination*. He will make us partake, as far as our minds can, his ideas; so that we shall be able to give a large expanse to our meditation without any fear of confusing ourselves.

5. In fine, the ideas of mankind are incomplete in their *number*. Most men think, there are only two sorts of beings, body and spirit; and they have also determined, that there can be only two. A rash decision in itself: but more rash still in a creature so confined in his genius as man. But the ideas of God are *complete*. He knows all possible beings. He will make us participate this disposition of mind, and from it may arise ideas of myriads of beings, on which now we cannot reason, because now we have no ideas of them. A communication of ideas is the first way in which God will make himself known to us. This will be the first trait of our resemblance of him. "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

The second communication of God to a beatified soul is a communication of *love*. We cannot possibly partake of the ideas of God without participating his love. To participate the ideas of God is to possess just notions. To possess just notions is to place each object in the rank that is due to it; consequently, we shall regard the chief being as the only object of supreme love.

What is necessary to answer the idea, that an upright soul forms of the lovely? The lovely object must answer three ideas: the idea of the great and marvellous; the idea of the just; and the idea of the good: and, if I may venture to speak so, of the *beatifying*. Now, it is impossible to know God without entertaining these three ideas of him alone; consequently it is impossible to know God without loving him.—And this is the reason of our profound admiration of the morality of the gospel. The morality of the gospel is the very quintessence of order. It informs us, no creature deserves supreme love. It makes this principle the substance of its laws. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind," Matt. xxi. 37.

How worthy of supreme love will this God appear, how fully will he answer the idea of the *great* and the *marvellous*, when "we shall see him as he is!" He will answer it by his independence. Creatures exist: but they have only a borrowed being. God derives his existence from none. He is a self-existent Being. He will answer our idea of the magnificent by the immutability of his nature. Creatures exist: but they have no fixed and permanent being. They arise from nothing to existence. Their existence is rather variation and inconstancy than real being. But God, but "I the Lord," says he of himself, "I change not," Mal. iii. 6. "The same yesterday, to-day, and

for ever," Heb. xiii. 8. He is, as it were, the fixed point, on which all creatures revolve, while he is neither moved by their motion, shaken by their action, nor in the least imaginable degree altered by all their countless vicissitudes. He will answer the idea of the great and marvellous by the efficiency of his will. Creatures have some efficient acts of volition: but not of themselves. But go back to that period in which there was nothing. Figure to yourselves those immense voids, which preceded the formation of the universe, and represent to yourselves God alone. He forms the plan of the world. He regulates the whole design. He assigns an epoch of duration to it in a point of eternity. This act of his will produces this whole universe. Hence a sun, a moon, and stars. Hence earth and sea, rivers and fields. Hence kings, princes, and philosophers. "He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast. The heavens were made by the word of the Lord, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth," Ps. xxxiii. 9. God then, perfectly answers our idea of the grand and the marvellous. He answers also the idea of the just.

It was he who gave us an idea of *justice* or order. It was he who made the greatest sacrifices to it. It was he who moved heaven and earth to re-establish it, and who testified how dear it was to him by sacrificing the most worthy victim that could possibly suffer, I mean his only Son.

Finally, God will perfectly answer our idea of the *good* and the *beatifying*. Who can come up to it except a God, who opens to his creatures an access to his treasures? A God, who reveals himself to them in order to take them away from their "broken cisterns," and to conduct them to the "fountain of living waters," Jer. ii. 13. A God, whose eternal wisdom cries to mankind, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye; buy and eat; yea come; buy wine and milk without money, and without price. Wherefore do you spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live," Isa. lv. 1—3.

We cannot, then, know God without loving him. And thus a communication of ideas leads to a communication of love. But this communication of love will render us *like* the God whom we admire. For the property of love in a soul inflamed with it, is to transform it in some sort into the object of its admiration. This is particularly proper to divine love. We love God, because we know his attributes; when we know his attributes, we know we can no better contribute to the perfection of our being than by imitating them, and the desire we have to perfect our being will necessitate us to apply wholly to imitate them, and to become *like* him.

Let us pass to our third consideration. The third communication of God to a beatified soul is a communication of his *virtues*. To love and to obey, in Scripture-style, is the same thing. "If ye love me, keep my commandments," is

a well known expression of Jesus Christ, John xiv. 15. "He who saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him," is an expression of our apostle, 1 John ii. 4. This is not peculiar to the love of God. To love and to obey, even in civil society, are usually two things which have a very close connexion. But, as no creature has ever excited all the love, of which a soul is capable, so there is no creature to whom we have rendered a perfect obedience. It is only in regard to God, that there is an inseparable connexion between obedience and love. For when we love God, because we know him, we are soon convinced, that he cannot ordain any thing to his creature but what is useful to him; when we are convinced he can ordain nothing to be performed by his creature but what is useful to him, it becomes as impossible not to obey him as it is not to love ourselves. To love and obey is one thing, then, when the object in question is a being supremely lovely. These are demonstrations; but to obey God, and to keep his commandments, is to be *like God*.

The commandments of God are formed on the idea of the divine perfections. God has an idea of order; he loves it; he follows it; and this is all he ever has required, and all he ever will require, of his intelligent creatures. He requires us to know order, to love it, to follow it. An intelligent creature, therefore, who shall be brought to obey the commandments of God will be *like God*. "Be ye perfect, as your Father, which is in heaven, is perfect," Matt. v. 48. "Be ye holy, for I am holy," 1 Pet. i. 16. "Every man, that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure," 1 John iii. 3. These precepts are given us here on earth, and we obey them imperfectly now: but we shall yield a perfect obedience, to them in heaven, when we shall "see him as he is." Here our apostle affirms, "Whosoever sinneth, hath not seen him, neither known him," ver. 6; that is to say, he who suffers sin to reign over him, does not know God; for, if he knew God, he would have just ideas of God, he would love him; and, if he loved him, he would imitate him. But in heaven we shall see, and know him, we shall not sin, we shall imitate him, "we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

Lastly, The fourth communication of the Deity with beatified souls is a communication of *felicity*. In an economy of order, to be holy and to be happy are two things very closely connected. Now we are in an economy of disorder. Accordingly, virtue and felicity do not always keep company together, and it sometimes happens, that for "having hope in Christ we are," for a while, "of all men most miserable," 1 Cor. xv. 19. But this economy of disorder must be abolished. Order must be established. St. Peter, speaking of Jesus Christ, says, "The heavens must receive him until the times of the restitution of all things," Acts iii. 21. When *all things* shall be restored, virtue and happiness will be closely united, and, consequently, by participating the holiness of God, we shall participate his happiness.

God is supremely good. He is naturally

inclined by his own perfections to do good. Rather than include himself in his own felicity, he went out of himself in the works of creation. He formed creatures capable of his favours. But these very perfections, which inclined him to do good, prevent his rendering impure and criminal creatures happy. "He is of purer eyes than to behold evil," Hab. i. 13. This is the cause of the innumerable penal evils, under which we groan. For this reason there are miserable people. Remove this obstacle, and God will follow his inclination to bounty. All creatures capable of being happy would be rendered perfectly happy. In heaven this obstacle will be removed.

Moreover, we may offer, if I may be allowed to speak so, a more evangelical reason to confirm this article. One part of the covenant of grace between the eternal Father and the Son, when the Son became incarnate, was, that the Father should restore them to happiness, whom the Son should redeem. Hence this adorable Son of God, in the sacerdotal prayer, which he offered to the Father the evening before he offered himself a sacrifice to death on the cross, repeats this clause of the covenant; "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory," John xviii. 6. 24.

God is, then, inclined by the nature of his perfections, and by the spirit of the covenant made with Jesus Christ, to render *like himself*, in regard to his felicity, those who are already made like him in regard to his ideas, in regard to his love, and in regard to his holiness; and this is the fourth sense of the proposition in our text, "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." This is the fourth communication of God to glorified souls. He will communicate his felicity to them. What constitutes the felicity of God will constitute the felicity of glorified souls.

God is happy in contemplating his *works*.—He approves all the plans that his intelligence has conceived, and which his wisdom and power have so gloriously executed, "He seeth every thing that he hath made, and approves it as very good," Gen. i. 31. God will discover these works to glorified souls. He will display before them all the pompous decorations of nature. He will direct their attention to the symmetry, the magnificence, the number of those luminous bodies, those flaming spheres, which appear to our weak eyes at present as only so many sparks.

God is happy in contemplating his *providence*, and the marvellous manner in which he governs the universe. God will discover this perfect government to glorified souls. Then will appear the folly of the many objections, which at present perplex our minds on the darkness of Providence; then will the many injurious suspicions vanish, which we have entertained concerning the government of the world; then will all the sophisms be confounded, that rash human minds have formed concerning the manner in which God has distributed good and evil.

God is happy in the contemplation of his

designs. The active spirit of the first great cause will diversify his works infinitely, and for ever; he judges of what may be as of what is, and determines of the possible world as of that which actually exists, that *all is very good*. He will communicate these designs to glorified souls. "Shall I hide from Abraham the thing which I do?" said God once to that patriarch, Gen. xviii. 17. Agreeably to which, Jesus Christ said to his apostles, "Henceforth I call you not servants: but I have called you friends; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth: but all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you," John xv. 15. God will hide nothing from glorified souls. He will open to them inexhaustible treasures of wisdom and knowledge. He will display in their sight all that would result from them. He will anticipate the future periods of eternity (if we may speak of future periods when we speak of eternity,) and he will show them every moment of this infinite duration signalized by some emanation of his excellence.

God is happy in certain *sentiments*, which may probably bear some analogy to what we call in ourselves sensations. At least, we may assure ourselves, to be rendered capable of pure sensations would contribute very much to the perfection and happiness of our souls. Sensations lively, affecting and delicious, we know, contribute to our present felicity. They who have affected to refine and spiritualize our ideas of felicity, and to free them from every thing sensitive, I think, have mistaken the nature of spirit. God will impart to glorified souls all the sentiments of which they are capable. He will make them feel something more harmonious than the best compositions of music; something more delicious than the most exquisite tastes: and so of the rest. God is happy in the *society* of the spirits which surround him. He is the centre of all their felicity. He accepts their adoration and homage. He reflects their services to him on themselves. God will receive glorified souls into this society. He will unite us to angels and seraphims, thrones, dominions, and cherubims, and to all other happy intelligent beings, which are without number, and of infinite variety. Their felicity will make our felicity, as our happiness will make their happiness. "There will be joy in heaven" over many "repenting sinners," Luke xv. 7.

But this subject carries me beyond all due bounds. The imagination of a hearer, less warned than that of a preacher, cannot extend itself so far as he would conduct it.—Only recollect, then, and unite the ideas, which we have been mentioning: "We know, when he shall appear, we shall see him as he is."

This passage, we say, seems to offer two senses. The first regards the human nature of Jesus Christ. "We shall see" the glorious body of Jesus Christ "as it is;" because our bodies, being rendered glorious like his, will have faculties relative to his; and proper to enable us to perceive it.

The other sense regards the Deity. "We shall see" God, not with the eyes of our bodies, but with the eyes of the mind, that is to say, we shall know him. "We shall see him as he is," not literally and fully, for God is

an infinite Spirit, who cannot be fully comprehended by infinite beings: but we shall know him, as much as it will be possible for us to know him, and our resemblance to him will bear a proportion to our knowledge of him. He will communicate himself to us. There will be four communications between God and glorified souls; a communication of ideas, of love, of holiness, and of happiness.

And, what deserves our particular regard, because it is most admirable, is, these four communications are connected together, and flow from one another. Because we shall "see God as he is, we shall be like him." Because we shall know his ideas, we shall be possessed of a rectitude of thought like his. Because we shall possess a rectitude of thought like his, we shall know that he is supremely lovely, and cannot but love him. Because we cannot help loving him, we cannot help imitating his holy conduct, as holiness will appear the perfection of our nature. Because we shall imitate his holiness, we shall participate his happiness; for he is naturally inclined by his own perfections to render those intelligent beings happy like himself, who like him are in a state of order. The three last communications are, then, immediate consequences of the first, and the first is the ground of the rest; "we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Then will all the divine plan of human redemption by Jesus Christ be fully executed. Then all the privileges of our adoption, and of the love that elevated us to a condition so noble, and glorious, will clearly appear. "Behold! what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

This is the plan of God in regard to man: a plan diametrically opposite to that of Satan. The plan of Satan is to render man unlike to God. Satan has been too successful in the execution of his design. "A liar and a murderer from the beginning;" John viii. 44; he seduced our first parents; he made them fall from truth to error, from error to vice: already he has robbed us of the glory of our first innocence; already he has darkened our understandings; already succeeded in making us find that pleasure in vice, which ought to follow virtue only; and, having communicated his vice to us, he has made us partake of his miseries; hence the air becomes infected, hence the ocean becomes a grave to mariners, hence animals rebel against him who was originally appointed to be their lord and king, hence passion, revenge and hatred, which begin a hell upon earth, hence maladies which consume our days in pain, and death, that most formidable weapon of the devil, to put a period to them, and hence, "the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone," Rev. xxi. 8, in which this wicked spirit will strive to alleviate the pain of his own punishment by the infernal pleasure of having companions of his misery.

The plan of the Son of God is opposite to that of Satan: "for this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the

works of the devil," 1 John iii. 8. These words almost immediately follow the text. Already this adorable Son has reconciled mankind to God by rendering the deity accessible, by taking on him the nature, and the innocent infirmities of men; already he has appeased by his sacrifice the just wrath of a God, who to punish men for imitating Satan was about to deliver them up to him; and already has he given the death-wound to the empire of this usurper of the rights of God; "having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in the cross," Col. ii. 15. The Son of God has already elevated the Christian above the vicissitudes of life, by detaching him from life, and by teaching him the blessed art of deriving advantages from his miseries; already has he dissipated the darkness of error, by causing the light of revelation to rectify all the abuses that even the greatest philosophers made of the light of nature; already has he attacked human depravity at its centre, and separated the souls of the elect from the seeds of sin, by causing "his seed to remain in them, so that they cannot sin, because they are born of God," as our apostle expresses it, 1 John iii. 9; already he has imparted to their consciences that "peace of God which passeth all understanding," Phil. iv. 7, and by which they are "raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," Eph. iii. 6; already has he made them "partakers of the divine nature," 2 Pet. i. 4, and he has already "changed them into the same image from glory to glory by his Spirit," 2 Cor. iii. 18. He is preparing to finish his work. Shortly he will make that second appearance, which is the object of the hopes of his churches, and for which his children cry, "Come Lord Jesus! come quickly!" Rev. xxii. 20. Shortly he will reduce to dust these organs, this "flesh and blood, which cannot inherit the kingdom of God," 1 Cor. xv. 50. Shortly he will raise these bodies from the dust with new faculties. Shortly he will remove the veils that hide the essence of the Creator from us, and will show it to us *as it is*, so that we may be rendered *like it*. These are two very different plans, my brethren; the one is the plan of God, and the other that of the devil; the one is the design of the enemy of mankind, the other that of their Redeemer.

Into which of these two plans do you propose to enter? Into the plan of God, or into that of the devil? Which of these two beings do you wish to resemble? Would you be *like God*, or would you have the features of Satan? This question may perhaps be already answered by some of you. Great God! to what are we reduced, to be obliged to suppose, at least to have great reason to fear, that in this church, built for the assembly of "saints, and for the edifying of the body of Christ," Eph. iv. 21, there are any imitators of the devil! To what are we reduced to be obliged to suppose, at least to have just grounds of fear, that in this assembly, composed of children of God, who come to appear in his presence, there are any children of the devil! But the frightful in a supposition does not take away the possibility of it.

Perhaps the question may have been fully answered already by some of our hearers. What idea must we form of a man, who employs all his talents to enervate truth, to attack religion, to render doubtful the being of a God; who attributes the creation of the world to blind chance; and brings into question the reality of a state of future rewards and punishments? What idea must be formed of a man, who employs himself wholly in increasing his fortune and establishing his family, how iniquitous soever the means may be which contribute to his end; who robs the widow and the orphan, embroils the state, elevates to the most eminent posts in society men who hardly deserve to live; who would subvert this whole republic, and erect a throne for himself and his family on its ruins? What must we think of a man who daily blasphemes the God of heaven, and incessantly pours out murmurs and charges against the Governor of the universe? What can we think of a man, who wallows in debauchery, who, in spite of those penalties of sin, which he bears about in his body, in spite of the infection and putrefaction that his infamous lasciviousness has caused in his body, indemnifies himself for his present pains by repeating his former pleasures, and yet searches among the ruins of his mortal body some portion, that, having escaped the punishment of his crimes, may yet serve his unbridled concupiscence? Were such men descended from the most illustrious ancestors; had they, like Lucifer himself, a heavenly origin; did their power equal that of the prince of the air; were their attendants as numerous as the legions of that miserable spirit; could their riches and affluence raise winds and storms, that would shake the whole world; had they in their hands the sword of justice, and were they considered as *gods* upon earth, and "children of the Most High," Ps. lxxxii. 7. I should not be afraid to say, while they abandon themselves to these excesses, I detest and abhor them as devils.

But you, my brethren, you, who ought to be the most holy part of the church; you, who pretend to glory in bearing the name of Christian, and who aspire after all the privileges and recompenses of Christianity; into which of the two plans do you propose to enter? Into the plan of Satan, or into that of God? Which of the two beings do you wish to resemble? Would you resemble God, or would you bear the features of the devil? Let not the mortifying in this question prevent your examination of it. It is far better to acknowledge a mortifying truth, than to persist in a flattering falsehood.

The purpose of God, as we just now said, is to render us *like himself*, by communicating his knowledge, by imparting sound ideas to us. Do you enter into this design? Are you labouring to form this feature; you, who neglect the cultivation of your minds; you, who suffer yourselves to be enslaved by prejudice; you, who, so far from being teachable, are angry when we attempt to remove your errors, and, consider those as your enemies who tell you the truth? The design of God, we just now told you, is to render us *like himself* by communicating his love to us. Do you enter into this

plan? Are you endeavouring to form this feature, you who feel no other flame than that, which worldly objects kindle, and which the Scripture calls "enmity with God," James iv. 4; you who, at the most, perform only some exterior duties and ceremonies of religion, and dedicate to these only a few hours on a Lord's day; and who lay out all your vigour and zeal, performances, emotions and passions, on the world? The design of God, we said, is to render us *like himself* by enabling us to imitate his holiness. Do you enter into this part of his design? Do you desire to resemble God, you, who conform to this present world; you, who "run with them to the same excess of riot," 1 Pet. iv. 4; you, who sacrifice your souls to fashion and custom? The design of God, we told you, is to render us *like himself* by communicating his felicity to us. Do you enter into this part of his plan? Are you labouring to attain this resemblance of the Deity? Are you seeking a divine felicity? Do you place "your hearts where your treasure is?" Matt. vi. 21. Do you "seek those things which are above?" Col. iii. 11. You, who are all taken up with worldly attachments; you, who are endeavouring by reputation, and riches, and worldly grandeurs, to fasten yourselves for ever to the world as to the centre of human felicity; you, whose little souls are all confined to the narrow circle of the present life; you, who turn pale, when we speak of dying; you, who shudder, when we treat of that eternal gulf, on the brink of which you stand, and which is just ready to swallow you up in everlasting woe; do you enter into the design of participating the felicity of God?

Let us not deceive ourselves, my brethren! We cannot share the second transformation unless we partake of the first; if we would be *like God* in heaven, we must resemble him here in his church below. A soul, having these first features, experiencing this first transformation, is prepared for eternity; when it enters heaven, it will not alter its condition, it will only perfect it. The most beautiful object, that can present itself to the eyes of such a soul, is the divine Redeemer, the model of its virtues, the original of its ideas. Hast thou experienced the first transformation?—Hast thou already these features? Dost thou ardently desire the appearance of the Son of God; and, should God present himself to thee *as he is*, couldst thou bear the sight without trembling and horror? Ah, my brethren! how miserable is a mind, when it considers Him as an object of horror, whom it ought to consider as an object of its desire and love! How miserable is a soul, which, instead of "loving the appearing of the Lord, the righteous judge," as St. Paul expresses it, 2 Tim. iv. 8, has just reason to dread it! How wretched is the case of the man, who, instead of crying, "Come Lord Jesus! come quickly!" Rev. xxii. 20, cries, Put off thy coming; defer a period, the approach of which I cannot bear; thy coming will be the time of my destruction; thine appearing will discover my shame; thy glory will be my despair; thy voice will be the sentence of my eternal misery; instead of hastening to meet thee, I will avoid thy presence; I will strive to "flee from thy Spirit,"

Ps. cxxxix. 7; I will call to my relief the "mountains" and the "rocks," Rev. vi. 16; and, provided they can conceal me from thy terrible presence, it will signify nothing, should they crush me by their fall, and bury me for ever in their ruins.

Let not such frightful sentiments ever revolve in our minds, Christians. Let us now begin the great work of our transformation. Let us commune with God. Let us apply all our efforts to obtain the knowledge of him. Let us kindle in our souls the fire of his love. Let us propose his holiness for our example. Let us anticipate the felicity of heaven. Indeed, we shall often be interrupted in this great work. We shall often find reason to deplore the darkness that obscures our ideas, the chilling damps which cool our love, and the vices that mix with our virtues; for the grief which these imperfections will cause will frequently lower our felicity. But hope will supply the place of fruition. Our souls will be all involved in evangelical consolations, and all our bitterness will be sweetened with these thoughts of our apostle, "Behold! what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him: for we shall see him as he is." To him be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

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## SERMON XL.

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### HELL.

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#### REVELATION xiv. 11.

*And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever.*

VIOLENT diseases require violent remedies. This is an incontestable maxim in the science of the human body, and it is equally true in religion, the science that regards the soul. If a wound be deep, it is in vain to heal the surface, the malady would become the more dangerous, because it would spread inwardly, gain the nobler parts, consume the vitals, and so become incurable. Such a wound must be cleansed, probed, cut, and cauterized: and softening the most terrible pains by exciting in the patient a hope of being healed, he must be persuaded to endure a momentary pain in order to obtain a future firm established health. Thus in religion; when vice has gained the heart, and subdued all the faculties of the soul, in vain do we place before the sinner a few ideas of equity; in vain do we display the magnificence of the heavens, the beauties of the church, and the charms of virtue; "the arrows of the Almighty" must be fastened in him, Job vi. 4; "terrors, as in a solemn day, must be called round about" him, Lam. ii. 22, and "knowing the terrors of the Lord," we must *persuade* the man, as the holy Scriptures express it.

My brethren, let us not waste our time in declaiming against the manners of the times. Let us not exaggerate the depravity of Chris-



tian societies, and pass encomiums on former ages by too censoriously condemning our own. Mankind have always been bad enough, and good people have always been too scarce. There are, however, we must allow, some times, and some places, in which Satan has employed more means, and has striven with more success to execute his fatal design of destroying mankind than in others. Observe this reflection. A violent malady must have a violent remedy; and this, which we bring you to-day, certainly excels in its kind. The Holy Spirit conducts us to-day in a road different from that in which he formerly led the Hebrews; and, to address you properly, we must change the order of St. Paul's words, and say, "Ye are not come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem: but ye are come unto a burning fire, unto blackness, and darkness, and tempests, chap. xii. 22. We are going to place before your eyes eternity with its abysses, the fiery lake with its flames, devils with their rage, and hell with its horrors.

Great God! suspend for a few moments the "small still voice of thy gospel!" 1 Kings xix. 12. For a few moments let not this auditory hear the church "shouting, Grace, grace unto it!" Zech. iv. 7. Let the blessed angels, that assist in our assemblies, for awhile leave us to attend to the miseries of the damned! I speak literally; I wish these miserable beings could show you for a moment the weight of their chains, the voracity of their flames, the stench of their smoke. Happy! if struck with these frightful objects, we imbibe a holy horror, and henceforth oppose against all our temptations the words of our text, "the smoke of their torment, ascendeth up for ever and ever!"

I have borrowed these words of St. John. In the preceding verses he had been speaking of apostates and idolaters, and them he had particularly in view in this; "If any man worship the beast, and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation, and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone, in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb; and the smoke of their torment," adds the apostle, in the text, "ascendeth up for ever and ever."

But do not think this sentence must be restrained to these sort of sinners. It is denounced against other kinds of sinners in other passages of Scripture. "His fan is in his hand," said the forerunner of Jesus Christ, "and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner: but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire," Matt. iii. 12.

It shall not be, then, to apostates and idolaters only that we will preach to-day; although, alas! was it ever more necessary to speak to them than now? Did any age of Christianity ever see so many apostates as this, for which providence has reserved us? O! could I transport myself to the ruins of our churches! I would thunder in the ears of our brethren, who have denied their faith and religion, the words of our apostle; "If any man worship

the beast, and his image, he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone, and the smoke of his torment shall ascend up for ever and ever!"

We will consider our text in a more general view, and we divide our discourse into three parts.

I. We will prove that the doctrine of eternal punishment is clearly revealed.

II. We will examine the objections, which reason opposes against it; and we will show, that there is nothing in it incompatible with the perfections of God, or the nature of man.

III. We will address the subject to such as admit the truth of the doctrine of eternal punishments: but live in indolence, and unaffected with it. This is the whole plan of this discourse.

I. We affirm, there is a hell, punishments finite in degree: but infinite in duration. We do not intend to establish here in a vague manner, that there is a state of future rewards and punishments, by laying before you the many weighty arguments taken from the sentiments of conscience, the declarations of Scripture, the confusions of society, the unanimous consent of mankind, and the attributes of God himself; arguments which placing in the clearest light the truth of a judgment to come, and a future state, ought for ever to confound those unbelievers and libertines, who glory in doubting both. We are going to address ourselves more immediately to another sort of people, who do not deny the truth of future punishments: but who diminish the duration of them; who either in regard to the attributes of God, or in favour of their own indolence, endeavour to persuade themselves, that if there be any punishments after death, they will neither be so general, nor so long, nor so terrible, as people imagine.

Of this sort was that father in the primitive church, who was so famous for the extent of his genius, and at the same time for the extravagance of it; admired on the one hand for attacking and refuting the errors of the enemies of religion, and blamed on the other for injuring the very religion that he defended, by mixing with it errors monstrous in their kind, and almost infinite in their number.\* He affirmed, that eternal punishments were incompatible both with the perfections of God, and that instability, which is the essential character of creatures; and mixing some chimeras with his errors, he added, that spirits, after they had been purified by the fire of hell, would return to the bosom of God; that at length they would detach themselves from him, and that God to punish their inconstancy would lodge them again in new bodies, and that thus eternity would be nothing but periodical revolutions of time.

Such also were some Jewish Rabbies, who acknowledge, in general, that there is a hell: but add, there is no place in it for Israelites, not even for the most criminal of them, excepting only those who abjure Judaism; and even these, they think, after they have suffered for one year, will be absolutely annihilated.

\* Origen, who was misguided by the Pythagorean philosophy, or the doctrine of Metempsychosis which our Saviour has condemned, John 2, 3. J. S.

Such was, almost in our own days, the head of a famous sect, and such were many of his disciples. They thought, that the souls of all men, good and bad, passed into a state of insensibility at death, with this difference only, that the wicked cease to be, and are absolutely annihilated, whereas the righteous will rise again into a sensibility in a future period, and will be united to a glorious body; that those wicked persons, who shall be alive, when Jesus Christ shall come to judge the world, will be the only persons, who will appear in judgment to receive their condemnation there; and that these, after they shall have been absorbed in the general conflagration, which they say, is the *gehenna*, or *hell-fire*, of which Scripture speaks, Matt. v. 22, will be annihilated with the devils and the fires of hell; so, that, according to them, nothing will remain in nature but the abode of happy spirits.

Such are the suppositions of those, who oppose the doctrine we are going to establish. Let us endeavour to refute them.

1. Scripture gives no countenance to this absurd opinion, that the wicked shall have no part in the resurrection and judgment. What could St. Paul mean by these words, "Despisest thou the riches of the goodness of God? after thy hardness, and impenitent heart, dost thou treasure up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God?" Rom. ii. 4, 5. What does he mean by these words, "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad?" 2 Cor. v. 10. What does St. John intend by these words, "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God, the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and they were judged (every man) according to their works; and whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire?" Rev. xx. 12, 13, 15. What meant Jesus Christ, when he said, "The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation?" John v. 28, 29. Any thing may be glossed over, and varnished: but was ever gloss more absurd than that of some, who pretend, that the *resurrection* spoken of in the last quoted words is not to be understood of a literal proper resurrection: but of sanctification, which is often called a resurrection in Scripture? Does sanctification then raise some unto a resurrection of life, and others unto a resurrection of damnation?

2. Scripture clearly affirms, that the punishment of the damned shall not consist of annihilation, but of real and sensible pain. This appears by divers passages. Our Saviour speaking of Judas, said, "It would have been good for that man, if he had not been born," Matt. xxvi. 24. Hence we infer, a state worse than annihilation was reserved for this miserable traitor; for had the punishment of his crime consisted in annihilation only, Judas, having already enjoyed many pleasures in this

life, would have been happier to have been than not to have been. Again, Jesus Christ says, "It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of Judgment than for thee," Matt. xi. 24. Hence we infer again, there are some punishments worse than annihilation; for if Sodom and Caperneum were both annihilated, it would not be true, that the one would be in a "more tolerable" state than the other.

Scripture images of hell, which are many, will not allow us to confine future punishment to annihilation. It is a *worm*, a *fire*, a *darkness*; they are *chains*, *weeping*, *wailing*, and *gnashing of teeth*; expressions which we will explain by and by. Accordingly, the disciples of the head of the sect just now mentioned, and whose system we oppose, have renounced these two parts of their Master's doctrine, and, neither denying the generality of these punishments, nor the reality of them, are content to oppose their eternity.

3. But, it appears by Scripture, that future punishment will be eternal. The holy Scripture represents another life as a state, in which there will be no room for repentance and mercy, and where the wicked shall know nothing but torment and despair. It compares the duration of the misery of the damned with the duration of the felicity of the blessed. Future punishment is always said to be eternal, and there is not the least hint given of its coming to an end. "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels," Matt. xxv. 41. "Their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched," Mark ix. 44. "If thy hand offend thee, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, rather than, having two hands, to be cast into everlasting fire," Matt. xviii. 8. "The devil, that deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast, and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever," Rev. xx. 10. Again in our text, "the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever." These declarations are formal and express.

But, as the word *eternal* does not always signify proper and literal eternity, it is presumed, the Spirit of God did not intend, by attributing eternity to future punishment, strictly and literally to affirm, that future punishment should never end: but only that it should endure many ages.

We grant, my brethren, the word *eternal* does not always signify properly and literally eternity. It has several meanings; but there are three principal. Sometimes eternity is attributed to those beings which are as old as the world. Thus we read of "everlasting hills," or "mountains of eternity," Gen. xlix. Sometimes it is put for a duration as long as the nature of the thing in question can permit.

Thus it is said, a servant, who would not accept his liberty in the seventh year of his servitude, should serve his Master *for ever*, Exod. xxi. 6, that is, until the time of the Jubilee, for then the Jewish republic was new modelled, and all slaves were set free. Sometimes it expresses any thing perfect in its kind and which has no succession. Thus the sacrifice of Melchisedec, and that of Jesus Christ,

of which the first was a shadow, *abide continually, or for ever*, Heb. vii. 3. This term, then, can best be taken in a metaphorical sense in the three following cases.

1. *When that, which is called eternal in one place, is said in another to come to an end.* Thus, it was said, the ceremonial law was to endure *for ever*. This expression must not be taken literally; for all the prophets informed their countrymen, that the ceremonial economy was to end, and to give up to a better. Now the holy Scriptures do not restrain in any one passage what it establishes in others concerning the eternity of future punishments.

2. A metaphorical sense must be given to the term, *when the sacred history assures us, that what it calls eternal has actually come to an end.* Thus, it is plain, the fire of Sodom was not *eternal*; for sacred history informs us, it was extinguished after it had consumed that wicked city, and it is called *eternal*, only because it burned till Sodom was all reduced to ashes, Jude 7. But what history can engage us to understand in this sense the eternity attributed to the torments of the wicked?

3. The term must be taken metaphorically *when the subject spoken of is not capable of a proper eternal duration*, as in the case just now mentioned, that a mortal servant should *eternally* serve a mortal master. But, we presume, the eternity of future punishment in a strict literal sense implies no contradiction, and perfectly agrees with the objects of our contemplation. This leads us to our second part, in which we are to examine those objections, which reason opposes against the doctrine of eternal punishment.

II. If the doctrine of eternal punishment imply a contradiction, it must either regard man, the sufferer of the pain, or God, who threatens to inflict it.

1. *The nature of man has nothing incongruous with that degree and duration of punishment, of which we speak.* Turn your attention to the following reflections.

Nothing but an express act of the will of God can annihilate a soul. No person in the world can assure himself, without a divine revelation, that God will do this act. Whatever we see, and know of our soul, its hopes and fears, its hatred and love, all afford a presumption, that it is made for an eternity of happiness or misery.

The will of God is the only cause of the sensations of our souls that alone establishes a commerce between motion and sensation, sensation and motion. His will alone is the cause, that from a separation of the component parts of the hand by the action of fire there results a sensation of pain in the soul; so that, should it please him to unite a condemned soul to particles of inextinguishable fire, and should there result from the activity of this fire violent anguish in the soul, there would be nothing in all this contrary to daily natural experiment.

Farther, weigh particularly the following reflection. Choose, of all the systems of philosophers, that which appears most reasonable; believe the soul is spiritual, believe it is matter; think, it must naturally dissolve with

the body, believe it must subsist after the ruin of the body; take which side you will, you can never deny this principle, nor do I know, that any philosopher has ever denied it: that is, that God is able to preserve soul and body for ever, were they perishable by nature; and this act of his will would be equal to a continual creation. Now, this principle being granted, all arguments drawn from the nature of man to prove its incongruity with the Scripture idea of eternal punishment vanish of themselves.

But Origen did not enter into these reflections. With all that fertility of genius, which enabled him to compose (if we believe St. Epiphanius,\*) six thousand books, and in spite of all his Greek and Hebrew, he was a sorry philosopher, and a very bad divine. The church has condemned his doctrine in the gross. All his philosophy was taken from the ideas of Plato: but thanks be to God! my brethren, we live in ages more enlightened, and were educated by masters wiser than Aristotle and Plato. So much shall suffice for objections taken from the nature of man.

2. Let us attend now to others taken from *the nature of God.* A man who opposes our doctrine, reasons in this manner. Which way soever I consider a being supremely perfect, I cannot persuade myself, that he will expose his creatures to eternal torments. All his perfections secure me from such terrors as this doctrine seems to inspire. If I consider the Deity as a being perfectly free, it should seem, although he has denounced sentences of condemnation, yet he retains a right of revoking, or of executing them to the utmost rigour; whence I infer, that no man can determine what use he will make of his liberty. When I consider God as a good being, I cannot make eternal punishment agree with infinite mercy: "bowels of compassion" seem incongruous with "devouring flames;" the titles "merciful and gracious" seem incompatible with the execution of this sentence, "depart ye cursed into everlasting fire," Matt. xxv. 41. In short, when I consider God under the idea of an equitable legislator, I cannot comprehend how sins committed in a finite period can deserve an infinite punishment. Let us suppose a life the most long and criminal that ever was; let the vices of all mankind be assembled, if possible, in one man; let the duration of his depravity be extended from the beginning of the world to the dissolution of it: even in this case sin would be finite, and infinite, everlasting punishment would far exceed the demerit of finite transgression, and consequently, the doctrine of everlasting punishment is inconsistent with divine justice.

There are libertines, who invent these difficulties, and take pains to confirm themselves in the belief of them, in order to diminish those just fears, which an idea of hell would excite in their souls, and to enable them to sin boldly. Let us not enter into a detail of answers and replies with people of this kind. Were we to grant all they seem to require, it would be easy to prove, to a demonstration, that there is a world of extravagance in deriving the least

\* Advers. Hæres. lib. 2.

liberty to sin from these objections. If, instead of a punishment enduring for ever, hell were only the sufferings of a thousand years' torments, were the sufferer during these thousand years only placed in the condition of a man excruciated with the gout or the stone; must not a man give up all claim to common sense, before he could, even on these suppositions, abandon himself to sin? Are not all the charms employed by the devil to allure us to sin absorbed in the idea of a thousand years' pain, to which, for argument's sake, we have supposed eternal punishment reduced? How pitiable is a man in dying agonies, who has nothing to oppose against the terrors of death but this opinion. Perhaps hell may be less in degree, and shorter in duration than the scriptures represent!

Some Christian divines, in zeal for the glory of God, have yielded to these objections; and under pretence of having met with timorous people, whom the doctrine of eternal punishment had terrified into doubts concerning the divine perfections, they thought it their duty to remove this stumbling-block. They have ventured to presume, that the idea which God has given of eternal punishment, was only intended to alarm the impenitent, and that it was very probable God would at last relax the rigorous sentence. But if it were allowed that God had no other design in denouncing eternal punishments than that of alarming sinners, would it become us to oppose his wise purpose, and with our unhallowed hands to throw down the batteries, which he had erected against sin? Shall we pretend to dive into his mysterious views? or, having, as it were, extorted his confidence, should we be so indiscreet as to publish it, like the bold adventurer in the fable, who, not content with having stolen fire from heaven for himself, endeavoured to encourage other men to do so? Let us "think soberly," and "not more highly than we ought to think; let us not think above that which is written," Rom. xii. 3; 1 Cor. iv. 6. Let us preach the gospel as God has revealed it. God did not think the doctrine of everlasting punishment injurious to the holiness of his attributes. Let us not pretend to think it will injure them.

None of these reflections remove the difficulty. We proceed then to open four sources of solutions.

1. Observe this general truth. It is not probable, God would threaten mankind with a punishment, the infliction of which would be incompatible with his perfections. If the reality of such a hell as the Scriptures describe be inconsistent with the perfections of the Creator, such a hell ought not to have been affirmed, yea, it could not have been revealed. The eminence of the holiness of God will not allow him to terrify his creatures with the idea of a punishment, which he cannot inflict without injustice; and considering the weakness of our reason, and the narrow limits of our knowledge, we ought not to say, such a thing is unjust, therefore it is not revealed: but, on the contrary, we should rather say, such a thing is revealed, therefore it is just.

2. Take each part of the objection drawn from the attributes of God, and said to destroy our doctrine, and consider it separately. The

argument taken from the liberty of God would carry us from error to error, and from one absurdity to another. For, if God be free to relax any part of the punishment denounced, he is equally free to relax the whole. If we may infer, that he will certainly release the sufferer from a part, because he is at liberty to do so, we have an equal right to presume he will release from the whole, and there would be no absurdity in affirming the one, after we had allowed the other. If there be no absurdity in presuming that God will release the whole punishment denounced against the impenitent, behold! all systems of conscience, providence, and religion, fall of themselves, and, if these systems fall, what, pray, become of all these perfections of God, which you pretend to defend?

The objection taken from the liberty of God might seem to have some colour, were hell spoken of only in passages where precepts were enforced by threatenings: but attend to the places, in which Jesus Christ speaks of it. Read, for example, the twenty-fifth of Matthew, and there you will perceive are facts, prophecies, and exact and circumstantial narrations. There it is said, the world shall end, Jesus Christ shall descend from heaven, there shall be a judgment of mankind, the righteous shall be rewarded, the wicked shall be punished, "shall go away into everlasting punishment." How can these things be reconciled to the truth of God, if he fail to execute any one of these articles?

The difficulty taken from the goodness of God vanishes, when we rectify popular notions of this excellence of the divine nature. Goodness in men is a virtue of constitution, which makes them suffer, when they see their fellow-creatures in misery, and which excites them to relieve them. In God it is a perfection independent in its origin, free in its execution, and always restrained by laws of inviolable equity, and exact severity.

Justice is not incompatible with eternal punishment. It is not to be granted, that a sin committed in a limited time ought not to be punished through an infinite duration. It is not the length of time employed in committing a crime, that determines the degree and the duration of its punishment, it is the turpitude and atrociousness of it. The justice of God, far from opposing the punishment of the impenitent, requires it. Consider this earth, which supports us, that sun, which illuminates us, the elements, that nourish us, all the creatures which serve us; are they not so many motives to men to devote their service to God? Consider the patience of God, what opportunities of repentance he gives sinners, what motives and means he affords them. Above all, enter into the sanctuary; meditate on the incarnate word, comprehend, if you can, what it is for a God to "make himself of no reputation," and to "take upon him the form of a servant," Phil. ii. 7. Consider the infinite excellence of God, approach his throne, behold his eyes sparkling with fire, the power and majesty that fill his sanctuary, the heavenly hosts which around his throne fulfil his will; form, if it be possible, some idea of the Supreme Being. Then think, this God united

himself to mortal flesh, and suffered for mankind all the rigours, that the madness of men, and the rage of devils could invent. I cannot tell, my brethren, what impressions these objects make on you. For my part, I ingenuously own, that, could any thing render Christianity doubtful to me, what it affirms of this mystery would do so. I have need, I declare, of all my faith, and of all the authority of him, who speaks in Scripture, to persuade me, that God would condescend to such a humiliation as this. If, amidst the darkness which conceals this mystery, I discover any glimmering that reduces it in a sort to my capacity, it arises from the sentence of eternal punishment, which God has threatened to inflict on all, who finally reject this great sacrifice. Having allowed the obligations under which the incarnation lays mankind, everlasting punishment seems to me to have nothing in it contrary to divine justice. No, the burning lake with its smoke, eternity with its abysses, devils with their rage, and all hell with all its horrors, seem to me not at all too rigorous for the punishment of men, who have "trodden under foot the Son of God, counted the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, crucified the Son of God afresh, and done despite unto the Spirit of grace," Heb. x. 29; and vi. 6. Were we to examine in this manner each part of the objection opposed against our doctrine, we should open a second source of solutions to answer it.

3. The doctrine of degrees of punishment affords us a third. I have often observed with astonishment the little use, that Christians in general make of this article, since the doctrine itself is taught in Scripture in the clearest manner. When we speak of future punishment, we call it all hell indifferently, and without distinction. We conceive of all the wicked as precipitated into the same gulf, loaded with the same chains, devoured by the same worm. We do not seem to think, there will be as much difference in their state as there had been in their natural capacities, their exterior means of obtaining knowledge, and their various aids to assist them in their pursuit of it. We do not recollect, that, as perhaps there may not be two men in the world, who have alike partaken the gifts of Heaven, so probably there will not be two wicked spirits in hell enduring an equal degree of punishment. There is an extreme difference between a heathen and a Jew; there is an extreme distance between a Jew and a Christian; and a greater still between a Christian and a heathen. The gospel rule is, "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required," Luke xii. 48. There must, therefore, be as great a difference in the other life between the punishment of a Jew and that of a pagan, between that of a pagan and that of a Jew, between that of a pagan and that of a Christian, as there is between the states in which God has placed them on earth. Moreover, there is a very great difference between one Jew and another, between pagan and pagan, Christian and Christian. Each has in his own economy more or less of talents. There must therefore be a like difference between the punishment of one Christian and that of another, the punishment of one Jew and that of another Jew, the suffering of one pagan and

that of another: and consequently, when we say, a pagan wise according to his own economy, and a Christian foolish according to his, are both in hell, we speak in a very vague and equivocal manner.

To how many difficulties have men submitted by not attending to this doctrine of degrees of punishment! Of what use, for example, might it have been to answer objections concerning the destiny of pagans! As eternal punishment has been considered under images, that excite all the most excruciating pains, it could not be imagined how God should condemn the wise heathens to a state that seemed suited only to monsters, who disfigure nature and subvert society. Some, therefore, to get rid of this difficulty, have widened the gate of heaven, and allowed other ways of arriving there, besides that "whereby we must be saved," Acts iv. 12. Cato, Socrates, and Aristides, have been mixed with the "multitude redeemed to God out of every people and nation," Rev. v. 9. Had the doctrine of diversity of punishments been properly attended to the condemnation of the heathens would not have appeared inconsistent with the perfections of God, provided it had been considered only as a punishment proportional to what was defective in their state, and criminal in their life. For no one has a right to tax God with injustice for punishing pagans, unless he could prove that the degree of their pain exceeded that of their sin; and as no one is able to make this combination, because Scripture positively assures us, God will observe this proportion, so none can murmur against his conduct without being guilty of blasphemy.

But, above all, the doctrine of degrees of punishment elucidates that of the eternity of them. Take this principle, which Scripture establishes in the clearest manner; press home all its consequences; extend it as far as it can be carried; give scope even to your imagination, till the punishments which such and such persons suffer in hell are reduced to a degree, that may serve to solve the difficulty of the doctrine of their eternity; whatever system you adopt on this article, I will even venture to say, whatever difficulty you may meet with in following it, it will always be more reasonable, I think, to make of one doctrine clearly revealed, a clew to guide through the difficulties of another doctrine clearly revealed too, than rashly to deny the former decisions of Scripture. I mean to say, it would be more rational to stretch the doctrine of degrees too far, if I may venture to speak so, than to deny that of their eternity.

4. The fourth source of solutions is a maxim from which a divine ought never to depart; and which we wish particularly to inculcate among those who extend the operations of reason too far in matters of religion. Our maxim is this. We know indeed in general, what are the attributes of God; but we are extremely ignorant of their sphere, we cannot determine how far they extend. We know in general, God is free, he is just, he is merciful; but we are too ignorant to determine how far these perfections must go; because the infinity of them absorbs the capacity of our minds. An example may render our meaning plain. Suppose two philosophers subsisting before the

creation of this world, and conversing together on the plan of the world, which God was about to create. Suppose the first of these philosophers affirming—God is going to create intelligent creatures—he could communicate such a degree of knowledge to them as would necessarily conduct them to supreme happiness—but he intends to give them a reason, which may be abused, and may conduct them from ignorance to vice, and from vice to misery.—Moreover, God is going to create a world, in which virtue will be almost always in irons, and vice on a throne—tyrants will be crowned, and pious people confounded. Suppose the first of our philosophers to maintain these theses, how think you? Would not the second have reasoned against this plan? Would he not, in all appearance, have had a right to affirm—It is impossible that God, being full of goodness, should create men, whose existence would be fatal to their happiness—It is impossible a Being, supremely holy, should suffer sin to enter the world? Yet, how plausible soever, the reasons of this philosopher might then have appeared, the event has since justified the truth of the first plan. It is certain God has created the world on the plan of the first; and it is also as certain, that this world has nothing incompatible with the perfections of God, how difficult soever we may find it to answer objections. It is our diminitiveness, the narrowness of our minds, and the immensity of the Deity, which prevent our knowing how far his attributes can go.

Apply this to our subject. The idea of hell seems to you repugnant to the attributes of God, you cannot comprehend how a just God can punish finite sins with infinite pain; how a merciful God can abandon his creature to eternal miseries. Your difficulties have some probability, I grant. Your reasons, I allow, seem well-grounded. But dost thou remember, the attributes of God are infinite? Remember, thy knowledge is finite. Remember the two philosophers disputing on the plan of the world. Remember the event has discarded the difficulties of the last, and justified the plan of the first. Now, the revelation of future punishments in our system, is equal to event in that of the first philosopher. They are revealed. You think future punishment inconsistent with the attributes of God: but your notion of inconsistency ought to vanish at the appearance of Scripture-light.

Thus we have indicated a few proofs of the doctrine of eternal punishments. We have endeavoured to convince you, that what the Scriptures teach us on the duration of the punishments of the wicked is neither repugnant to the nature of God, nor to the nature of man. We will now lay aside these ideas, and endeavour to improve the few moments that remain, by addressing your consciences. Having shown you the doctrine of eternal punishments as taught in Scripture, and approved by reason, we will try to show it you as an object terrible and affecting. But, while we are endeavouring as much as possible, to accommodate ourselves to your impatience, use some efforts with yourselves; and if ever, through indulgence for our person, or through respect to our doctrine, you have opened access

to your hearts, grant it, I entreat you, to what I am going to propose.

III. Observe the quality, and the duration of the punishments of hell. The quality is expressed in these words, *smoke, torment*. The duration in these, “ascend up for ever and ever.”

[1.] The *quality* of the punishment of hell is expressed in these terms, *smoke, torment*. The metaphorical terms include five ideas. Privation of heavenly happiness—Sensation of pain—remorse of conscience—horror of society—increase of crime.

1. *A privation of celestial happiness* is the first idea of hell, an idea which we are incapable of forming fully in this life. We have eyes of flesh and blood. We judge of happiness and misery according to this flesh and blood, and as things relate to our families, our fortunes, our professions, and we seldom think we have immortal souls. In the great day of retribution all these veils will be taken away. Darkness will be dissipated, scales will fall from our eyes, the chief good will be known: but what will be the condition of him, who no sooner discovers the chief good than he discovers also, that he shall be for ever deprived of it! Repressen. *b* yourself a man constrained to see, and made by his own experience to know, that the pleasures, the grandeurs, and all the riches of this world, are nothing but wind and smoke: and that true felicity consists in communion with God, in beholding his perfections, and participating his glory: or, to use emblems taken from Scripture, represent to yourselves a man, who shall see the nuptial chamber of the bridegroom, his triumphant pomp, and his magnificent palace; and who shall see all these glorious objects as felicities, which his crimes forbid him to enjoy. What regrets! What despair! Lord of nature! Being of beings! Adorable assemblage of all perfections! Eternal Father! Well-beloved Son! Holy Spirit! glorious body of my divine Redeemer! archangels! cherubim! seraphim! powers! dominions! general assembly of the first-born! myriads of angels! apostles! martyrs! saints of all ages, and of all nations! unfading crown! perfect knowledge! communion of a soul with its God! throne of glory! fulness of joy! rivers of pleasure! all which I see, all which I know, and wish to enjoy, even while avenging justice separates me from you; am I then for ever excluded from all your ineffable delights? Are you all shown to me to make me more sensible of my misery? And do you display so much felicity only to render my pain more acute, and my destruction more terrible?

2. Consider *painful sensations*. To these belong all the expressions of Scripture just now mentioned, “darkness, blackness of darkness, thirst, fire, lake burning with fire and brimstone,” and all these to such a degree, that the damned would esteem as an invaluable benefit one drop of water “to cool their tongues,” Luke xvi. 24. We dare not pretend to determine, that hell consists of material fire. But if you recollect that we just now observed the power of God to excite in our souls such sensations as he pleases, if to this reflection you add this remark, that Scripture almost always employs the idea of fire to express the pains of

hell, you will be inclined to believe, that most of these unhappy sufferers literally endure torments like those, which men burning in flames feel; whether God act immediately on their souls, or unite them to particles of material fire. The very name given in Scripture to the fire of hell has something very significant in it. It is called "the fire of Gehenna," Matt. v. 22. This word is compounded of words, which signify "the valley of Hinnon." This valley was rendered famous by the abominable sacrifices which the idolatrous Jews offered to Moloch. They set up a hollow brazen figure, enclosed their children in it, kindled fires underneath, and in this horrible manner consumed the miserable infant victims of their cruel superstition. This is an image of hell. Terrible image! We have no need of abstract and metaphysical ideas. Who among us could patiently bear his hand one hour in fire? Who would not tremble to be condemned to pass one day in this monstrous machine? And who, who could bear to be eternally confined in it? When we see a criminal in chains, given up to an executioner of human justice, and just going to be burned to death, nature shudders at the sight, the flesh of spectators shivers, and the cries of the sufferer rend their heart, and excite painful compassion in all the emotions of the soul. What must it be to be delivered up to an executioner of divine justice? What to be cast into the fire of hell? Delicate flesh! feeble organs of a human body! What will you do when you are cast into the quick and devouring flames of hell!

3. The third idea of future punishment is that of the *remorse* of conscience. The pains of the mind are as lively and sensible as those of the body. The grief of one man, who loses a person dear to him, the inquietude of another afraid of apparitions and spectres, the gloomy terrors of a third in solitude, the emotions of a criminal receiving his sentence of death, and, above all, the agitation of a conscience filled with a sense of guilt, are pains as lively and sensible as those which are excited by the most cruel torments. What great effects has remorse produced! It has made tyrants tremble. It has smitten the knees of a Belshazzar together in the midst of his courtiers. It has rendered the voluptuous insensible to pleasure, and it has put many hardened wretches upon the rack. It has done more. It has forced some, who upon scaffolds and wheels have denied their crimes, after a release, to confess them, to find out a judge, to give evidence against themselves, and to implore the mercy of a violent death, more tolerable than the agonies of their guilty souls. This will be the state of the damned. This will be "the worm that never dies," and which will consume their souls. This will be the cruel vulture, that will devour their vitals. Conscience will be obliged to do homage to an avenging God. It will be forced to acknowledge, that the motives of the gospel were highly proper to affect every man, who had not made his "face as an adamant, his forehead harder than a flint." It will be forced to acknowledge, that the goodness of God had been enough to penetrate every heart, even those which were least capable of gratitude. It will be constrained to own, that the succours

of the Spirit of God had been more than sufficient of themselves. It will be driven to own, that the destruction of man came of himself, and that he sacrificed his salvation to vain imaginations, more delusive than vanity itself. The testimony of a good conscience has supported martyrs in fire and tortures. When a martyr said to himself, I suffer for truth, I plead a good cause, I bear my Saviour's cross. I am a martyr for God himself; he was happy in spite of seeming horrors. But when the reproaches of conscience are added to terrible torments, when the sufferer is obliged to say to himself, I am the author of my own punishment, I suffer for my own sins, I am a victim of vice, a victim for the devil; nothing can equal his horror and despair.

4. A fourth idea is taken from the horror of the *society* in hell. How great soever the misery of a man on earth may be, he bears it with patience, when a wise discourse is addressed to him for his consolation, when a friend opens his bosom to him, when a father shares his sufferings, and a charitable hand endeavours to wipe away his tears. The conversation of a grave and sympathizing friend diminishes his troubles, softens his pains, and charms him under his afflictions, till he becomes easy and happy in them. But, good God! what society is that in hell! Imagine yourselves condemned to pass all your days with those odious men, who seem formed only to trouble the world. Imagine yourselves shut up in a close prison with a band of reprobates. Imagine yourselves lying on a death-bed, and having no other comforters than traitors and assassins. This is an image of hell! Good God! what a society! tyrants, assassins, blasphemers, Satan with his angels, the prince of the air with all his infamous legions!

From all these ideas results a fifth, an *increase of sin*. Self-love is the governing passion of mankind. It is that which puts all the rest in motion, and all the rest either spring from it, or are supported by it. It is not in the power of man to love a being, who has no relation to his happiness; and it is not possible for him to avoid hating one, who employs his power to make him miserable. As God will aggravate the sufferings of the damned, by displaying his attributes, their hatred of him will be unbounded, their torment will excite their hatred, their hatred will aggravate their torment. Is not this the height of misery? To hate by necessity of nature the Perfect Being, the Supreme Being, the Sovereign Beauty, in a word, to hate God; does not this idea present to your minds a state the most melancholy, the most miserable? One chief excellence of the glory of happy spirits, is a consummate love to their Creator. One of the most horrible punishments of hell, is the exclusion of divine love. O miserable state of the damned! In it they utter as many blasphemies against God as the happy souls in heaven shout hallelujahs to his praise.

These are the punishments of condemned souls. It remains only that we consider the length and duration of them. But by what means, my brethren, shall we describe these profound articles of contemplation? Can we number the innumerable, and measure that

which is beyond all mensuration? Can we make you comprehend the incomprehensible? And shall we amuse you, with our imaginations?

For my part, when I endeavour to represent eternity to myself, I avail myself of whatever I can conceive most long and durable. I heap imagination on imagination, conjecture on conjecture. First, I consider those long lives, which all men wish, and some attain; I observe those old men, who live four or five generations, and who alone make the history of an age. I do more, I turn to ancient chronicles. I go back to the patriarchal age, and consider a life extending through a thousand years; and I say to myself, All this is not eternity; all this is only a point in comparison of eternity.

Having represented to myself real objects, I form ideas of imaginary ones. I go from our age to the time of publishing the gospel, from thence to the publication of the law, from the law to the flood, from the flood to the creation. I join this epoch to the present time, and I imagine Adam yet living. Had Adam lived till now, and had he lived in misery, had he passed all his time in a fire, or on a rack, what idea must we form of his condition? At what price would we agree to expose ourselves to misery so great? What imperial glory would appear glorious, were it followed by so much woe? Yet this is not eternity; all this is nothing in comparison of eternity.

I go farther still. I proceed from imagination to imagination, from one supposition to another. I take the greatest number of years that can be imagined. I add ages to ages, millions of ages to millions of ages. I form of all these one fixed number, and I stay my imagination. After this, I suppose God to create a world like this, which we inhabit. I suppose him creating it by forming one atom after another, and employing in the production of each atom the time fixed in my calculation, just now mentioned. What numberless ages would the creation of such a world in such a manner require! Then I suppose the Creator to arrange these atoms, and to pursue the same plan of arranging them as of creating them. What numberless ages would such an arrangement require! Finally, I suppose him to dissolve and annihilate the whole; and observing the same method in this dissolution as he observed in the creation and disposition of the whole. What an immense duration would be consumed! Yet this is not eternity; all this is only a point in comparison of eternity.

Associate now all these suppositions, my brethren, and of all these periods make one fixed period; multiply it again, and suppose yourselves to pass in multiplying it, a time equal to that, which the period contains; it is literally and strictly true, all this is not eternity; all this is only a point in comparison of eternity.

My God! one night passed in a burning fever, or in struggling in the waves of the sea between life and death, appears of an immense length! It seems to the sufferer as if the sun had forgot its course, and as if all the laws of nature itself were subverted. What, then, will be the state of those miserable victims to divine displeasure, who, after they shall have passed through the ages, which we have been describ-

ing, will be obliged to make this overwhelming reflection, All this is only an atom of our misery! What will their despair be, when they shall be forced to say to themselves, again we must revolve through these enormous periods; again we must suffer a privation of celestial happiness; devouring flames again; cruel remorse again; crimes and blasphemies over and over again! *For ever! for ever!* Ah, my brethren! my brethren! how severe is this woe even in this life! How great is a misfortune, when it is incapable of relief! How insupportable, when we are obliged to add for ever to it! These irons for ever! these chains for ever! this prison for ever! this universal contempt for ever! this domestic trouble for ever! Poor mortals! how short-sighted are you to call sorrows eternal, which end with your lives! What! this life! this life, that passes with the rapidity of a "weaver's shuttle!" Job vii. 6, this life, which vanishes "like a sleep!" Ps. xc. 5, is this what you call for ever! Ah! absorbing periods of eternity, accumulated myriads of ages; these, if I may be allowed to speak so, these will be the FOR EVER of the damned!

I sink under the weight of this subject; and I declare, when I see my friends, my relations, the people of my charge, this whole congregation; when I think, that I, that you, that we are all threatened with these torments; when I see in the lukewarmness of my devotions, in the languor of my love, in the levity of my resolutions and designs, the least evidence, though it be only probable, or presumptive, of my future misery, yet I find in the thought a mortal poison, which diffuses itself into every period of my life, rendering society tiresome, nourishment insipid, pleasure disgustful, and life itself a cruel bitter. I cease to wonder, that a fear of hell has made some melancholy, and others mad; that it has inclined some to expose themselves to a living martyrdom by fleeing from all commerce with the rest of mankind, and others to suffer the most violent and terrible torments. But the more terror this idea inspires, the more inexcusable are we, if it produce no good fruits in us. The idea of eternity ought to subvert all our sinful projects. In order to avoid eternal misery, all should be suffered, all surmounted, all undertaken, sinful self should be crucified, and the whole man devoted in holy sacrifice to God. Let each particle of our bodies, become a victim to penitence, let each moment of life expose us to a new martyrdom; still we should be happy, could we avoid the flaming sword, that hangs over our heads, and escape the gulfs of misery, which yawn beneath our feet.

My brethren, have you heard what I have been speaking? have you well reflected on what I said? Perhaps I may have weakened these great truths. Perhaps I may have left many proper things unsaid. Yet, methinks, if you have thoroughly comprehended what little I have said, you will become new men.

Remember, we have not exceeded the truth; all we have said is taken from Scripture, from those Scriptures which you profess to believe, so, that if you deny these truths, you must deny your own faith, Christianity, religion.

Remember, we have taken our evidences from that part of Scripture, which you con-



sider as the most kind and comfortable, I mean the gospel. Renounce, I beseech you, at once; this miserable prejudice, that under the gospel, we ought not to speak of hell. On the contrary, it is the gospel that reveals it in its clearest light; it is the gospel which proves it; it is the gospel that describes it; the gospel says, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire," Matt. xxv. 41. It is the gospel that says, "The servant which knew his lord's will, and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes," Luke xii. 47. It is the gospel that says, "If we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin; but a certain fearful looking-for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries," Heb. x. 26, 27.

Remember the doctrine of degrees of punishment, which seems to diminish the horrors of hell in regard to pagans, and Christians educated in superstition and ignorance, has every thing in it to augment the horror of future pain in regard to such Christians as most of us are.

Recollect what sort of persons God reserves for this state. Not only assassins, murderers, highway robbers; but also apostates, who know the truth, but who sacrifice through worldly interests the profession of truth to idolatry; misers, usurers, unjust persons, gluttons; unclean, implacable, lifeless lukewarm professors of Christianity; all these are included in the guilt and punishment of sin.

Remember, we must be wilfully blind, if we deny, that in this town, in this church, in this flock, in this assembly, among you, my hearers, who listen to me, and look at me, there are such persons as I just now mentioned, each of whom must come to this reflection; I myself, I perhaps, am in a state of damnation, perhaps my name is one in the fatal list of those at whom these threatenings point.

Go farther yet. Remember, this life is the only time given you to prevent these terrible punishments. After this life, no more exhortations, no more sermons, no more admission of sighs and tears, no more place for repentance.

After this, think on the brevity of life.—Think, there may be perhaps only one year granted, perhaps only one month, perhaps only one day, perhaps only one hour, perhaps only one moment, to avoid this misery; so that perhaps, (O Lord, avert the dreadful supposition!) perhaps some one of us may this very day experience all these torments and pains.

Finally, consider the spirit, that this moment animates us, the drift of this discourse, and, to say more, consider what God is now doing in your favour. In a plenitude of compassion, and with bowels of the tenderest love, he entreats and exhorts you to escape these terrible miseries; he conjures you not to destroy yourselves; he says to you, "O that my people would hearken unto me. Be instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee! Why, why will ye die? O house of Israel!" Ps. lxxxi. 8; Jer. vi. 8. O! were we wise, these expostulations would reign over our hearts! O! if there remained the least spark of reason in us, the frightful image of hell would henceforth make the deepest impressions on our souls!

Frightful ideas of judgment and hell! may you be always in my mind, when the world would decoy me to stain my ministry by its vain and glaring snares! Frightful ideas of judgment and hell! may you strike all these hearers so as to give success to this sermon, and weight to our ministry! Frightful ideas of judgment and hell! may you ever follow us, so that by knowing the terror of avenging justice, and the unspeakable value of grace set before us, we may be rendered capable of participating eternal glory; which I wish you, my brethren, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

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## SERMON XLI.

### THE UNIFORMITY OF GOD IN HIS GOVERNMENT.

HEBREWS xiii. 8.

*Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.*

ST. PAUL gives us a very beautiful idea of God, when he says, "The wisdom of God is manifold," Eph. iii. 10. The first great cause, the Supreme Being, has designs infinitely diversified. This appears by the various beings which he has created, and by the different ways in which he governs them.

What a variety in created beings! A material world, and an intelligent world! Matter variously modified, or, as the apostle speaks, "One kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, another of birds, celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial; one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon," and so on to an infinite multitude. There is a similar variety of spirits; men, angels, seraphim, cherubim, powers, dominions, archangels, and thrones.

What a variety in the manner in which God governs these beings? To restrain ourselves to men only, are not some loaded with benefits, and others depressed with adversities? Does he not enlighten some by nature, others by the law, and others by the gospel? Did he not allow the antediluvians one period of life, the cities of the plain another, and us another; the first he overwhelmed with water, the next consumed by fire, and the last by an endless variety of means.

But, although there be a diversity in the conduct of God, it is always a diversity of wisdom. Whether he creates a material or an intelligent world; whether he forms celestial or terrestrial bodies, men, angels, seraphim, or cherubim; whether he governs the universe by the same, or by different laws; in all cases, and at all times, he acts like a God; he has only one principle, and that is order. There is a harmony in his perfections, which he never disconcerts. There is in his conduct a uniformity, which is the great character of his actions. His variety is always wise; or, to repeat the words just now mentioned, "the wisdom of God is of many kinds."

These great truths we intend to set before you to-day; for on these the apostle intended to treat in his epistle to the Hebrews. Look,

said he, on the present period, reflect on past times, anticipate the future, run through all dimensions of time, dive into the abysses of eternity, you will always find the perfections of God in exact harmony, you will perceive an exact uniformity characterize his actions, you will acknowledge, that Jesus Christ is the "true God and eternal life, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever," 1 John v. 20.

Are you disposed, my brethren, to elevate your minds a little while above sense and matter? Can you sufficiently suspend the impressions, which sensible objects made on your minds last week, to give such an attention to this subject as its nature and importance demand? Let us then enter into the matter, and God grant while we are contemplating to-day the harmony of his perfections, and the uniformity of his government, we may be "changed into his image from glory to glory, even as by his Spirit." God grant, as far as it is compatible with the inconstancy essential to human nature, we may be always the same, and amidst the perpetual vicissitudes of life may have only one principle, that is to obey and please him! Amen.

I shall connect, as well as I can, the different explications of my text; I would rather conciliate them in this manner, than consume my hour in relating, and comparing them, and in selecting the most probable from them.

These expositions may be reduced to three classes. Some say, the apostle speaks of the person of Jesus Christ; others of his doctrine; and a third class apply the passage to the protection that he affords his church.

The first class of expositors, who apply the text to the person of Jesus Christ, are not unanimous to the strict sense of the word; some think, the apostle speaks of the human nature of Jesus Christ; and others say, he speaks of his divine nature. The latter take the text for a proof of his eternity; and according to them, the words are synonymous to these, "I am Alpha and Omega, the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty," Rev. i. 8.

The former consider the apostle as speaking of Christ either as man, or as mediator; and according to them, St. Paul means to say, The Saviour, whom I propose to you, was the Saviour of Adam, of Abraham, and of the whole church, agreeably to what I have elsewhere affirmed. "Him hath God set forth a propitiation through faith, for the remission of sins that are past," Rom. iii. 25; that is, his sacrifice always was the relief of sinners.

The second class of interpreters affirm, that St. Paul does not speak of the person of Jesus Christ: but of his doctrine. In this view the text must be connected with the words which immediately follow, "be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines." Why would not the apostle have Christians carried about with divers doctrines? Because Jesus Christ, that is Christianity, the religion taught by Jesus Christ, is always the same, and is not subject to the uncertainty of any human science.

But other expositors ascribe a quite different sense to the words, and say, the apostle speaks neither of the person of Christ, nor of his doctrine, but of that protection which he af-

fords believers. According to this, the text has no connexion with the following verse, but with that which goes before. St. Paul had been proposing to the believing Hebrews, the examples of their ancestors and predecessors, some of whom had sealed the doctrine of the gospel with their blood. "Remember" your guides, "who have spoken unto you the word of God; whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation." In order to induce them to imitate these bright examples, he adds, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever;" that is to say, he supported, and rewarded his primitive martyrs, and he will confirm and crown all who shall have courage to follow their example.

It would be easy to multiply this list of various opinions: but, as I said, I will connect the three different expositions which have been mentioned, and endeavour to show you the admirable harmony of the perfections of God, and the uniformity of his actions in regard to mankind; first as they appear in the economy of time; and secondly, in that of eternity; and we will attempt to prove that God is the same in both.

I. We see in the economy of time four remarkable varieties. 1. A variety in the degrees of knowledge given to the church. 2. A variety in the worship required of it. 3. A variety in the nature of the evidences, on which it has pleased God to found the faith of the church. 4. A variety in the laws, that he has thought proper to prescribe. At one time he gave only a small degree of knowledge; at another he drew aside the veil, and exposed to public view the whole body of truth and knowledge. At one time he prescribed the observation of a great many gross ceremonies along with that spiritual worship, which he required of men; at another time he required a worship altogether spiritual and free from ceremonial usages. At one time his laws tolerated some remains of concupiscence: at another time he commanded the eradication of every fibre of sin. At one time the church saw sensible miracles, and grounded faith on them; at another time faith followed a train of reasoning, made up of principle and consequences. At one time the church participated worldly pomps and grandeurs; at another it experienced all the misery and ignominy of the world.

A work so different, and, in some sort, so opposite in its parts, is, however, the work of one and the same God. And what is more remarkable, a work, the parts of which are so different and so opposite, arises from one principle; that is, from the union and harmony of the divine perfections. The same principle, that inclined God to grant the church a small degree of light at one time, engaged him to grant a greater degree at another time. The same principle which induced him to require a gross worship under the economy of the law, inclined him to exact a worship wholly spiritual under the gospel; and so of the rest.

I. We see in God's government of his church, various degrees of light communicated. Compare the time of Moses with that of the prophets, and that of the prophets with that of the evangelists and apostles, and the difference will be evident. Moses did not enter into a particular detail concerning God,

the world in general, or man in particular. It should seem, the principal view of this legislator, in regard to God, was to establish the doctrine of his unity; at most to give a vague idea of his perfections. It should seem, his chief design in regard to the world in general was to prove that it was the production of that God, whose unity he established. And, in regard to man in particular, it should seem, his principal drift was to teach, that, being a part of a world which had a beginning, he himself had a beginning; that he derived his existence from the same Creator, and from him only could expect to enjoy a happy existence.

Pass from the reading of the writings of Moses to a survey of the prophecies; thence proceed to the gospels and epistles, and you will see truth unfold as the sacred roll opens. You will be fully convinced, that as John the Baptist had more knowledge than any of his predecessors, so he himself had less than any of his followers.

In these various degrees of knowledge communicated by God to men, I see that uniformity which is the distinguishing character of his actions, and the inviolable rule of his government. The same principle that inclined him to grant a little light to the age of Moses, inclined him to afford more to the time of the prophets, and the greatest of all to the age in which the evangelists and apostles lived.—What is this principle? It is a principle of order, which requires that the object proposed to a faculty be proportioned to this faculty; that a truth proposed to an intelligence be proportioned to this intelligence.

What proportion would there have been between the truths proposed to the Israelites, when they came out of Egypt, and the state in which they then were, had God revealed all the doctrines to them which he has since revealed to us? Could a people born in slavery, employed in the meanest works, without education, meditation, and reading, attain a just notion of those sublime ideas, which the prophets have given us of the Deity? How could God have enabled them to conceive rightly of these truths unless he had more than assisted them, unless he had new made them? And how could he have recreated them, if I may speak so, as far as was necessary to fit them for understanding these truths, without annihilating their faculties, and without violating that law of order, which requires every one to make use of his own faculties? What proportion would there have been between the state of the Israelites and their abilities, had God revealed to them some doctrines taught us in the gospel? These would have been, through the stupidity of the people, useless, and even dangerous to them. Thus we may justly suppose of some prophecies concerning the Messiah; had they represented him in such a manner as the event has shown him to us, the representation, far from attaching them to the worship of God, would have tempted them to conform to that of some other nations, which was more agreeable to their concupiscence. Particularly, of the doctrine of the Trinity, which makes so considerable a part of the Christian system, we may justly suppose what I have said. A people who had lived among

idolaters, a people, who had been accustomed not only to multiply gods, but also to deify the meanest creatures, could such a people have been told without danger, that in the Divine essence there was a Father, a Son, and a Holy Spirit? Would not this doctrine have been a snare too powerful for their reason? If they so often fell into polytheism, that is, into the notion of a plurality of Gods, in spite of all the precautions that Moses used to preserve them from it, what, pray, would have been the case, had their religion itself seemed to favour it?

If we follow this reasoning, we shall see, that when the church was in a state of infancy, God proportioned his revelation to an infant state, as he proportioned it to a mature age, when the church had arrived at maturity.—This is an idea of St. Paul, “When I was a child, I thought as a child,” 1 Cor. xiii. 11. I thought the perfections of the great God had some likeness to the imperfections of men, at least, I was not sufficiently struck with the immense distance between human imperfections and divine excellence; I represented God to myself as a being agitated with human passions, and capable of wrath, jealousy, and repentance: “But when I became a man, I put away childish things;” God made me understand, what he described himself to be under these emblems, for the sake of proportioning himself to my capacity, condescending, as it were, to lisp with me, in order to learn me to speak plainly. “When I was a child, I thought as a child;” I thought it was a matter of great consequence to man to have fruitful fields, heavy harvests, and victorious armies; I thought a long life, protracted through several ages, the greatest felicity that a mortal could enjoy: “But when I became a man, I put away childish things;” God then revealed to me his design in proposing motives to me adapted to my weakness; it was to attract me to himself by these incitements; then I understood, that the longest life, how happy and splendid soever it might be, fell infinitely short of satisfying the wants and desires of a soul, conscious of its own dignity, and answering to the excellence of its origin: I was convinced, that a soul aspiring to eternal felicity, and filled with the noble ambition of participating the happiness of the immortal God; considers with equal indifference the highest and the meanest offices in society, riches and poverty, the short duration of twenty years, and the little longer of a hundred. “When I was a child, I thought as a child;” I thought the Messiah, so often promised in the prophecies, so often represented in types, and expected with so much ardour by the church, would come to hold a superb court, to march at the head of a numerous army, to erect a throne, to seat himself there, and to make the Romans, the conquerors of the whole earth, lick the dust: “But when I became a man I put away childish things;” God informed me, that a Messiah, sent to make me happy, must come, to restrain my avidity for the world, and not to gratify it, to check my passions, and not to irritate them; he instructed me, that a Messiah, appointed to redeem mankind, must be fastened to a cross, and not seated on

a throne, must subdue the devil, death, and sin, and not the Romans; must be despised and rejected, and not encircled with a pompous court.

2. What justifies the government of God on one of these articles, on the various degrees of light bestowed on his church, will fully justify him in regard to the *worship* required by him. Let Jesus Christ, as far as the subject will allow, be opposed to Moses; contrast Moses giving a hundred ceremonial precepts along with one precept of morality, with Jesus Christ giving a hundred moral precepts with one ceremony. Compare Moses, imposing on the Israelites "heavy burdens grievous to be borne," Matt. xxiii. 4, with Jesus Christ, proposing "an easy yoke and a light burden," chap. xi. 30. Oppose Moses enjoining festivals, purifications, sacrifices, and observances without number, to Jesus Christ reducing all the ritual of his religion to baptism and the Lord's Supper, to a worship the least encumbered, and the most artless and simple, that ever a religion proposed declaring, "Now is the hour, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth," John iv. 23. Notwithstanding this seeming difference, God acts on the uniform principle of order. Uniformity, if I may express myself so, is in him the cause of variety, and the same principle, that engaged him to prescribe a gross sensible worship to the Israelites, engages him to prescribe a worship of another kind to Christians.

Conceive of the Jews, as we have just now described them, enveloped in matter, loving to see the objects of their worship before their eyes, and, as they themselves said, to have "gods going before them," Exod. xxxii. 1. Imagine these gross creatures coming into our assemblies, how could they, being all sense and imagination (so to speak), exercise the better powers of their souls, without objects operating on fancy and sense? How could they have made reflection, meditation, and thought, supply the place of hands and eyes, they, who hardly knew what it was to meditate? How could they, who had hardly any idea of spirituality, have studied the nature of God abstractly, which yet is the only way of conducting us to a clear knowledge of a spiritual Being?

If there ever was a religion proper to spiritualize men; if ever a religion was fitted to produce attention and emulation, and to fix our ideas on an invisible God, certainly it is the Christian religion. And yet how few Christians are capable of approaching God, without the aid of sensible objects! Whence come those rich altars, superb edifices, magnificent decorations, statues of silver and gold adorned with precious stones, pompous processions, gaudy habits, and all that heap of ceremonies, with which one whole community employs the minds, or, shall I rather say, amuses the senses of its disciples? All these argue a general disinclination to piety without ceremony. Whence comes another kind of superstition, which, though less gross in appearance, is more so in effect? How is it, that some of you persuade yourselves, that God, though he does not require any longer, the pompous worship of the Jews, will yet be perfectly satisfied with

the observation of the Christian ritual, although it be always unaccompanied with the exercise of the mind, and the emotions of the heart? Whence comes this kind of superstition? It proceeds from the same disposition, a disinclination and a difficulty to approach God without the aid of sensible things. And yet, all things considered, a pompous worship is more worthy of God than a plain worship. The Jew, who offers hecatombs to God, honours the Deity more than the Christian, who offers only prayers to him. The Jew, who cleanses his hands, feet, and habits, when he goes to present himself before God, honours him much more than the Christian, who observes none of these ceremonies, when he approaches him. The Jew, who comes from the farthest part of the world to adore the Deity in an elegant temple, honours God much more than the Christian, who worships him in any mean edifice. But God entrenched pomp in the exterior of religion, lest the capacities of men's minds, too much taken up with pomp, should not furnish those cool reflections of mind, and those just sentiments of heart, of which the Deity appears an object so proper to all who know him, as he is revealed in the gospel. If Christians then, who, through the nature of the revelation, with which God has honoured them, know the Deity better than the Jews knew him, if they find a difficulty in rendering to God a worship of heart and mind proportional to this knowledge, what would have been the difficulties of the Jews, whose degrees of knowledge were so far inferior to ours? The same principle, then, that inclined the Supreme Being to exact of his church a gross ceremonial worship, under ancient dispensations, engages him to require a worship altogether spiritual, and detached from sensible objects, under the dispensation of the gospel.

3. The same may be said of the *evidences*, on which God has founded the faith of his church; and this is our third article. What a striking difference! Formerly the church saw sensible miracles, level to the weakest capacities; at present our faith is founded on a chain of principles and consequences, which find exercise for the most penetrating geniuses. How many times have infidels reproached us on account of this difference! How often have they inferred, that the church never saw miracles, because there are none wrought now! How often have they pretended to prove, that, had miracles ever been wrought, they ought to be performed still! But this triumph is imaginary, and only serves to display the absurdity of those who make parade of it.

A wise being, who proposes a truth to an intelligent creature ought to proportion his proofs not only to the importance of the truth proposed, and to the capacity of him to whom evidence is offered, but also to his own end in proposing it. If he intend only, by proposing a truth, to make it understood, he will give all his arguments as much clearness and facility as they are capable of having: but if he designs, by proposing a truth, to exercise the faculties of him to whom it was proposed; if he intends to put his obedience to the trial, and to render him in some sort worthy of the bene-

fit which he means to bestow; then it will be necessary indeed to place the arguments, on which the truth is founded, in a strong and conclusive point of view; but it will not be necessary to give them all the clearness and facility of which they are capable.

Why, then, you will say, did not God give to the contemporaries of Jesus Christ, and his apostles, such an exercise of capacity as he gives to Christians now? Why should a truth, made so very intelligible then by a seal of miracles, be inaccessible to us, except by the painful way of reasoning and discussion? I deny the principle, on which this objection goes. I do not allow, that God exercised them, who lived in the time of Christ and his apostles, less than he exercises us. Weigh their circumstances against yours; represent Christianity destitute of those arguments, which arise in favour of it from the rejection of the Jews, and the conversion of the Gentiles; imagine men called to own for their God and Redeemer a man, who had "no form, nor comeliness," Isa. liii. 2, a man dragged from one tribunal to another, from one province to another, and at last expiring on a cross. How needful were miracles in these sad times, and, with all their aid, how hard was it to believe! Represent to yourselves the whole world let loose against Christians; imagine the primitive disciples required to believe the heavenly origin of a religion, which called them first to be baptized in water, then in blood. How necessary were miracles in these adverse times, and how hard, with all the encouragement given by them, must the practice of duty be then! Weigh these circumstances against yours, and the balance will appear more equal than you have imagined. There is, you will perceive, a uniformity in God's government of both, even when his government seems so very dissimilar.

4. In like manner, we observe, in the fourth place, a similar uniformity in the various laws prescribed to the church. One of the most famous questions, which the theological debates of the latter ages have produced, is that which regards the difference between the morality of the Old and New Testament. Without pronouncing on the different manners in which the question has been answered, I will content myself with proposing what, I think, ought to be answered. The morality of both dispensations, it may truly be affirmed, in one sense is absolutely the same: but in another sense it is not so. The great principles of morality, both among Jews and Christians, are absolutely the same. There not only is no difference: but there can be none. It would be incompatible with the perfections of the Creator, to suppose, that, having formed an intelligent creature, capable of knowing him, he should dispense with his obligation to this precept, the ground and source of all others, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind," Matt. xxii. 37. This was the morality of Adam and Abraham, Moses and the prophets, Jesus Christ and his apostles.

But if we consider the consequences that result from this principle, and the particular precepts which proceed from it, in these re-

spects morality varies in different periods of the church. At all times, and in all places, God required his church to "love him with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the mind:" but he did not inform his people at all times and in all places the manner in which he required love to express itself. Expressions of love must be regulated by ideas of Deity. Ideas of Deity are more or less pure as God reveals himself more or less clearly. We have seen what a difference there is between Christians and Jews in this respect. We have even proved, that it was founded on the perfections of God, on those laws of proportion, which he inviolably pursues. The laws of proportion, then, which God inviolably follows, and the eminence of his perfections also require, that, as he has made himself known to Christians more fully than he revealed himself to the Jews, so he should require of the disciples of Christ a morality more refined, and more enlarged. Variety, therefore, in this branch of divine government, comes from uniformity, which, as I have often said, is the grand character of his actions.

Let us not pass over this article lightly, it will guard you against the attacks of some corrupters of morality. I speak of those, who, wishing to recall such times of licence as God permitted, or tolerated, before the gospel, retrench the present morality, under pretence that what was once allowable is always allowable. These persons are never weary of repeating, that some favourites of Heaven were not subject to certain laws; that it does not appear in any part of their history, either that God censured their way of living, or that they repented when they were dying. Hence they infer, that some maxims, which are laid down in our usual sermons, and treatises of morality, originate in the gloom of a casuist, or the caprice of a preacher, and not in the will of God. But remember this saying of Jesus Christ, "In the beginning it was not so," Matt. xix. 8. The end of religion is to inform and refine man up to the state in which he was at "the beginning," that is, in a state of innocence. This work is done by degrees. It began in the first age of the church, it will be finished in the last. As God made himself known to believers before the gospel only in part, he regulated the requisite expressions of love to himself by that degree of knowledge of his perfections, which he had given them; for his attributes are the ground of this love. He has made known these attributes more clearly under the gospel, and he apportions the expressions of love accordingly.

But if this article affords us armour against some corrupters of morality, it affords us at the same time, some against you, my dear brethren. When we endeavour to animate you to pious actions by the examples of Moses, David, and many others, who lived under the old dispensation, you allege, that they were saints of the highest class, and that an attainment of such piety as theirs is impossible to you. But recollect our principle. The expressions of our love to God must be regulated by our knowledge of his perfections. The perfections of God are revealed more clearly to Christians than they were to Jews. "Among those, that

were born of women, there was not a greater prophet than John the Baptist; but he, that is least in the kingdom of heaven, is greater than he," Luke vii. 28. The least in love, then (if I may venture to speak so,) the least in love in the kingdom of heaven must be greater than John the Baptist, as John the Baptist was greater than his predecessors. As John, therefore, had a purer morality than the prophets and the patriarchs, so I ought to have a morality purer than that of the patriarchs and the prophets, yea, than John the Baptist himself. A degree of love to God, then, which would have been accounted flame in them, is lukewarmness and ice in me, to whom God has revealed himself as a being so amiable, and so proper to inflame his intelligent creatures with love to him. A certain attachment to life, and to sensible objects, then, which would have been tolerable in them, would be intolerable in me, who, replete as I am with just and high ideas of the Deity, ought only to be aspiring after that state, in which I shall be united to God more closely, than in this valley of imperfections and miseries I am allowed to be.

5. Our fifth article is intended to justify the various *conditions*, in which it has pleased God to place his church. At one time the church enjoys temporal pomp and felicity, at another it is exposed to whatever the world can invent of misery and ignominy. Once the church filled the highest post in Egypt in the persons of Joseph and his family; and afterward it was loaded with Egyptian fetters in the persons of this patriarch's descendants: one while leading a languishing life in a desert; another time attaining the height of its wishes by seeing the waters of Jordan divide to give a passage, by entering the land of promise, by beholding the walls of Jericho fall at the sound of trumpets, by overshadowing with an awful fear the minds of Hittites and Perizzites, Jebusites and Amorites, Canaanites and Amalekites: sometimes torn from this very country, to which a train of miracles had opened an access, led into captivity by Sennacheribs and Nebuchadnezzars, and leaving Jerusalem and its temple a heap of ruins; at other times re-established by Cyrus, and other princes like him, reassembling fugitives who had been scattered over the face of the whole earth, rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, and readorning the temple: now exposed to the most cruel torments, that such as Nero and Domitian, Trajan, Dioclesian, and Decius could invent; then rising from ruin by the liberal aid of Constantine and Theodosius, and princes, who like them, became patrons of the cause. Of this article, as of the former, I affirm, uniformity produced variety; the same principle that produced the happy days of the triumphs of the church, gave birth also to the calamitous times, which caused so many tears.

Let us reason in regard to the church in general, as we reason in regard to each private member of it. Do you think (I speak now to each individual,) there is a dungeon so deep, a chain so heavy, a misery so great, a malady so desperate, from which God cannot deliver you, were your deliverance suitable to the eminence of his perfections? Is there, think you, any condition so noble that he can-

not elevate you to it, any title so desirable that he cannot grace you with it, any treasure too immense for him to bestow, would the law of proportion, his invariable rule, permit him? Or dost thou really think, God takes pleasure in embittering thy life, in taking away thy children, in tarnishing thy glory, in subverting thine establishments, in crushing thy house, and in precipitating thee from the highest human grandeur to the lowest and most mortifying station? Do you think God takes pleasure in seeing a poor wretch stretched on a bed of infirmity, and tormented with the gout or the stone? Has he any delight in hearing an agonized mortal exhale his life in sighs and groans? Why then does he at any time reduce us to these dismal extremities? Order requires God, who intends to save you, to employ those means, which are most likely to conduct you to salvation, or, if you refuse to profit by them, to harden you under them. He wills your salvation, and therefore he removes all your obstacles to salvation. He takes away a child, because it is become an idol; he tarnishes grandeur, because it dazzles and infatuates its possessors; he subverts palaces, because they make men forget graves, their last homes; he precipitates men from pinnacles of earthly glory, because they make them reasons for vanity and insolence; he involves his creatures in pain and torture, because these alone make men feel their diminitiveness, their dependence, their nullity. As order requires God, who wills your salvation, to employ the most proper means to conduct you to it; so the same order requires him to punish contempt of it. It is right, that the blackest ingratitude, and the most invincible obduracy, should be punished with extreme ills. It is just, if God be not glorified in your conversion, he should be in your destruction.

Let us reason in regard to the church in general, as we do in regard to the individuals who compose it. A change in the condition of the church, does not argue any change in the attributes of God. Is his *arm shortened*, since he elevated to a throne those illustrious potentates, who elevated truth and piety along with themselves? Is his hand shortened since he engulfed Pharaoh in the waves? since he obliged Nebuchadnezzar to eat grass like a beast? Since he sent a destroying angel to slay the army of Sennacherib? Since he struck the soul of Belshazzar with terror, by writing with a miraculous hand on the very walls of his profane festal room the sentence of his condemnation? The same eminence of perfections, which engages him sometimes to make all concur to the prosperity of his church, engages him at other times to unite all adversities against it.

II. We have considered Jesus Christ in the economy of time, now let us consider him in the economy of eternity. We shall see in this, as in the former, that harmony of perfections, that uniformity of government, which made our apostle say, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

The same principle, that formed his plan of human government in the economy of time, will form a plan altogether different in that of eternity. The same principle of proportion,

which inclines him to confine our faculties within a narrow circle during this life, will incline him infinitely to extend the sphere of them in a future state.

The same principle which induces him now to communicate himself to us in a small degree, will then induce him to communicate himself to us in a far more eminent degree.

The same principle, that inclines him now to assemble us in material buildings, to cherish our devotion by exercises savouring of the frailty of our state, by the singing of psalms, and by the participation of sacraments, will incline him hereafter to cherish it by means more noble, more sublime, better suited to the dignity of our origin, and to the price of our redemption.

The same principle, which inclines him to involve us now in indigence, misery, contempt, sickness, and death, will then induce him to free us from all these ills, and to introduce us into that happy state, where there will "be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying," and where "all tears shall be wiped away from our eyes," Rev. xxi. 4. Proportion requires, that intelligent creatures should be some time in a state of probation, and this is the nature of the present dispensation: but the same law of proportion requires also, that after intelligent creatures have been some time in a state of trial, and have answered the end of their being placed in such a state, there should be a state of retribution in an eternal economy. The same principle, then, that inclines Jesus Christ to adopt the plan of his present government, will incline him to adopt a different plan in a future state. There is, therefore, a harmony of perfections, a uniformity of action in all the varieties of the two economies. In the economy of time, then, as well as in the economy of eternity, "Jesus Christ is the same."

But who can exhaust this profound subject in the time prescribed for a single sermon? Our time is nearly elapsed, and I must leave you, my brethren, to enlarge on such conclusions as I shall just mention. God is always the same; he pursues one plan of government, arising from one invariable principle. By this truth let us regulate our faith, our morality, and our ideas of our future destiny.

1. Our *faith*. I will venture to affirm, that one chief cause of the weakness of our faith is our inattention to this harmony of perfections, this uniformity of government in God. We generally consider the perfections of God and his actions separately, and independent of those infinite relations, which the last have to the first. Hence, when God displays what we call his justice, he seems to us to cease to be kind, and when he displays what we call goodness, he seems to suspend his rigid justice. Hence it seems to us, his attributes perpetually clash, so that he cannot exercise one without doing violence to another. Hence we sometimes fear God without loving him, and at other times love him without fearing him. Hence we imagine, so to speak, many different gods in one deity, and are ignorant whether the good God will favour us with his benefits, or the just God will punish us with his avenging strokes.

False ideas! more tolerable in people involved

in pagan regions of darkness and shadows of death than in such a live where the light of the gospel shines with so much splendour. Let us adore only one God, and let us acknowledge in him only one perfection, that is to say, a harmony, which results from all his perfections. When he displays what we call his bounty, let us adore what we call his justice; and when he displays what we call his justice, let us adore what we call his goodness. Let us allow, that the exercise of one attribute is no way injurious to another. If this idea be impressed upon our minds, our faith will never be shaken, at least it will never be destroyed by the vicissitudes of the world, or by those of the church. Why? Because we should be fully convinced, that the vicissitudes of both proceed from the same cause, I mean the immutability of that God, who says by the mouth of one of his prophets, "I, the Lord, change not," Mal. iii. 6.

2. But, when I began this discourse, I besought God, that, by considering this subject, we might be "changed into the same image by his Spirit," and this petition I address to him again for you. God has only one principle of his actions, that is, proportion, order, fitness of things. Let love of order be the principle of all your actions, my dear brethren, it is the character of a Christian, and would to God it were the character of all my hearers. A Christian has only one principle of action. We often see him perform actions, which seem to have no relation; however, they all proceed from the same principle. The same motive, that carries him to church, engages him to go to court; he goes into the army on the same principle, that induces him to visit an hospital; the motive, which engages him to perform acts of repentance and mortification, inclines him to make one in a party of pleasure; because if order, or fitness of things, require him sometimes to perform mortifying actions, it also requires him at other times to take some recreation: because as order requires him sometimes to visit the sick, it requires him at other times to defend his country by war; because if order calls him sometimes to church, it calls him at other times to court; and so of the rest. In Scripture-style this disposition of mind is called "walking with God, setting the Lord always before us," Gen. v. 24; Ps. xvi. 8. Glorious character of a Christian, always uniform, and like himself! He does nothing, if I may be allowed to speak so, but arrange his actions differently, as his circumstances vary.

3. Finally, this idea of God is very proper to regulate that of your future destiny. There is, as we have been proving in this discourse, one principle of order, that governs both the economies of time and eternity. But, we have elsewhere observed, there are two sorts of order; there is an absolute and a relative order. Relative order, or fitness, considered in itself, and independently of its relation to another economy, is a real disorder. In virtue of this relative order, we may live happily here awhile in the practice of sin; but, as this kind of order is a violent state, it cannot be of long duration. If therefore you would judge of your eternal destiny, your judgment must be regulated not by an idea of relative order,

which will soon end: but by that of real, absolute order, which must have an eternal duration; and in virtue of which vice must be punished with misery, and virtue must have a recompense of felicity.

Put these questions sometimes to yourselves, and let each ask; What will my condition be in a state of absolute fitness? I, who have devoted my whole life to counteract the great design of religion, to misrepresent its nature, to check its progress, to enervate its arguments, to subvert its dominion, shall I shine then as a star of the first magnitude, along with them, who have turned many to righteousness, or shall I partake of the punishment of the tempter and his infamous legions? I, who tremble at the thought of giving any thing away; I, who enrich myself at the private expense of individuals, and at the public expense of my country, at the expense of my friends, and even of my children, shall I share in a future state the felicity of that generous society, which breathes benevolence only, and which considers the happiness of others as its own; of that society, which is happy in the persons of all, who participate their felicity; or shall I share the misery of those infernal societies, which seek pleasure in the miseries of others, and so become mutually self-tormentors?

Do we wish for a full assurance of a claim to eternal happiness? Let us then by our conduct form an inseparable relation between our eternal felicity and the invariable perfections of that God who changes not; let us spare no pains to arrive at that happy state; let us address to God our most fervent prayers to engage him to bless the efforts which we make to enjoy it; and after we have seriously engaged in this great work, let us fear nothing. The same principle, which induced God to restore Isaac to Abraham, to raise as it were, that dear child by a kind of resurrection from his father's knife, the same principle that engaged him to elevate David from the condition of a simple shepherd to the rank of a king; let us say more, the same principle, which engaged him to open the gates of heaven to the "author and finisher of our faith," Heb. xii. 2, after the consummation of the work, for which he came; the same principle will incline him to unfold the gates of heaven to us, when we shall have finished the work for which we were born. Our felicity will be founded on the Rock of ages; it will be incorporated with the essence of an unchangeable God; we shall stand fast in perilous times, and when the world, the whole world tumbles into ruins, we shall exclaim with the highest joy, "My God! thou hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They perish: but thou shalt endure. They all shall wax old like a garment: but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end. The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee," Ps. cii. 24, &c. God grant this may be our happy lot! To him be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

## SERMON XLII.

### THE NECESSITY OF UNIVERSAL OBE- DIENCE.

JAMES ii. 10.

*Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all.*

MY BRETHREN,

WERE I obliged to give a title to the epistle, from which I have taken my text, to distinguish it from the other books of our sacred canon, I would call it *the paradoxes of St. James*. It should seem, the apostle had no other design in writing than that of surprising his readers by unheard-of propositions. In the first chapter he subverts that notion of religion, which is generally received both in the world and in the church. To adore the God of heaven and earth, to receive his revelation, to acknowledge his Messiah, to partake of his sacraments, to burn with zeal for his worship, this is usually called religion. No, says St. James, this is not religion; at most this is only a small part of it: "Religion consists in visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and in keeping himself unspotted from the world," ver. 27. In the second chapter he seems to take pains to efface the grand character of a Christian, and of Christianity itself, and destroy this fundamental truth of the gospel, "that man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law," Rom. iii. 28. "No," says he, "man is not justified by faith only; Abraham our father was justified by works," chap. ii. 24. 21, and all Christians are justified by works. In another place, St. James seems to place all religion in some minute and comparatively inconsiderable articles, or, what comes to much the same, to teach, that the omission of some comparatively small duty renders the most pure and solid piety of no account. Levity of conversation is one of these articles. How different, my brethren! is the morality of the Scriptures from the morality of the world! We often hear high encomiums of some people in company. Observe that man, say they, what a pattern of piety is he! The church doors are hardly open before he rushes into his seat with eagerness and transport. In approaching the Lord's table he discovers by every look and gesture a heart all inflamed with divine love. When his shepherds were smitten, and the sheep scattered, the most difficult sacrifices became easy to him. Country, family, titles, riches, he left all with pleasure for the sake of following the bloody steps of Jesus Christ in his sufferings. He can be reproved for no more than one little inadvertence, that is, he has a levity of conversation. But what says St. James of this man, who seems to have a right of precedence in a catalogue of saints? What does he say of this man, so diligent to attend public worship, so fervent at the Lord's supper,



so zealous for religion? He says, this man has no religion at all; "If any man among you seem to be religious, and brideth not his tongue, this man's religion is vain," chap. i. 26.

But without attending to all the paradoxes of St. James, let us attend to this in our text. Here is a principle that seems more likely to produce despair in our hearts than to promote virtue; a principle which seems to aim at no less than the exclusion of the greatest saints on earth from heaven, and to oblige Moses, Elias, David, Paul, and other such eminent men to exclaim, "Who then can be saved!" Matt. xix. 25. This principle is, that to sin against one article of the divine laws is to render one's self guilty of a breach of them all. "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."

That you may the better enter into the spirit of our text, we have three sorts of reflections to propose to you. By the first, we intend to fix the meaning of our apostle's proposition, and to clear it from all obscurity. Our second class of reflections will be applied to enforce the sense that we shall give the text. The last will characterize those sinners who live in this dreadful state, who, by habitually offending in one point, render themselves guilty of an universal subversion of the whole law of God; and here we shall direct you how to use the text as a touchstone to discover the truth or falsehood of your faith, the sincerity or hypocrisy of your obedience.

I. Let us fix the sense of our apostle's proposition, and for this purpose let us answer two questions. 1. What kind of sin had St. James in view when he said, "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point?" 2. How did he mean, that, by "offending in one point," the offender was guilty of violating "the whole law?"

The meaning of the first depends partly on what precedes the text. The apostle had been endeavouring to inspire Christians with charity; not with that partial charity, which inclines us to pity and relieve the miseries of a few distressed neighbours, but with that universal love, which induces all the disciples of Christ to consider one another as brethren, and which, because all are united to God, unites all to one another, and teaches each to consider all as one compact body, of which love is the bond.

The apostle enters into this subject by this exhortation, "My brethren! have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect to persons," chap. ii. 1.—These words are rather difficult: but one of the following senses, I think, must be given to them. 1. Instead of translating, *have not the faith*, we may read, *judge not of faith by appearance of persons*; that is to say, Do not judge what faith Christians have in Jesus Christ, whom God has elevated to the highest glory, by the rank, which they occupy in civil society, by their attendants, and equipage, and habits. A man who makes a very mean and contemptible appearance, a man all in rags, is often a better Christian than he whose Christianity, so to speak, is all set off with splendour, and grandeur, and fortune.

Or rather, *have not faith in the Lord of Glory by showing a partial regard for the appearance of persons*; that is to say, Do not imagine yourselves believers, while you regard the appearance of persons. Do not imagine, that true faith is compatible with that meanness of soul, which makes people susceptible of very deep impressions of esteem at seeing a parade of human grandeur; do not suppose, that the soul of a good man must necessarily prostrate itself before pomp, and annihilate itself in the presence of great men; while he turns with disdain from the poor, infinitely greater for their piety than others for their pomp. A Christian believing in Jesus Christ glorified, a Christian persuaded that Jesus, his head, is elevated to the highest degree of glory, and hoping that he shall be shortly exalted to some degree with him; a Christian, in whose mind such ideas are formed, ought not to entertain very high notions of earthly things; he ought to esteem that in man, which constitutes his real greatness; that immortality, which is a part of his essence; those hopes of eternal glory, at which he aspires; those efforts, which he is making towards bearing the image of his Creator: such qualities deserve esteem, and not the empty advantages of fortune.

The apostle, having established this general maxim, applies it to a particular case; but there are some difficulties in his manner of stating the case, as well as in the maxim to which he applies it. "If there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?" What assembly had the apostle in view here?

Some think, he spoke of an assembly of judges, and by *respect*, or appearance of persons, a spirit of partiality. They say, these words of St. James are synonymous to those of God to Jewish judges by Moses, "Thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty: but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour," Lev. xix. 15. "Ye shall not respect persons in judgment: but ye shall hear the small as well as the great," Deut. i. 16, 17. They confirm this opinion by quoting a canon of the Jews, which enacts, that when two persons of unequal rank appear together in the Sanhedrim, one shall not be allowed to sit, while the other stands; but both shall either sit together, or stand together, to avoid every shadow of partiality.

But, perhaps, our apostle spoke also of religious assemblies, and intended to inform primitive Christians, that where the distinctions of princes and subjects, magistrates and people, were not known, there the rich would affect state, aspire to chief places, and gratify their senseless vanity by placing the poor on their footstools, in order to make them feel their indigence and meanness. However the apostle might mean, whether he spoke of judicial assemblies, or of religious conventions;

of partial judgments, or of improper distinctions in the church, it is plain, he intended to preclude that veneration, which, in little souls, riches obtain for their possessors, and that disdain which poverty excites in such minds for those whom Providence has exposed to it.

Among many reasons, by which he enforces his exhortation, that, which immediately precedes the text is taken from charity, or benevolence. "If ye fulfil the royal law, according to the Scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well. But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors." Then follow the words of the text, "for whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."

It should seem at first, from the connexion of the text with the preceding verses, that when St. James says, "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all," he means, by this one point, benevolence. However, I cannot think the meaning of St. James ought to be thus restricted, I rather suppose, that he took occasion, from a particular subject, to establish a general maxim, that includes all sins, which come under the same description with that of which he was speaking. On this account, after he has said, "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all," he adds, "for he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill;" he adds another example beside that of which he had been speaking. Consequently, he intended not only to speak of violation of the precepts of love, but also of all others, which had the same characters.

But in what light does he place this violation of the precept of love? He considers it as a sin committed with full consent, preceded by a judgment of the mind, accompanied with mature deliberation, and, to a certain degree, approved by him who commits it. All these ideas are contained in these words, "Ye have respect to persons, ye are partial in yourselves, ye are judges of evil thoughts, ye have despised the poor." What the apostle affirms of love in particular, he affirms of all sins committed with full consent, preceded by a judgment of the mind, accompanied with mature deliberation; every sin that conscience is made to approve during the commission of it; every such sin is included in this maxim of our apostle, "whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."

In this manner divest the text of one vague notion, to which it may seem to have given occasion. We acquit the apostle of the charge of preaching a melancholy, cruel morality, and we affirm, for the comfort of weak and timorous minds, that we ought not to place among the sins here intended, either momentary faults, daily frailties, or involuntary passions.

1. By *daily frailties* I mean those imperfections of piety, which are inseparable from the conditions of inhabitants of this world, which mix themselves with the virtues of the most eminent saints, and which even in the highest

exercises of the most fervid piety, make them feel that they are men, and that they are sinful men. By *daily frailties* I mean wanderings in prayer, troublesome intrusions of sensible objects, low exercises of self-love, and many other infirmities, of which you, my dear brethren, have had too many examples in your own lives in time past, and yet have too much experience in the tempers of your hearts every day. Infirmities of this kind do not answer the black description which St. James gives of the *offence* mentioned in the text. A good man, who is subject to these frailties, far from approving the sad necessity, that carries him off from his duty, deploras it. In him they are not conclusions from principles, laid down with full consent; they are sad effects of that imperfection, which God had thought proper to leave in our knowledge and holiness, and which will remain as long as we continue to languish life away in this valley of tears. To say all in one word, they are rather an imperfection essential to nature, than a direct violation of the law.

2. We ought not to number *momentary faults* among the offences, of which it is said, "Whosoever commits *one* is guilty of a violation of the whole law. Where is the regenerate man, where is the saint, where is the saint of the highest order, who can assure himself, he shall never fall into some sins? Where is the faith so firm as to promise never to tremble at the sight of racks, stakes, and gibbets?—Where is that Christian heroism, which can render a man invulnerable to some fiery darts, with which the enemy of our salvation sometimes assaults us; and (what is still more unattainable by human firmness,) where is that Christian heroism which can render a man invulnerable to some darts of voluptuousness, which strike the tenderest parts of nature, and excite these passions which are at the same time the most turbulent and the most agreeable? A believer falls into such sins only in those sad moments in which he is surprised unawares, and in which he loses, in a manner, the power of reflecting and thinking. If there remain any liberty of judgment amidst the frenzy, he employs it to recall his reason, which is fleeing; and to arouse his virtue, that sleeps in spite of all his efforts. All chained as he is by the enemy, he makes efforts, weak indeed, but yet earnest, to disengage himself. The pleasures of sin, even when he most enjoys them, and while he sacrifices his piety and innocence to them, are embittered by the inward remorse that rises in his regenerate soul. While he delivers himself up to the temptation and the tempter, he complains, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Rom. vii. 24. When the charm has spent its force, when his fascinated eyes recover their sight, and he sees objects again in their true point of light, then conscience reclaims its rights; then he detests what he just before admired; then the cause of his joy becomes the cause of his sorrow and terror; and he prefers the pain, anguish, and torture of repentance, before the most alluring attractions of sin.

3. We will venture one step farther. We affirm, that gusts of *involuntary passions* ought

not to be included in the number of sins of which St. James says, "Whosoever offendeth in one point, he is guilty of all." God places us in this world as in a state of trial. We are all born with some passions, which it is our duty to attack and mortify; but from which we shall never be able to free ourselves entirely. The soul of one is united to a body, naturally so modified as to incline him to voluptuousness. Another soul has dispositions naturally inclining it to advance, pride, envy, or jealousy. It is in our power to resist these passions; but to have, or not to have them, when we come into the world, does not depend on us. We ought not always to judge of our state by the enemy, whom we have to encounter: but by the vigilance with which we resist him. In spite of some remains of inclination to pride, we may become humble, if we endeavour sincerely and heartily to become so. In spite of natural inclinations to avarice, we may become generous by endeavouring to become so, and so of the rest. Involuntary passions, when we zealously endeavour to restrain them, ought to be considered as exercises of our virtue prescribed by our Creator; and not as criminal effects of the obstinacy of the creature.

The sins, into a commission of which they beguile us, ought always to humble us; indeed they would involve us in eternal misery, were we not recovered by repentance after having fallen into them: but neither they, nor transient offences, nor daily frailties, ought to be reckoned among those sins, of which St. James says, "he who offendeth in one point, is guilty of all." The sins of which the apostle speaks, are preceded by the judgment of the mind, accompanied with mature deliberation, and approved by conscience. Thus we have divested the text of one vague meaning to which it may seem to have given occasion.

But in what sense may it be affirmed of any sin, that "he who offendeth in one point, is guilty of all?" The nature of the subject must answer this second question, and enable us to reject the false senses, that are given to the proposition of our apostle. It is plain, St. James neither meant to establish an equality of sins, nor an equality of punishments. It is evident, that as sins are unequal among men, so justice requires an inequality of punishment. The man who adds murder to hatred, is certainly more guilty than he who restrains his hatred, and trembles at a thought of murder. He whose hatred knows no bounds, and who endeavours to assuage it with murder, will certainly be punished more rigorously than the former.

What, then, was the apostle's meaning? He probably had two views, a particular and a general view. The particular design might regard the theological system of some Jews, and the general design might regard the moral system of too many Christians.

Some Jews, soon after the apostle's time, and very likely in his days,\* affirmed, that God gave a great many precepts to men, not that he intended to oblige them to the observance of all, but that they might have an opportunity of obtaining salvation, by observing any

one of them; and it was one of their maxims, that he who diligently kept one command, was thereby freed from the necessity of observing the rest. Agreeable to this notion, a famous Rabbi\* expounds these words in Hosea, "Take away all iniquity, and give good," that is, according to the false notion of our expositor, pardon our sins, and accept our zeal for one precept of thy law. What is still more remarkable, when the Jews choose a precept, they usually choose one that gives the least check to their favourite passions, and one the least essential to religion, as some ceremonial precept. This, perhaps, is what Jesus Christ reproves in the Pharisees and scribes of his time, "Wo unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for ye pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith; these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone," Matt. xxiii. 23. Perhaps these words of our Saviour may be parallel to those of St. James. The apostle had been recommending love, and at length he tells the Jews, who, in the style of Jesus Christ, "omitted mercy," that "whosoever" should "keep the whole law, and yet offend in this one point, would be guilty of all."

But, as we observed just now, St. James did not intend to restrain what he said to love. If he had a particular view to the theological system of some Jews, he had also a general view to the morality of many Christians, whose ideas of devotion are too contracted. He informs them, that a virtue, incomplete in its parts, cannot be a true virtue. He affirms, that he who resolves, in his own mind to sin, and who forces his conscience to approve vice while he commits it, cannot in this manner violate one single article of the law without enervating the whole of it. A man cannot be truly chaste without being humble, nor can he be truly humble without being chaste. For the same reason, no man can deliberately violate the law that forbids anger, without violating that which forbids avarice; nor can any man violate the law which forbids extortion, without violating that which forbids impurity. All virtues are naturally united together, and mutually support one another. The establishment of one unjust maxim authorizes all unjust maxims. This is the meaning of the proposition in our text, "Whosoever offendeth in one point is guilty of all."

Hitherto we have only explained the sense of our text; it remains now to be proved. The proposition of our apostle is founded on three principal reasons. He who sins in the manner now described; he whose mind resolves to sin, and who forces his conscience to approve vice, while he commits it, sins against all the precepts of the law, while he seems to sin against only one. 1. Because he subverts, as far as he can, the foundation of the law. 2. Because, although he may not actually violate all the articles of the law, yet he violates them virtually; I mean to say, his principles lead to an actual violation of all the precepts of the law. 3. Because we may pre-

\* See Whitby on James ii. 2.

\* Kimchi on Hos. xiv. 2. Marg.

sume, he who violates the law virtually, will actually violate it when it suits him to do so. These three reasons establish the truth of our apostle's proposition, and justify the sense that we have given it. The discussion of these three reasons will be the second part of our discourse.

II. He who violates one precept of the law, in the manner just now described, violates all; because, first, he subverts, as far as in him lies, the very foundation of the law. This will clearly appear by a comparison of vice with error, heresy with disobedience. There are two sorts of errors and heresies; there are some errors which do not subvert the foundation of faith, and there are other errors that do subvert it. If, after I have honestly and diligently endeavoured to understand a passage of Scripture proceeding from the mouth of God, I give it a sense different from that which is the true meaning of it; if I give it this sense, not because I dispute the authority of an infallible God, but because I cannot perceive that it ought to be taken in any other sense than that in which I understand it, I am indeed in an error, but by falling into this error I do not subvert the foundation on which my faith is built. I always suppose the authority and infallibility of God, and I am ready to renounce my error as soon as I am convinced that it is contrary to divine revelation.

But if, after it has been made to appear with irrefragable evidence, that my error is contrary to divine revelation, and if, moreover, after it has been made to appear that revelation came from God, I persist in my error, then, by sinning against "one point," I become "guilty of all," because, by denying one single proposition of revelation, I deny that foundation on which all other propositions of revelation are built, that is, the infallibility and veracity of that God who speaks in our Scriptures. I put in the place of God my reason, my wisdom, my tutor, my minister, whoever or whatever determines me to prefer my error before that truth, which I am convinced is clearly revealed in a book that came from heaven.

In like manner, there are two sorts of vices, some of which do not subvert the foundation of our obedience to the laws of God, and others that do. In the first class are those sins which we have enumerated, daily infirmities, transient faults, and involuntary passions. In the second class ought to be placed those sins of deliberation and reflection, of which we just now spoke, and which our apostle had in view. These sins strike at the foundation of obedience to the laws of God.

What is the ground of obedience to the divine laws? When God gives us laws, he may be considered under either of three relations, or under all the three together; as a sovereign, as a legislator, as a father. Our obedience to God, considered as a sovereign, is founded on his infinite authority over us, and in our obligation to an entire and unreserved submission to him. Our obedience to God as a legislator is founded on his perfect equity. Our obedience to God as a father is founded on the certain advantages which they who obey his laws derive from them, and on a clear evidence

that because he ordains them, they must be essential to our happiness. Now he who sins coolly and deliberately against one single article, saps these three foundations of the law. He is, therefore, guilty of a violation of the whole law.

He saps the foundation of that obedience which is due to God, considered as a master, if he imagine he may make any reserve in his obedience; if he says, I will submit to God, if he command me to be humble, but not if he command me to be chaste; and so on. He saps the foundation of that obedience which is due to God, considered as a lawgiver, if he imagines God is just in giving such and such a law, but not in prescribing such and such other laws; if he supposes God is just when he appoints him to educate and provide for an only son, but that he ceases to do right when he commands him to sacrifice him, addressing him in this terrifying style, "Take now thy son, and offer him for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of," Gen. xxii. 2. He subverts the foundation of obedience to God as a father, if he supposes that God has our happiness in view in requiring us to renounce some passions, but that he goes contrary to our interests by requiring us to sacrifice some other passions, which we may suppose can never be sacrificed without sacrificing at the same time his pleasure and felicity.

He who sins in this manner, attributes to the objects which induce him to sin, excellencies that can be in none but the Creator. He says, it is not God who is my master, my sovereign: it is the world, it is my company, it is my custom. He says, it is not God who is just: justice is the property of my passions, my anger, my vengeance. He says, it is not God who is the source of my true happiness: it is my gold, my silver, my palace, my equipage, my Delilah, my Drusilla. To "offend in one point," in this sense, is to be "guilty of all;" because it subverts the foundation on which our obedience is built. And this reason is emphatically assigned by St. James, in the verses that follow the text, "Who-soever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all; for," adds the apostle, "he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law."

2. The man who offends in the manner we have described, he who in his mind resolves to sin, and endeavours to force his conscience to approve of vice while he commits it, breaks all the precepts of the law, because, whether he do actually break them or not, he breaks them virtually, and intentionally. He violates precepts of generosity, but he does not fall into debauchery. Why? Is it because he respects the divine laws which prohibit debauchery? No, but because, not being alike inclined to both these vices, he enjoys less pleasure in excess than in avarice. Could he find as much pleasure in violating the laws that prohibit excesses, as he finds in violating those which forbid avarice, then the same principle that impels him now to an incessant, immoderate love of gain, would impel him to

drown his reason in wine, and to plunge himself into all excesses. By violating, then, laws commanding generosity, he violates, if not actually, yet virtually, laws prohibiting debauchery. What keeps him from violating the laws that forbid *clamour* and dissipation, is not respect for that God who commands recollection, retreat, and silence: but he affects these, because he has less aversion to retirement and silence, than he has to noise, clamour and dissipation. Had he as much dislike of the first as he has of the last, then the same principle that now induces him to be always alone, always either inaccessible or morose, would induce him to be always abroad, always avoiding a sight of himself, by fleeing from company to company, from one dissipation to another. As, therefore, he does not obey the law that enjoins silence by his perpetual solitude, so he virtually annihilates the law that forbids dissipation; and here again to offend "in one point" is to be "guilty of all."

In fine, he who offends in the manner that we have explained, he whose mind determines to sin, and who endeavours to force his conscience to approve his practice, sins against all the precepts of the law, while he seems to offend only in one point, because there is sufficient reason to believe he will some time or other actually break those laws, which now he breaks only intentionally. Here, my brethren, I wish each of you would recollect the mortifying history of his own life, and reflect seriously on those passions which successively took place in you, and which by turns exercise their terrible dominion over all them who are not entirely devoted to universal obedience. What proceeds only from a change of circumstances, we readily take for a reformation of manners; and we often fancy we have made a great progress in holiness, when we have renounced one vice, although we have only laid aside this one to make room for another that seemed opposite to it, but which was a natural consequence of the first. What elevates you to-day into excesses of ungoverned joy, is your excessive love of pleasure. Now, it is natural to suppose this excessive love of pleasure which elevates you into immoderate joy, now that the objects of your pleasure are within your reach, will plunge you into depths of melancholy and despair, when you are deprived of those objects. That which induces you to-day to slumber in carnal security, is your inability to resist the first impressions of certain objects; but, if you know not how to resist to-day the impressions of such objects as lull you into security, you will not know how to resist to-morrow the impressions of other objects which will drive you to despair; and so this very principle of non-resistance, if I may so call it, which makes you quiet to-day, will make you desperate to-morrow. There is no greater security for our not falling into one vice, than our actual abstinence from another vice.— There is no better evidence that we shall not practice the sins of old men, than our not committing the sins of youth. Prodigality is the vice of youth, and not to be profuse in youth is the best security that we shall not in declining life fall into avarice, the vice of old age. May one principle animate all your ac-

tions, a principle of obedience to the laws of God! then what keeps you from haughtiness, will preserve you from meanness; what saves you from the seduction of pleasure, will preserve you from sinking under pain; what keeps you from inordinate love to an only son, while it pleased God to spare him, will keep you from immoderate disquietude, when God thinks proper to take him away. But a man, who deliberately "offends in one point," not only offends intentionally against all the articles of the law: but, it is highly probable, he will actually violate all articles one after another; because, when universal esteem for all the laws of God is not laid down as the grand principle of religious action, the passions are not corrected, they are only deranged, one put in the place of another; and nothing more is necessary to complete actual, universal wickedness, than a change of vices with a change of circumstances.

All this is yet too vague. We have, indeed, endeavoured to explain, and to prove the proposition of our apostle; but unless we enter into a more minute detail, we shall derive very little advantage from this discourse.— Those of our auditors who have most reason to number themselves with such as sin deliberately, will put themselves in the opposite class. The most abandoned sinners will call their own crimes either daily frailties, or transient faults, or involuntary passions. We must, if it be possible, take away this pretext of depravity, and characterize those sins which we have named sins of *reflection*, *deliberation*, and *approbation*; sins which place him who commits them precisely in the state intended by our apostle; "he offends in one point," and his disposition to do so renders him guilty of total and universal disobedience. This is our third part, and the conclusion of this discourse.

III. St. James pronounces in our text a sentence of condemnation against three sorts of sinners. 1. Against such as are engaged in a way of life sinful of itself. 2. Against such as cherish a favourite passion. 3. Against persons of unteachable dispositions.

1. *They who are engaged in a way of life sinful of itself*, are guilty of a violation of the whole law, while they seem to offend only in one point.

We every day hear merchants and traders ingenuously confess, that their business cannot succeed unless they defraud the government. We will not examine whether their assertion be true; we will suppose it to be as they say; and we affirm, that a trade which necessarily obliges a man to violate a law so express as that of paying tribute to government, is bad of itself. That disposition of mind which induces a man to follow it, ought not to be ranked either with those human frailties, transient faults, or involuntary passions, which we have enumerated, and for which evangelical abatements are reserved. This is a blow struck at legislative authority. What, then, ought a merchant to do, who is engaged in a commerce which necessarily obliges him to violate a law of the state concerning impost? He ought to give up this commerce, and to quit a way of living which he knows is iniquitous in itself. If he cannot prevail with himself

to make this sacrifice, all his hopes of being saved are fallacious.

We every day hear military men affirm, that it is impossible to wear a sword with honour, without professing to be always disposed to revenge, and to violate all laws human and divine, which forbid duelling. We do not inquire the truth of the assertion, we suppose it true. We do not examine, whether prudence could not in all cases suggest proper means to free men from a tyrannical point of honour; or whether there really be any cases, in which gentlemen are indispensably obliged, either to quit the army, or to violate the precepts that command us to give up a spirit of resentment. We only affirm, that a military man, who constantly and deliberately harbours a design of always avenging himself in certain cases is in this miserable list of sinners, who, by offending in "one point," are "guilty of all." We do not affirm, that he would be in this guilty condition, if he could not promise to resist a disposition to revenge in every future moment of his life; we only affirm that he is guilty of a violation of the whole law, if he do not sincerely and uprightly resolve to resist this inclination. You cannot be a Christian without having a fixed resolution to seal the truths of the gospel with your blood, if it please Providence to call you to martyrdom. You cannot, however, promise, that the sight of racks and stakes shall never shake your resolution, nor ever induce you to violate your sincere determination to die for religion if it should please Providence to expose you to death on account of it. It is sufficient for the tranquillity of your conscience, that you have formed a resolution to suffer rather than deny the faith. In like manner, we do not affirm, that a military man is guilty of the offence with which we have charged him, if he cannot engage never to be carried away with an excess of passion inclining him to revenge; we only say, if he coolly determine always to revenge himself in certain cases, he directly attacks the authority of the lawgiver. "He offendeth in one point, and he is guilty of all." If a man cannot profess to bear arms without harbouring a fixed intention of violating all laws human and divine, that prohibit duelling, even to those who receive the most cruel affronts, either the profession of arms or the hope of salvation must be given up. No man in the army can assure himself that he is in a state of grace, unless his conscience attests, that he will avoid, with all possible circumspection, every case in which a tyrannical point of honour renders revenge necessary; and that, if ever he be, in spite of all his precautions, in such a case, when he must either resign his military employments, or violate the laws that forbid revenge, he will obey the law, and resign his military honours.

It is too often seen, that our relation to some offenders inspires us with indulgence for their offences. This kind of temptation is never more difficult to surmount than when we are called to bear a faithful testimony concerning the state of our brethren, who refuse to sacrifice their fortune and their country to religion and a good conscience. But

what relation is so near as to preoccupy our minds to such a degree as to prevent our considering the life of such a person, as it really is, bad in itself; or what pretext can be plausible enough to authorize it? We have sounded in their ears a thousand times these thundering words of the Son of God, "Whoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels," Luke ix. 26. "He that loveth father or mother, son or daughter," and, we may add, he that loves houses or lands, ease, riches, or honours, "more than me, is not worthy of me," Matt. x. 37. We have summoned them by the sacred promises and solemn engagements, which some of them have entered into at the table of the Lord, while they partook of the significant symbols of the body and blood of the Saviour, to devote themselves to the glory of God, and the edification of his church. We have unveiled their hearts, and shown them how the artfulness of their ingenious passions exculated their conduct, by putting specious pretexts in the place of solid reasons. We have reproved them for pretending, that they dare not face the danger of attempting to flee, when the government forbade their quitting the kingdom; and now liberty is granted, for making that a reason for staying. We have described the numerous advantages of public worship; we have proved, that the preaching of the gospel is, if I may speak so, the food of Christian virtues; and that, when people have accustomed themselves to live without the public exercises of religion, they insensibly lose that delicacy of conscience, without which they cannot either be good Christians, or, what are called in the world, men of honour and probity; we have demonstrated this assertion by an unexceptionable argument taken from experience; we have said, Observe that man, who was formerly so very scrupulous of retaining the property of his neighbour; see, he retains it now without any scruple: observe those parents, who were formerly so tender of their children; see now with what inhumanity they leave them to struggle with want. We have represented to them, that to reside where the spirit of persecution is only smothered, not extinguished, is to betray religion, by exposing the friends of it to the hazard of being martyred, without having any assurance of being possessed with a spirit of martyrdom; and we have endeavoured to convince them, that he who flatters himself he shall be able to undergo martyrdom, and lives where he is liable to it, while Providence opens a way of escape, is presumptuous in the highest degree, and exposes himself to such misery as the son of Sirach denounces, when he says, "He that loveth danger, shall perish therein," Eccles. iii. 26. Not having been able to move them by motives taken from their own interest, we have tried to affect them with the interest of their children. We have told them, that their posterity will live without any religion, that they will have too much knowledge to adhere to superstition, and too little to profess the true religion; and this sad prophecy has been al-

ready verified in their families. To all these demonstrations they are insensible; they willfully shut their eyes against the light; they guard themselves against the force of these exhortations; they are forging new fetters for themselves, which will confine them to a place, of which God has said, "Come out of her, my people! that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues," Rev. xviii. 4. They build, they plant, they marry, they give in marriage, and thus they have abused the patience of thirty-five years, in which they have been invited to repent. I ask again, what relation can be so near as to prevail with us to put this kind of life among the frailties, for which evangelical abatements are reserved.

Let us all, as far as providential circumstances will allow, follow a profession compatible with our duty. Let us do more, let us endeavour so to arrange our affairs that our professions may stimulate us to obedience, and that every thing around us may direct our attention to God. Alas! in spite of all our precautions, sin will too often carry us away; we shall too often forget our Creator, how loud soever every voice around us proclaims his beneficence to us, and his excellencies in himself. But how great will our defection be, if our natural inclinations be strengthened by the engagements of our condition! A kind of life wicked of itself is the first sort of sin of which my text says, "Whosoever offendeth in one point is guilty of all."

2. In the same class we put sinners, who cherish a *darling passion*. Few hearts are so depraved as to be inclined to all excesses, Few souls are so insensible to the grand interest of their salvation, as to be unwilling to do any thing towards obtaining salvation. But, at the same time, where is the heart so renewed as to have no evil disposition? And how few Christians are there, who love their salvation so as to sacrifice all to the obtaining of it? The offender, of whom we speak, pretends to compound with his lawgiver. Is he inclined to avarice? he will say, Lord! allow me to gratify my love of money, and I am ready to give up my disposition to revenge. Is he inclined to revenge? Lord! allow me to be vindictive, and I will sacrifice my avarice. Is he disposed to voluptuousness? Lord! suffer me to retain my Drusilla, and my Delilah, and my vengeance, my ambition, my avarice, and every thing else, I will sacrifice to thee.

A favourite passion is inconsistent with the chief virtue of Christianity, with that, which is the life and soul of all others, I mean that love of God, which places God supreme in the heart. A jealous God will accept of none of our homage, while we refuse him that of our chief love. All the sacrifices that we can offer him to purchase a right to retain a darling sin, are proofs of the empire which that sin has over us, and of our fixed resolution to free ourselves from the law of him, who would be, as he ought to be, the supreme object of our love. Do not fancy, that what we have said concerning involuntary passions is applicable to a darling sin, and exculpates a favourite passion. One man, whose involuntary passions sometimes hurry him away, detests his own

disposition; but the other cherishes his. One makes many an arduous attempt to correct his error: the other engages to do so; but he makes promises pass for performances, and means to get rid of the last by professing the first. One considers the grace that tears the deplorable passion from his heart as a most desirable benefit; and, even while he falls into his sin, he considers it as the greatest misfortune of his life: the other regards him as a mortal enemy who endeavours to prevail with him to renounce a passion, in the gratification of which all his happiness depends.

Let us lay down the love of God as a foundation of all virtue. Let us love him chiefly, who is supremely lovely. Let our hearts adopt the language of the Psalmist, "Access to God is my supreme good. Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon the earth that I desire besides thee," Ps. lxxiii. 28. 25. Let us consider and avoid, as acts of idolatry, all immoderately lively and affectionate emotions of love to creatures. Let us entertain only a small degree of attachment to objects, which at most can procure only a momentary felicity. A favourite passion is a second disposition of mind, that renders us guilty of a violation of the whole law, even while we seem to violate it only in an inconsiderable part.

3. Finally, *Intractable minds* are condemned in our text. Docility is a touchstone, by which a doubtful piety may be known to be real or apparent. The royal prophet describes in the fiftieth psalm such a rigid observer of the exterior of religion as we speak of; a man who has the name of God always in his mouth, and is ever talking of the holiness of his laws; a man always ready to offer whole hecatombs in sacrifice; but who has not patience to hear a representation of his duty, and an exhortation to perform it. The Psalmist declares, all this appearance of devotion, if unaccompanied with docility, is useless; yea, more likely to arouse the anger of God than to obtain his favour. "Thou wicked wretch!" says he, in the name of God, to this phantom of piety, who imposes on the church by his outward appearance, and who, perhaps, imposes on himself; "Thou wicked man, what hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth, seeing thou hatest instruction?" ver. 16. He authorizes us to use the same language to some of you. Why this assiduity at church, why this zeal on solemn festivals, why this fervour at the Lord's table, seeing you are unteachable; seeing you love none but vague maxims of virtue and holiness; seeing you will not allow your casuist to enter into some details; seeing every man loses your favour, if he only hint at your foibles; seeing your tenderest and most faithful friend would become suspected directly, yea, would seem an impertinent censor, the moment he should discover your faults, and endeavour to make you acknowledge and reform them?

My brethren, if we love virtue, we love all the means that lead to it, and with peculiar pleasure behold them who recommend it. Nothing is more opposite to that general devotedness to the laws of God which my text prescribes, than a spirit inimical against them

who have the courage to control the passions. "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayers shall be abomination," Prov. xxviii. 9. "Whoso loveth instruction loveth knowledge," chap. xii. 1.—"The law of the wise is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death," chap. xiii. 14. "Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head," Ps. cxli. 5. May God always continue a succession of such righteous men, and may he incline our hearts to profit by their instructions! To him be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

## SERMON XLIII.

### THE GREAT DUTIES OF RELIGION.

MATTHEW xxiii. 23.

*Wo unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithes of mint, and anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.*

We frequently meet with a sort of people in the world, many of whom neglect the chief virtues of religion, and supply the want of them by performing the least articles of it; and others, who perform the chief duties, and neglect the least. Observe one man, who cherishes a spirit of bitterness, and is all swelled with pride, envy, and revenge; by what art has he acquired a reputation of eminent piety? By grave looks, by an affected simplicity of dress, by an assiduity in the exercises of public worship. See another, who is all immersed in worldly affairs, whose life is all consumed in pleasure, who neglects, and who affects to neglect, both public worship and private devotion. Ask him how he expects to escape in a well-regulated society that just censure which irregular actions, and a way of living inconsistent with Christianity, deserve. He will tell you, I am a man of honour, I pay my debts, I am faithful to my engagements, I never break my word.

We are going to-day, my brethren, to attack both classes of this inconsistent sort of people; and to prove that the practice of small virtues cannot supply the want of the chief; and that the performance of the chief virtues cannot make up for the omission of the least. These points are determined by Jesus Christ in the text. On the one hand, he denounces a wo against the scribes and Pharisees, who scrupulously extended their obedience to the Mosaic law of tithes to the utmost limits, while they violated the more indispensable precepts of morality. On the other hand, he does not intend to divert the attention of his disciples from the least duties by enforcing the greatest. "These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." As if he had said, your principal attention, indeed, should be directed to equity of judgment, to charitable distribution of property, and to sincerity of conversation; but, besides an attention to these,

you should diligently discharge the less considerable duty of tithing, and other such obligations. These are two propositions which I will endeavour to explain and establish. They will afford matter for two discourses; the first on the chief virtues, and the last on the least, or, more strictly speaking, the less considerable. Some preliminary remarks, however, are absolutely necessary for our understanding the text.

1. The word that should determine the sense, is equivocal in the original, and signifies sometimes to *exact* tithes, and at other times to *pay* them. It is used in the first sense in Hebrews, "the sons of Levi have a commandment to take tithes of the people;" and a little after, "he whose descent is not counted from them, received tithes of Abraham," chap. vii. 5, 6. But, in the gospel of St. Luke, the word which we have elsewhere rendered to receive tithes, signifies to pay them, "I give tithes," says the Pharisee, "of all that I possess," chap. xviii. 12.

The ambiguity of this term has produced various opinions concerning the meaning of our text. The most laborious and the most learned of the ancient expositors, I mean St. Jerome, is said to have taken the term in the first sense. According to this hypothesis, Jesus Christ paints the Pharisees here in colours, which have almost always too well suited the persons to whom governments have intrusted the business of tax-gathering. Inhumanity has almost always been their character. "Ye tithe mint, anise, and cummin, and ye omit judgment, mercy, and faith." As if he had said, you tithe inconsiderable herbs, and you do not reflect, that it is incompatible with principles both of equity and mercy to tithe inconsiderable articles, from which the proprietors derive little or no advantage. It is not right, that these things should be subject to such imposts as governments charge on articles of great consequence.

We embrace the sense of our translators, and take the word to signify here *pay tithes*. This sense best agrees with the whole text. "Ye pay tithes of mint, anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of law. These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." It agrees better also with the following words, "Ye strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel." This is a proverbial way of speaking, descriptive of that disposition of mind, which inclines men to perform inconsiderable duties with a most scrupulous exactness, and to violate without any scruple the most essential articles of religion. The hypocrisy of the Pharisees would have been less remarkable in an inhuman exaction of tithes, than in a parade of paying them with a rigid nicety. Accordingly, it is a Pharisee who speaks the words just now cited from St. Luke, and who reckons scrupulously among his virtues. "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess." that is to say, I pay tithes of those things which seem to be too inconsiderable to be tithed.

2. Our second remark regards the law of tithes. Tithes were dues payable to God, and they consisted of the tenth of the produce of



whatever was titheable. The Jews pretended, that the example of Abraham, who paid to God, in the person of Melchisedec, his minister, a tenth of the spoils which he took from the confederate kings of the plain, ought to have the force of a law with all his descendants. To this mysterious circumstance they refer the origin of tithes. Natural religion seems to have inculcated among the pagans the necessity of paying this kind of homage to God. We meet with examples among the heathens from time immemorial. With them tithes were considered as a sacred tax. Hence Pisistratus, a tyrant of Athens, said to the Athenians, in order to obtain their consent to submit to his authority, Inquire whether I appropriate tithes to myself, and do not religiously carry them to the temples of the gods. We will not multiply quotations. It shall suffice to say, God declared to the Israelites, that the land of Canaan was his, as well as the rest of the world; that they should enjoy the produce of the land, but should be as strangers and pilgrims, and have no absolute disposal of the lands themselves. In the quality of sole proprietor he obliged them to pay him homage, and this is the true origin of tithes. "All the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's," Lev. xxvii. 30; that is, tithe belongs to God of right, and cannot be withheld without sacrilege.

There were three sorts of tithes. The first kind was appointed for the support of the Levites, and was wholly devoted to that purpose, except a fifth, which was taken out for the priests. This was called by the Jews the first tithe, the provision for God, because it was dedicated to the maintenance of the ministers of the temple. "Bring ye all the tithes into the store-house, that there may be meat in mine house," Mal. iii. 10. Hence the Jews thought themselves free from this kind of tithe, when they had no temple.

There was a second sort of tithe. Every head of a family was obliged to carry it himself to the temple at Jerusalem, and to eat it there. If he were prevented by distance of habitation, he was allowed to redeem this tax, that is to say, he was allowed to pay an equivalent. A law to this purpose is in Deuteronomy, "Thou shalt eat before the Lord thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there, the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds, and of thy flocks, that thou mayest learn to fear the Lord thy God always. And if the way be too long for thee," that is to say, if the tithe would take damage in carrying, "then shalt thou turn it into money, and shalt carry it into the place which the Lord thy God shall choose," chap. xiv. 23. 25.

The third sort of tithes were called the tithes for the poor. These, it was supposed, were paid to God, because his benevolence had, if I may speak agreeably to an expression of Jesus Christ, incorporated them with himself. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me," Matt. xxv. 40. This tithe was paid every three years. "At the end of three years thou shalt bring forth all the tithe

of thine increase the same year, and shall lay it up within the gates. And the Levite, because he hath no part nor inheritance with thee, and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which are within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat, and be satisfied; that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand, which thou doest," Deut. xiv. 28, 29.

But what principally regards the sense of our text is, that the law had not precisely determined what things were titheable. It had only expressed the matter in general terms. This had given occasion to two opinions among the Jews, that of the scrupulous, and that of the remiss. The remiss affirmed, that only things of value were titheable. The scrupulous, among whom the Pharisees held the first place, extended the law to articles of the least importance. Their rituals ordained, that all eatables were titheable, and in this class they put the inconsiderable herbs mentioned in the text. They are all specified in the Talmud. Jesus Christ declares himself here for the opinion of the Pharisees; but what he blamed, and what he detests was, that they dispensed with the great duties of religion, under pretence of performing these, the least; and this is the subject we are going to examine.

I. We will define the great duties of religion.

II. We will unmask those hypocrites, who by observing the small duties of religion, pretend to purchase a right of violating the chief articles of it. We will endeavour to developpe this kind of devotion, and to show you the inutility and extravagance of it.

I. What are the chief duties of religion? or, to retain the language of my text, what are the *weightier matters of the law*?

In some respects all virtues are equal, because the foundation of our obedience is the same, that is, the majesty of the Supreme Legislator, who prescribed all. A man who should coolly and obstinately violate the least important duties of religion, would be no less guilty than he who should violate the most essential articles of it. His violation of the least ought to be accounted a violation of the greatest, because by sinning in the manner just now mentioned, he would subvert, as far as he could, the ground of all virtues, great and small. St. James says, "whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all," chap. ii. 10, and the reason he assigns is, the same God has prescribed all, "For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill." Now, adds the apostle, "if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law," ver. 11, that is to say, thou subvertest the foundation of the law, that forbids adultery which thou dost not commit, as well as that which forbids murder, which thou dost commit. In this respect, then, the virtues and vices are equal. In this view, there is no room for distinction between the more and the less important duties of religion.

But this, which is incontestable in one point of view, is not defensible in another. There are some things in the law more important than others; because, though they all proceed from the same tribunal, yet the majesty of

God, the lawgiver, was displayed in a more express and solemn manner, in ordaining some than others, so that he who violates the first kind of virtues, attacks this majesty in a more direct manner than he who is guilty of violating only the last.

The difficulty lies in exactly determining the rules by which these two classes of virtues have been distinguished. The time allotted for a sermon renders such a discussion impracticable. It is, if I may so speak, essential to all sermons preached in this pulpit, that they be discussed superficially. We must accommodate ourselves to custom, and briefly sketch out the present subject.

In order to ascertain what virtues ought to be arranged among the most important, and what among the least, five things must be distinguished. 1. The origin of a virtue. 2. The duration of it. 3. Its object. 4. Its influence. 5. Its destination. From these distinctions arise five rules.

The first rule regards the *origin* of a virtue. A virtue arising immediately from primitive law, is more important than others, an obligation to which arises from some particular circumstances; and those which are immediate consequences of this law, are more important than others, which are remotely consequential.

The second regards the *duration* of a virtue. A virtue that runs on to eternity, is more important than another, which belongs only to the economy of time.

The third rule regards the *object* of a virtue. A virtue, that has a great object, is more important than another which has an inconsiderable object.

The fourth rule is taken from the *influence* of a virtue. A virtue connected with other virtues, and moving along with itself very many others, is more important than another virtue which operates independently and alone.

The fifth rule regards the *end* of a virtue. A virtue that constitutes the end to which all religion conducts us, is more important than other virtues, which at most only promote the means that lead to the end. We shall briefly explain these five rules, and shall leave them to your mature deliberation.

The first rule is taken from the *origin* of a virtue. One virtue originating immediately in primitive law is more important than another, an obligation to perform which is founded only on some particular circumstances; and such virtues as are immediate consequences of this law, are more important than others that are only remotely consequential.

Primitive law is that class of maxims which derive their authority, not from revealed law only, but from the eternal truths on which they are founded, and from the nature of the intelligent beings to whom they are prescribed. Such are these: a created intelligence has no right to assume a freedom from the laws of his Creator: the Being who possesses supreme perfection, is alone worthy of supreme adoration: "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them," Matt. vii. 12: talents with which I am intrusted by another, ought not to be employed to gratify my particular caprice; but they ought to be so used as to enable me to give a good account of them

to him who entrusted me with them, and directed the use of them. Multiply and enlarge these maxims, brethren; I only give you a clew. Virtues of this kind are far more important than others, an obligation to which is founded only on particular circumstances. Virtues of this last kind oblige only as consequences of the primitive law, of which I just now spoke; and they oblige more or less, as the consequences are more or less remote. To address consolatory conversation to a sufferer obliges only as a consequence of this primitive virtue, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." To comfort an afflicted man by conversing with him, is a consequence more remote from this primitive virtue than to remove his affliction by supplying his wants. Accordingly, the virtues of this consequential kind cease to oblige, when the circumstances that found the obligation cease. Hence it sometimes happens, these duties annihilate one another. We must often omit some to discharge others. We must defer, or wholly omit consolatory conversation, in order to procure and administer real supplies. We must omit relieving a stranger, in order to fly to relieve a fellow-citizen. We must cease to relieve one to whom we are related only as a fellow-citizen, in order to attend to the relief of another, who is a member with us of "the household of faith," Gal. vi. 10, and so on.

2. Virtues anterior to particular circumstances subsist after those circumstances; and my second maxim is only the first in a different point of view. A virtue perpetuated to eternity is more important than another which is confined within the limits of time. Now, the virtues that go on to eternity, are the same which oblige prior to all the particular circumstances of time. The two rules, therefore, unite; it is one proposed in divers views.

Hear how St. Paul reasons to prove that charity is more excellent than all the miraculous gifts which God bestowed on the primitive Christians. He enumerates these gifts; "God hath set in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues," 1 Cor. xii. 28. "But," adds he, "covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet I show unto you a more excellent way," ver. 31. Then follows his encomium upon charity. "Charity," or love, "never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away," 1 Cor. xiii. 8. Moreover, he places charity not only above all miraculous gifts: but he sets it above all other virtues. "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three: but the greatest of these is charity," ver. 13.

My brethren, what St. Paul said of miraculous gifts, and of some virtues, that "they fail" in comparison with charity, an obligation to which continues for ever, we say of a thousand particular practices, to which, indeed, you are obliged, but which are not to be compared with other great virtues, of the excellence of which we have been speaking, and which are "weightier matters of the law." All these particular circumstances will cease in another

life: but these great virtues, to which we would persuade you to give the preference, will never cease. In heaven we can erect no hospitals, visit no sick people, wipe off no slander: but we shall be happily united by ties the most agreeable, the most close, and the most indissoluble. In heaven we shall love one another with sentiments the most sincere, the most lively, the most tender; because we shall participate the same God, propose to ourselves the same end, and be for ever in the highest bliss. In heaven we shall have no temple: we shall eternally enjoy the presence of God. In heaven we shall not "take hold of each other's skirts," Zech. viii. 23, according to the expression of a prophet, saying, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord," Isa. ii. 3: but we shall incessantly animate one another to celebrate the praises of the Author of our existence and happiness. In heaven we shall not approach a table to commemorate, by receiving a little bread and wine, our divine Redeemer, and to hold communion with God; but we shall be as closely connected with God as creatures can be to the Creator. Those virtues which approach nearest to them that are anterior to time, and to them that continue to eternity, are more important than others, to which circumstances of time oblige us.

3. Our third rule regards *objects of virtue*. A virtue that has a great object, is more important than those which have small objects. The answer of Jesus Christ to a famous question in his time is well known. It was then warmly disputed, "Which is the great commandment?" Some rabbies said, it was that which appointed *phylacteries*; others affirmed, it was the law of *circumcision*; others again contended for that which appointed *sacrifices*. No, said Jesus Christ, none of these commandments merit the highest place; "the great commandment is, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy strength." This law admits of no dispensation, no limitation, no concurrence.

This law, I say, is *indispensable*: it binds alike angels and men, and they are only devils who, having precipitated themselves by the greatest of all crimes into the greatest of all miseries, are reduced to the dreadful necessity of hating a God whose perfections incline him to render them miserable.

This law is *unlimited*. Others are confined to a certain sphere; they cease to be virtues when they are carried to excess, and whatever carries us too far in performing one obligation, retrenches another. Excessive justice runs into barbarity, and leaves no room for the exercise of humanity. Excessive penitence ceases to be repentance, degenerates into despair, and leaves no room for faith in the promises of mercy made to us in the gospel. Excessive faith ceases to be faith, degenerates into superstition and puerile credulity, and leaves no room for the exercise of reason. But who can love God in an extreme? A passion so noble can never be too vehement, nor can its flames ever burn with too much ardour.

This law is without *concurrence*. The great object of our love admits of no rival in the heart. In many cases we ought to sacrifice one duty, which has God for its object, to

another that has a neighbour for its object. It would be better to absent one's self from the external duties of religion, than to neglect a dying parent. Love to God, in this case, is not in opposition to love for a fellow-creature. God himself requires us in such a case to suspend a performance of ritual service, and to bend all our attention to relieve a dying parent. The love then shown to a dying parent is a necessary consequence of loving God, of that primitive love from which all other loves proceed. Whenever the love of God and the love of our neighbour are in opposition, so that we cannot perform the last without neglecting the first, we need not hesitate; love to God must be preferred before love to creatures. The most lawful attachments become criminal, when they diminish, yea, when they divide, the regard that we ought to have for God. "No man can serve two masters." "He that loveth father or mother, or son or daughter, more than me, is not worthy of me." "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment," Matt. vi. 24; x. 17; and xxii. 36, 37.

The objects of some virtues, which regard our neighbour, are greater than others of the same class. Charity which respects the life of a neighbour, is greater than that which regards his fortune. The charity which regards his salvation, is greater than that which regards his life; the objects are greater.

The same may be said of virtues which regard ourselves. The rule is certain. A virtue which has a great object is more important than another which has a small object.

4. Our fourth rule regards the *influence of virtues*. Every virtue connected with other virtues, and drawing after it many more, is greater than any single and detached virtue. The influence of virtues proceeds in some cases from the *relations* of him who performs them, and in others from the *nature* of the virtues themselves.

The virtues of a minister of state, and those of a minister of Christ, are of far greater importance in the execution of their offices than the other virtues of the same men which they practice as private persons in the comparative obscurity of their families. It is a very virtuous action in a statesman to provide good tutors for his children; but it is a far more virtuous action in him to prefer able professors in a university. The first influence only his family, and the last the whole state. The same reasoning holds in the case of a minister of Christ, and of every other person, always proportioning, however, the duty to the relation that each bears in the world.

Sometimes the influence of a virtue is essential to the *nature* of the virtue itself. It is a virtue to bestow on a beggar a sum sufficient to free him from the necessity of begging; but it is a far more virtuous action to put him in a capacity of supporting himself; for by this means he is not only freed from the temptations of poverty, but from those of idleness, the parent of all vice and misery. By this means, you make a good member of society; a good father of a family, a good Christian in the church, and so on.

What has been said on the difference of virtues, both in this and in the former rules, may be applied to the difference of vices. Vicious actions of extensive influence ought to be considered as more odious than others of confined effects. It is certainly a detestable action to utter, in excesses of debauchery, any maxims injurious to religion and good manners: but it is incomparably more detestable, coolly and deliberately to pen, print, publish, extend, and perpetuate these maxims. There is no pretext specious enough to palliate the permission of such publications, as there are no colours black enough to describe the audacious authors of such books.

No, neither that spirit of toleration, which produces such innumerable blessings where it reigns, nor that freedom of commerce, which, where it is allowed, enriches nations, and renders them so flourishing and formidable; no, no pretext can palliate the liberty, or rather the licentiousness that we deplore. The law of God ordained that a blasphemer should be stoned, and this law was executed in all its rigour by the Jewish legislature. Have Christians more right to blaspheme God than Jews had? Has the Christian magistrate a greater right to exercise indulgence towards blasphemers than Jewish magistrates had?

But if no pretext can be invented to palliate a permission of such publications, who can furnish colours black enough to describe the publishers of them? Thou miserable wretch, who, in order to obtain the empty reputation of an author, and to acquire the false glory of writing with vivacity and beauty, coverest thyself with real infamy, what madness animates thee! wretch! who spreadest the poison of thy corruption, not only through thy own circle, but through all the countries where thine infamous productions go; infecting not only thy contemporaries, but all others who succeed thee; what punishment proportioned to thy malice can be inflicted on thee! Miserable wretch! methinks I distinguish thee hereafter in the crowd of victims, which the vengeance of God sacrifices in hell. Methinks I see thee amidst the unworthy captives, whom thy writings subdued to Satan, and I hear them address this frightful language to thee: Thou barbarian! was it not enough for thee to delight thyself with error and vice, didst thou aspire at the glory of giving a relish for it! Was it not enough to exclude thyself from eternal happiness, must heaven also be shut against us, by thine abominable maxims as well as thy pernicious example! Was it not enough to precipitate thyself into those flames, must we be drawn after thee? Thou wast our betrayer in time, and we will be thy tormentors through all eternity.

Finally, the last rule to distinguish virtues the most important of others of inferior importance, is taken from the *end* of each. A virtue that constitutes the *end* to which all religion conducts us, is more important than other virtues which at most are only means to lead to the end. What is the end and design of all religion? Can there be one among us so great a novice in the school of Jesus Christ as to want an answer to this question? Let us hear St. Paul, "Christ loved the church, and gave

himself for it, that he might sanctify it, and that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish," Eph. v. 25—27. This is the end of religion. In order to obtain this end, we are dedicated to God in baptism as soon as we are born. In our infancy we are inspired with a piety of prejudice in hope that in time we may imbibe a rational piety. As soon as our minds unfold their powers we are taught to know our Creator. As we ripen in years and knowledge, tutors are provided for us, and we are conducted to places of public worship erected to the glory of our Creator; there being assembled we are invited to celebrate solemn festivals; there we are taught whence we came and whither we go, what we are and what we ought to be, what we should believe, and what we ought to practice: we are led by the exercise of prayer to the source of all that assistance which is necessary to enable us to surmount the obstacles which nature, example, and habit, in spite of an education the most rigid and holy, oppose to our sanctification; there we are made to ratify, by engagements the most solemn and binding, at the table of the Lord, all that had been promised for us at our baptism. Now what are all these practices? Are they not means to conduct us to the *end* of religion? Let us then put every thing in its proper place; let us value the means only as they lead to the end; and let us not imagine, when we have lost sight of the end, that we do any thing to purpose by continuing to make use of the means.

Here, my brethren, I finish my essay; for the rules laid down are sufficient to enable us to perceive the reasons which induced Jesus Christ to rank the virtues enumerated, *judgment, faith, and mercy, among the weightier matters of the law*. Can we refuse this rank to what Jesus Christ calls *judgment*; that is, attentive, impartial, incorruptible *justice*; such equity as that which engages a judge to go through the fatigue of a long and painful discussion of an intricate subject, to disregard the appearance of persons, never to suffer himself to be *blinded by gifts*, to determine a point and decide a cause only by the justice or injustice of it? Can we refuse this rank to *mercy*, that is, to that benevolence which inclines us always to tolerate the tolerable infirmities of our neighbours, to excuse them when any excuse can be made for them, to conceal and correct them, rather than to envenom and publish them; or, to use the language of St. Paul, can we refuse to place in the highest order of virtues that charity "which suffereth long and is kind, which vaunteth not itself, which is not puffed up, which doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, beareth, believeth, hopeth, endureth all things," 1 Cor. xiii. 4, &c. My God, what a description! My God, how seldom is this virtue practised, how little is it understood, even among Christians! Finally, can we refuse to place among the *weightier matters of the law*, what Jesus Christ calls *faith*, that is, such a rectitude and candour as all the world praise, though few practise, the virtue that makes a

man sincere in his professions, steady in his friendships, punctual in his contracts, faithful in all his engagements? Our attempt, our rules may serve to convince you, that these virtues ought to be placed in the highest rank, and that their places cannot be supplied by a punctual payment of tithes, or by any other duties of the same class. This is so clear that it is needless to add any thing more on this article.

II. What we proposed to treat of in the second place, demands a greater attention. We engaged to unmask such of our hearers as endeavour to acquire by the performance of less important duties, a right to neglect other duties of the highest class and of the utmost importance. And yet I have neither time nor courage to fulfil this engagement. All that the few remaining moments, all that the delicacy, or, if I may venture to use the words of an apostle, all that the "itching ears" of our times will allow me to do, is to set you a task. This is it. Recollect our rules, avail yourselves of them to enable you to form a just notion of your state; and to exemplify in a few articles what we cannot fully investigate; let one avail himself of our rules to enable him to make a just estimate of the decency of his outward deportment; let another judge by these of the value of those sacrifices which he has made for religion; another of his assiduity in attending public worship; and another of the encomiums which he makes on the dead, and which he hopes his survivors will after his decease make on him.

You are a man of a grave deportment. All the virtues seem painted in your countenance, your eyes habitually roll towards heaven, the smallest inadvertent offenses and provokes you, your mouth never opens but to utter moral sentences; and yet you are proud and affronted at a smile, a look, the least indication of incivility. Every body knows you are always full of your own importance, your reputation, your rank, and what is still worse, your virtue. It should seem you are afraid of defiling yourself by touching other men, and always exclaiming by your actions, if not in so many words, "Stand by thyself, come not near me, for I am holier than thou," Isa. lxxv. 5. How little progress soever we have made in the knowledge of the human heart, and in the art of discerning the pretences, under which the most haughty souls conceal their pride, it is easy enough to see that what you esteem above all other things is self. Ah! "wo be to you!" you "pay tithe of mint, anise, and cummin;" but "omit the weightier matters of the law." Do I impose on you? What place then does humility occupy in your system of morality? What value do you set upon humility, that virtue of which Jesus Christ has given you so many excellent descriptions, and so many amiable models?

You have made great sacrifices for religion. You have left your country and your fortune, your honour and your family, yea, your all, to follow Jesus Christ: yet, were we to judge of your intention by your actions, we should affirm that you followed him only to have a fairer opportunity to insult and betray him.—It is notorious that you violate, without re-

morse, the most essential laws of that religion, for the sake of which you made such noble sacrifices. In this exile, to which you voluntarily condemned yourself for the sake of religion, we see you covetous, envious, revengeful, wearing, and glorying to wear, the livery of the world. Ah! "wo be to you!" you pay "tithe of mint, anise, and cummin;" but omit "the weightier matters of the law." I ask again, do I impose on you? What place, then, does the practical part of religion occupy in your system? Is Christianity less proposed to your heart than to your mind? Is the person from whom it proceeds, less jealous of his precepts than of his doctrines? Satisfied that his disciples "say Lord, Lord," is he indifferent whether they perform or omit what he commands?

You are assiduous in attending public worship. You are scrupulously exact in the performance of every part. Our festivals are delicious days to you; but alas! devotion sours your temper, and you become insufferable as you grow devout. You make your friends martyrs; you treat your children like slaves, and your domestics like animals of a species different from your own. You are more like a fury than a man. Your house is a hell, and it seems as if you came into a Christian church only to learn of the God, who is worshipped there, the art of becoming a tormentor of mankind. Ah! "Wo be to you!" you pay tithe of mint, anise, and cummin;" but "you omit the weightier matters of the law." I ask again, Do I impose on you? What rank, then, in your system does discretion occupy? Where is that spirit of prudence, patience, gentleness, and goodness, which the inspired writers so often repeat, and so powerfully recommend in their writings?

You celebrate the praises of your dying friend, and incessantly exclaim, "How comfortably he died!" If you do not go so far as to place your departed friends, who in your opinion died in such a Christian manner, among the number of the gods, you do place them without scruple in the number of the saints. This sort of encomium is a model of that at which you aspire; hence you often exclaim, speaking of your good departed friend, "Let me die his death, and let my last end be like his!" Numb. xxiii. 10. When you are seized with any illness that threatens your life, you put on all the exterior of religion. I see one minister after another sitting at your bedside. I hear your constant sobs and groans. Here is nothing but weeping, and sighing, and holy ejaculations; but I stand listening to hear you utter one other word; that is, *restitution*, and that I never hear. I never hear you say, as Zaccheus said, "If I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold," Luke xix. 8. I never see your coffers disgorge the riches you have obtained by extortion; you never hear, or never feel, the cries "of the labourers, which have reaped down your fields, whose hire is of you kept back by fraud, the cries of whom are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth," James v. 4. You choose rather to set at defiance all those terrible judgments which God has denounced against extortioners than to part with

your idol, gain; you would rather transmit your fortune under a curse to your posterity than restore what you and your ancestors have extorted. Ah! "Wo be to you! you pay tithe of mint, anise, and cummin; but you omit the weightier matters of the law, judgment, faith, and mercy!"

My brethren, it is a deplorable thing, that when we treat of such an important subject as this, we are obliged to pay more attention to the delicacy of our hearers than to the weight of the subject. But in the name of God, do you yourselves finish the list of those articles which timidity, (or, shall I say, caution?) forbids me to extend. Go up to the *origin* of that disposition which I have been opposing. It must proceed from one of *three* principles; it must come from either narrowness of mind, or hypocrisy, or a criminal composition.

Perhaps it may proceed from *littleness of mind*. We are enslaved by external appearance. We determine ourselves by semblances. In the world more reputation is acquired by the shadow than by the substance of virtue. By habituating ourselves to this kind of imposition, we bring ourselves to believe that God will suffer himself to be imposed on in the same manner. "These things hast thou done," says he, by the mouth of a prophet, "and thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself," Ps. l. 21. We insensibly persuade ourselves, that, provided we lift our eyes to heaven, God will think our hearts are elevated thither; provided we kneel before the throne of God, he will think our hearts bow with our bodies; provided we mutter a few prayers, God will accept us as if we formed ideas and performed acts of love. This is littleness of mind.

Sometimes it proceeds from *hypocrisy*. Jesus Christ reproached the Pharisees with this. The Pharisees were attached to religion no farther than as it acquired them reputation in the world. But I will not insist on this article. I freely acknowledge, I had almost said I lament, that hypocrisy is *not* the vice of our age. Piety is now so little respected, that we need not much suspect people of aiming to acquire reputation by professing it; yea, perhaps, it may oftener happen that they who really have some degree of it, conceal it in order to escape contempt, than that others who have none, affect to possess it in order to acquire public esteem.

Sometimes also this disposition of mind proceeds from a *criminal composition*. We have the face to compound with God. We are willing to perform the external part of religion, provided he will dispense with the internal part: we are ready to offer *sacrifices* provided he will dispense with obedience; we are willing to do what costs our depravity nothing, or next to nothing, if he will dispense with what would cost it much.

Let us finish. One maxim, which I entreat you to retain in memory, is the essence of my subject, and the spring that gives force to all the exhortations which I have addressed to you in the latter periods of this discourse. This maxim is, that a Christian is obliged by his *heavenly calling*, not only to practice all virtues, but to place each in its proper rank; to give more application to such as merit more appli-

cation, and to give most of all to such as require most of all.

On this principle, what an idea ought we to form of that *mercy* or benevolence, which my text places among the *weightier matters of the law*? You have heard the value of this in the body of this discourse. Such virtues as have God for their object are more important than others, which have our neighbour for their object. But God, in order to engage us to benevolence, has taught us to consider benevolence to our neighbours as one of the surest evidences of our love to himself. He unites himself with the poor; he clothes himself, as it were, with their miseries; and he tells us, "inasmuch as ye do good unto one of the least of these, ye do it unto me," Matt. xxv. 40. What a sublime idea! From what a fund of love does such a benevolent declaration proceed! And, at the same time, what a motive to animate us to benevolence.

This virtue, to the practice of which we perpetually exhort you, ought to be extraordinarily exerted, my dear brethren, now that God visits us with a sort of judgment, I mean the excessive rigour of this winter. It is not a judgment upon you, rich men, God loads you with temporal blessings; but it falls upon you, miserable labourers, whose hands, benumbed with cold, are rendered incapable of working, the only way you have of procuring a morsel of bread for yourselves and your families: upon you, poor old people, struggling at the same time against the infirmities of old age and the rigours of the season: upon you, innocent victims to hunger and cold, who have no provision except cries and tears, and whom I see more dead than alive around a fire that emits less heat than smoke: upon you, wretched sick people, lodged in a hovel open on all sides to the weather, and destitute of both nourishment and clothing. Is it wrong to call a cause producing such tragical effects a judgment?—Must I justify the term by reasons more convincing; I am ashamed to allege them.—Without pretending to answer for the fact (it is an affair too mortifying for some of us to investigate,) we are assured, that some have perished with cold. I do not know who is in fault, but I recollect the complaint which St. Paul addressed to the Corinthians, when incest had been committed in their city. "What!" said he, "have ye heard of this deed, and have ye not covered yourselves with *mourning*?" 1 Cor. v. 1, 2. What, my dear brethren, in a Christian society, do we see such events; do we behold the poor dying with cold, without being touched in our inmost souls, without inquiring into the cause of such a misfortune, without applying proper means to prevent such things in future?

With this pious design, the dispensers of your bounty will again humbly wait at the door of this church to receive your charitable contributions, in order to enable them to-day plentifully to supply the wants of such as perhaps may die to-day, if they be not relieved. With the same pious views, they have besought the magistrates to grant them an extraordinary collection, and next Wednesday they intend to conjure you by those shocking objects, with which their own minds are

affected, and with which they have thought it their duty to affect ours, to afford such relief as may be necessary to prevent the many evils, with which the remainder of the winter yet threatens us.

If you accuse me of applying too often to you on this subject, I answer, my importunity is your glory. You have affectionately habituated me to see you accessible, and myself successful, when I speak to you on subjects of this kind. I hope I shall always find you the same; I hope you will not be "weary in well doing," 2 Thess. ii. 13. I hope the voice of so many wretched petitioners as beseech you by my mouth, will not sound in vain in this Christian assembly. Hear it, you happy natives of these provinces, whom God distinguishes by so many favours. Hear it, my dear countrymen, whom Heaven has enriched in your exile, and who, after having yourselves been a long time in want of assistance are now so able to assist others. Hear it, generous strangers, who sometimes mix your devotions with those which we offer to God in this house; contribute to our charities, and share with us the blessings which they procure. God grant us all grace to do his will. To the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

## SERMON XLIV.

### THE SMALL DUTIES OF RELIGION.

MATTHEW xxiii. 23.

*Wo unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithes of mint, anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.*

IN order to form a just notion of the *little duties* of religion, of which we are about to treat, we must avoid a disposition to fastidious nicety, and an inclination to panics or groundless fears.

Nothing is more opposite to the genius of religion than what I call a fastidious nicety, a sort of trifling spirit. It is incompatible with the greatness of God, whom we serve, and the excellence of rational creatures, to whom religion is proposed. It is inconsistent, too, with the importance of those engagements to which the gospel calls us, and with the magnitude of those objects which it proposes to our faith.

What condemns a trifling spirit censures also an inclination to groundless fears. For example, a Christian seriously prepares himself for the Lord's supper; when he partakes of it, a wandering thought alarms him, and he is filled with terror, as if he had committed a high crime against God. But can we imagine, that God is setting snares for us, while he is giving us tokens of his love? Who can presume to approach the table of the Lord, I do not say worthily, but possibly, if there were any ground for such panics as these? Do you think you do honour to God, by attributing to him a turn for such comparatively insignificant niceties (forgive the expression, I cannot convey my meaning without it,) a dis-

position, I think, which you would hardly suppose in a sensible man? Can you suppose that God loves you with less wisdom, and less condescension, than you love your children? Far from us be such odious thoughts! Remember, "the spirit which ye have received, is not a spirit of bondage to fear; but a spirit of adoption," Rom. viii. 15. Remember, ye are "not children of the bond woman; but of the free," Gal. iv. 31. "Stand fast then in that inestimable liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free," chap. v. 1. "Give of such things as ye have, and behold all things are clean unto you," Luke xi. 41. Be fully persuaded that in a religion of love, love excuses much infirmity, and sets a value on seemingly inconsiderable actions, which appear to have only a very remote connexion with the disposition whence they proceed.

In what, then, you will ask, consist what we call small or little duties? What are the "less weighty things of law," which Jesus Christ says we "ought not to leave undone," after we "have done the more weighty things?" My brethren, the *duties* of which we speak to-day, ought not to be accounted *little*, except when they are compared with other duties, which are of greater importance; and, as we said last Lord's day, because they are consequences more remote from original primitive right. However, though little duties do not proceed so directly and immediately as great duties do, yet do they proceed from the same origin; and though they are not the first links of the chain of Christian virtues, yet they are as truly connected with the origin as the first.

Choose of the list of moral virtues any one that seems the least important and I will justify my idea of it. For instance, to be affable and accessible, to give attention to the tiresome tale of a tedious fellow-Christian in some difficulty, this is one of the *very least duties* that we can enjoin you, this is one of the "less weighty matters of the law." Who will pretend to compare this with what you ought to do for this man in other cases? You ought to supply his wants when he is on a sick bed, to defend his reputation when it is attacked, to support and provide for his family when it falls to decay. This first little duty, however, small as it may appear, proceeds from the same principle of primitive law as the last great duties do. This law is expressed in these words, "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them," Matt. vii. 12. Would any one of you be convinced of this? Put yourselves in the place of this man. Suppose a person elevated as much above you as you pretend to be above him, would it not mortify you if he either refused to hear you at all, or gave you only a careless negligent audience? Let each of you, my brethren, enlarge this thought, and by applying it to himself let him judge whether my proposition be not sufficiently clear.

I carry my proposition farther still. I affirm, not only that there is no duty so small in the moral law as not to proceed from primitive original right, but that God never prescribed an observance so insignificant in the ceremonial law as not to proceed from the same origin. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all

thy heart," Deut. vi. 5, this is the first principle of primitive law. If we ought to love God with all our hearts, we ought carefully to observe all the means which he has appointed to cherish this love. Now, these means vary according to the various circumstances in which they to whom the means are prescribed may be. A worship charged with ceremonies would serve only to extinguish emotions of love, if prescribed to people in some conditions; yet the same sort of worship would inflame the love of other people in different circumstances. The Jews were in the last case. Born and brought up in slavery, employed, as they were, in manual occupations, they would have been destitute of all ideas under an economy without ceremonies. Surrounded with idolatrous nations, and naturally inclined, as they were, to idolatry, it was necessary, in order to prevent their copying such wretched examples, to which they had strong propensities and inducements, I say, it was necessary, if I may venture to speak so, not to give them opportunity to breathe, to keep them constantly employed in some external action, every moment of the time devoted to religion.

Christians, I allow, are in circumstances altogether different. A mass of ceremonies would serve only to veil the beauty of that God, whom "no man had seen at any time" before the advent of Christ, and whom "the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, hath declared," John i. 18. Whatever contributes to the concealment of the perfections of this God, damps that love which a contemplation of them inspires. Yet, as we are full of infirmities on this earth, we want a few signs to produce and cherish in us the love of God. Where is the man who is capable of a devotion all disengaged from sense? Who can fix his eyes immediately on "the sun of righteousness?" Mal. iv. 2. Where is the man who is capable of such abstract meditations and pure emotions as constitute the worship of angels and seraphim? Alas! my soul, how difficult is recollection to thee, even with all the assistance of a religious ceremonial! How hard dost thou find it to maintain a spirit of devotion even in this place, in this concourse of people, with all these voices, and with those ordinances which are appointed for the maintenance of it!—What wouldst thou do, wert thou left to thine own meditations only, to practise a piety altogether spiritual, and free from external action?

Let us finish this article. The least important parts of ceremonial worship, as well as the least virtues of morality, which we call *little duties*, or the "less weighty matters of the law," proceed from primitive law, by consequences more remote, but as real as those of the most important duties.

What we have been saying of the *nature* of little duties, demonstrates the *obligation* of them. They all proceed from primitive law. You cannot, therefore, neglect the performance of them, without confining what ought to be infinite.

But this is too vague. We will treat of the subject more at large, and in order to enable you more fully to perceive your *obligation* to *little duties*, I will speak of them in four different views, each of which will open a field of reflections.

I. They contribute to maintain a tenderness of conscience.

II. They are sources of re-conversion after great falls.

III. They make up by their frequency what is wanting to their importance.

IV. They have sometimes characters as certain of real love as the great duties have.

Now, my brethren, whatever engages us to the performance of *little duties*, must preserve us from the commission of what the world calls *little sins*. This is all I have to propose to you at present.

I. *An exact performance of little duties maintains tenderness of conscience.* By *conscience* I mean that instant, and in some sort, involuntary approbation of our own conduct, when we discharge our obligations, and that sentence of condemnation which we cannot help denouncing against ourselves, whenever we are so unhappy as to violate them. In the language of St. Paul, it is "the work of the law written in our hearts, our thoughts accusing or else excusing one another," Rom. ii. 18.

Conscience, considered in this point of light, is the same in our souls in regard to salvation as the senses are in our bodies in regard to health and life. The office of our senses is to inform us, by the short method of sensation, of whatever may be hurtful or beneficial to our bodies. If when any exterior body approached us, we were always obliged to measure its size, to examine its configuration, to judge by the laws of motion, action, and reaction, whether its approach would be hurtful or beneficial to us, our frail machine would be crushed to atoms before we could finish the discussion. If it were necessary always before we took any nourishment, to examine the nature of the aliments before us, to understand the properties and effects of them, we should die with hunger before we had finished our researches. God has enabled the senses of our bodies to supply the place of tedious discussions. This beautiful economy is never disconcerted except when our bodies are disordered.

It is exactly the same in regard to conscience. If always when it was necessary to determine the morality of an action, we were obliged to turn over a large class of books, to consult our casuist, and to examine a whole system of rectitude, what would become of us? The short way of sentiment supplies the place of all this discussion. A sudden horror excited by the idea of a crime which we are tempted to commit, a secret joy, excited by the idea of a virtue, which we are going to practise, are, in urgent cases, systems, books, and casuists' to us. When we lose this moral sense, we lose our best guide, and are then exposed to an infallible misery of proceeding from one error to another, from a first pernicious practice to a second, and so in the end to a gulf of final wretchedness.

Such being the design of conscience, the end for which God has appointed it, we can never be too diligent to avoid those things which impair it, as, on the other hand, we can never apply ourselves too eagerly to such practices as contribute to improve and perfect it. Now, I affirm, that the first of these effects



is produced by allowing ourselves to commit *little sins*, and the second by an exact performance of *little duties*.

The commission of little sins leads on to the perpetration of great crimes; and we cannot assure ourselves that we should religiously practise great virtues, unless we scrupulously discharge other obligations comparatively small. Of the many examples which present themselves to my mind, which shall I select to elucidate this subject? Where originate the vexations caused by those public robbers, who are the scourge of many a country? In a neglect of small virtues, in a practising of what are called little sins. At first the man transgressed in a small degree the laws of frugality and modesty. Not content with a convenient situation, he aspired to make a figure. His table became in his eyes too plain, he wished it might be furnished, not as formerly with plenty, but with taste and expensive delicacy. To compass these designs, he was obliged to exceed his income. His lawful income not being sufficient, he supplied his pressing necessities by means which at first sight seemed not very blamable: he borrowed money. After some time his creditor became troublesome, at length formidable; at first he solicited, at last he threatened: The wretched debtor a while thought he must deliver himself up to his creditor; at length he saw himself reduced to the necessity either of retrenching his expenses, or of transgressing a little the maxims of severe equity: he determined on the last, and availed himself of the property of others for whom he was in trust, intending, however, to replace it the first opportunity. Such an opportunity never happened; and the same motives that induced him to begin this vicious course of action engages him to persevere in it. Hence comes his venality, hence his public frauds, hence his base inclination to make sale of both church and state whenever he can find purchasers to come up to his price.

There is a virtue which we cannot fully treat of without danger. To enforce the practice of some virtue is sometimes to excite a disposition to violate it. To describe exactly the dangers which must be avoided by those who would practise the virtue of which I now speak, would be to increase the number of delinquents. But whence, think ye, come the utmost excesses of voluptuousness, and the enormous crimes which its votaries have been capable of perpetrating, in order to cover the scandal of having yielded to it? Both proceed from a neglect of little duties and a commission of little sins. I will here borrow the language of the most eloquent and polite writer of his time. "Voluptuousness at first is nothing but an unintentional curiosity. It proceeds from an affection apparently lawful. A little worldly complaisance mixes with it. The mind by little and little turns to its object; the heart softens and dissolves. Means to please are sought. Inquietude follows and presses. Sight kindles desire. Desire engages to see. Certain vague wishes, at first not perceived, form themselves in the soul. Hence criminal familiarities, scandalous intrigues, continual agitations, and all the other consequences of a

passion, fatal, restless, and unsatisfied, whether it be gratified or not."<sup>7</sup>

So true is what we have affirmed, that, by neglecting the least virtues, we acquire a habit of neglecting others of the greatest importance. So true is it, that we prepare ourselves to practise the greatest crimes, by practising what are called little sins. We conclude, then, that *exactness in performing little duties cherishes tenderness of conscience*. This is our first reflection.

II. We affirm, in the second place, that small duties are *sources of re-conversion after great falls*. Some passages of Scripture have occasioned a difficult case of conscience, which is this: Is the practice of little duties altogether useless to those who neglect great ones; and, all things considered, would it not be better for a man who neglects the important obligations, to omit the performance of small duties, than practice the last, while he neglects the first? This question rises out of these passages: "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to me? saith the Lord. I am full of the burnt-offering of rams, and the fat of fed beasts, and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations, incense is an abomination unto me, the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with," Isa. i. 11—13, "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord," Prov. xv. 8. "I spake not unto your fathers in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt concerning burnt-offerings and sacrifices; but this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice," Jer. vii. 22, 23. "He that killeth an ox, is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he had cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol," Isa. lxvi. 3. "Unto the wicked, saith God, What hast thou to do to declare thy statutes, or that thou shouldest take thy covenant in thy mouth?" Ps. l. 16.

These passages, which might be easily multiplied, seem to determine the question that was just now proposed, and to establish the opinion of those who affirm, that men ought either to leave off the practice of small duties, if they determine to neglect great obligations, or to perform great obligations if they continue to practise small duties. There are, however, some celebrated casuists whose morality in some cases may deserve censure, although they are not censured at Rome, except for what merits applause; these casuists, I say, have decided the question differently, and I cannot help submitting to their reasons. I have more hope of a man who attends public worship, though he derive no advantage from it, than of him who has resolved for ever to absent himself. I have more hope of a man who performs only the most superficial parts of the laws of benevolence, than of him who resolves to violate these, and all the rest too. I have more hope of him who suspends the exercise of his passions only the day before and the day after his participation of the Lord's Supper, than o<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Flechier. Panegy. de St. Bernard.

him who excommunicates himself and his whole family for ever. I have more reason to hope for him who, having made great sacrifices for the doctrines of religion, violates the precepts of it, than for him who both violates the precepts and abjures the doctrines. Not that I affirm, either that it is sufficient to perform small duties while we persist in a neglect of great obligations, or that the performance of the former is not detestable when we perform them carelessly and hypocritically. This I think is the key of the passage just now quoted. These small duties are remains of spiritual life in such as practise them; dying remains, I allow, but precious remains, however; and the state of these people is preferable to the condition of the other persons in question, whom death has enveloped in its dismal shade. Preserve, carefully, preserve these precious remains, whatever just grounds of fear of your salvation may accompany them. Do not extinguish this *wick*, though it only *smokes*, Matt. xii. 20. Perhaps an idea of the sacrifices which you have made for the doctrines of religion, may incline you at last to submit to the precepts of it. Perhaps self-examination, superficial as it is, preparatory to the Lord's Supper, may at some time or other lead you into reflections more deep and serious. Possibly, the sermons which now you attend only to satisfy some transient emotions of conscience, may in the end arouse your consciences effectually.

III. Small duties *compensate by their repetition, for what is wanting to their importance.* We are not called every day to make great sacrifices to order; we are seldom required to set up the standard of the cross in barbarous climes, to sound the gospel to the ends of the world, and to accomplish the promises made to Jesus Christ, that he should have the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession," Ps. ii. 8. Seldom are we called to dare executioners, to triumph in cruel sufferings and death, to confess Christ amidst fires and flames. We are rarely called to the great actions that make heroes; to die for our neighbours; to sacrifice ourselves for the public good; and to devote ourselves for our country.

If we are seldom required to perform great duties, thanks be to God we are seldom tempted to commit great crimes, to deceive a friend, to betray a trust, to reveal a state-secret, to make a sale of justice, to perplex truth, or to persecute innocence. But in what moment of each day do we not meet with opportunities to commit little sins, and to perform duties of comparatively small importance?

Are you confined at home? You have little inconveniences to suffer, little perverse humours to bear with, little provocations to impatience to resist, little disgusts to endure.

Are you in company? You have a few capacious tempers to manage, idle reports to discountenance, a few pernicious maxims to combat, profane actions to censure; sometimes you are obliged to resist iniquity boldly, and at other times to affect to tolerate it, in order to obtain an opportunity to oppose it on a future opportunity with greater probability of success.

Do you prosper? What a source of *little duties* is prosperity, if we sincerely love virtue?

And what a source of *little sins*, if we are not always guarded against temptations to vice? Now a little air of self-sufficiency inclines to solitude, then a little eagerness to shine impels to society. Here a little necessary expense must be incurred, there another expense must be avoided. Here something is due to rank, and must be observed, there rank would be disgraced, and something must be omitted.

Are you in adversity, under misfortunes, or sickness? How many *miserable comforters!* How many disgusting remedies! What intolerable wearinesses! So many articles, so many occasions to perform little duties, and to commit little sins.

Opportunities to commit little sins return every day, I may almost say, every moment of every day. A little sin is a little poison, slow indeed, but continually insinuating itself into the soul, till by degrees it issues in death. A man who does not watch against little sins, is liable to provoke God as often as an occasion to commit them presents itself. On the contrary, a man who makes conscience of practising little duties as well as great ones, finds every day, and every moment, opportunities of giving God proofs of his love. He has only a religion of times and circumstances, which is sometimes justly suspected, but a religion of influence that diffuses itself into every part of his life. There is not a moment in which he does not make some progress in his heavenly course. By his attention to every little duty, he discharges the greatest of all duties, that which St. Paul prescribes to all Christians. "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God," 1 Cor. x. 31. He is an exact imitator of Jesus Christ, "the author and finisher of his faith, who went about doing good," Heb. xii. 2, like him he can say, "I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand I shall never be moved," Ps. xvi. 8. Had I not reason to affirm, that little duties compensate, by the frequency of their return, for what is wanting to constitute their importance?

IV. Our third reflection leads us to a fourth. Little duties have sometimes *characters more evident of real love to God, than the most important duties.* If hypocrisy, if false ideas of religion, sometimes produce little duties, it must be allowed, that secular motives, interest, and vain-glory, sometimes give birth to great exploits. Pride without any mixture of love to order, is sometimes sufficient to engage us to make those great sacrifices of which we just now spoke. Sometimes nothing but an extreme and refined attachment to virtue can animate us to perform little duties. There is sometimes more genuine benevolence in accepting such tokens of gratitude as a poor man gives for a favour conferred on him than in conferring the favour itself. There is sometimes more humility in receiving the praise from a man whose esteem flatters our vanity a little, than in refusing to hear it. After all, though the love of God differs in many respects from mere worldly esteem, yet there are some resemblances. We often think ourselves obliged to render considerable services to people for whom we have no great regard; but it is only for such as we hold in the highest veneration

that we feel certain little attachments, certain little attentions, certain solitudes, which indeed are called *little* in the usual phrase, but which are strong demonstrations of the tender sentiments of the soul. It is just the same with divine love. But this is one of those truths of sentiment and experience, which each of you may understand better by consulting the history of his own life, and by watching the motions of his own heart, than by attending to our syllogisms and discussions.

Perhaps you may imagine God cannot, without debasing his Majesty, cast his eyes on those insignificant actions which we are recommending to you. But undeceive yourselves. What could be less considerable than those *two mites* which the poor widow in the gospel cast into the treasury? Mark xii. 42. Yet we know what Jesus Christ thought of that action. What service less considerable could be rendered Jesus Christ just before his death, than to pour ointment on his head? The apostles had indignation within themselves at this unseasonable ceremony, chap. xiv. 13, &c. They were angry with the woman for diverting the attention of Jesus Christ from those great objects with which his whole soul had been filled. But he reproved them, "Why trouble ye the woman?" said he; she has performed an action worthy of emulation. "Verily I say unto you, whosoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of, for a memorial of her." What can be less considerable in itself than *a cup of cold water*? Yet Jesus Christ promises to reward even this with eternal life, when it is given from a principle of real piety. We said before, my brethren, and allow us to repeat it again, in a religion of love, whatever proceeds from a principle of love has an intrinsic value.

I unite now the subjects of both the discourses, which I have addressed to you, on the words of my text, and, by collecting both into one point of view, I ask, what idea ought you to form of a religion which exhibits a morality so pure and complete? What idea of the preaching of those ministers, who are called to instruct you in it? What idea of the engagements of such disciples as profess to submit to the discipline of it?

What idea ought you to form of a *religion* that prescribes a morality so pure and complete? The Christian religion requires each of us to form, as well as he can, just notions of primitive law: to observe all the consequences, and to place each virtue that proceeds from primitive right, in its just order; to give the first rank to those virtues which immediately proceed from it, and the second to those which proceed from it mediately and remotely. Christianity requires us to regulate our application to each virtue, by the place which each occupies in this scale; to set no bounds to the loving of that God, whose perfections are infinite; to entertain only a limited esteem for finite creatures; to engage our senses in devout exercises, but to take care that they are held under government by our minds; to sing the praises of the Lord with our voices, but animated with our affections; in short to look towards heaven, but to let inward fervour pro-

duce the emotion, determine the direction, and fix the eye.

How amiable would society be, if they who compose it were all followers of this religion! How happy would it be to make treaties, to form alliances, to unite ourselves, by the most affectionate and indissoluble ties, to men inviolably attached to this religion! Had not God shaken nature, and subverted kingdoms, or, in the language of a prophet, had he not "shaken the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land," Hag. ii. 6, to establish this religion in the world, yet it ought to be held in the highest estimation for its own intrinsic worth. How can we help being filled with indignation at those abominable men, who in spite of all the demonstrations of the divine origin of this religion, place their glory in weakening its empire over the heart!

2. But if you form such noble ideas of a religion, the morality of which is so extensive and so pure, what ideas ought you to form of the *preaching* of those who are appointed to instruct you in it? Which way, think you, ought they to bend their force? What kind of questions ought they to propose in the Christian pulpit? Under what point of view ought they to consider the texts, which make the matter of their discourses? Are they required to excite your astonishment by flights of imagination, or to gratify your curiosity by a display of their profound erudition? Does not their office rather require them to employ all the times you allow them to free you from your prejudices, to take off those scales from your eyes, which prevent your perceiving "the things which belong unto your everlasting peace," Luke xix. 42, and to give you such directions as you may follow, as far as can be in the tumult of the world, whither either your inclinations or your necessities call you?

My brethren, while I was meditating on my text two methods of discussing it presented themselves to my mind.

Following the first of these plans, I divided my discourse into three parts, according to the three parts, that is, the three different herbs mentioned in the text. Each of these parts I subdivided into three more. First, I examined the force, the signification, the derivation of the original term, and I inquired whether the word were rightly rendered *mint*. I quoted various opinions on this subject, for interpreters are very much divided about it. According to the Ethiopic version, Jesus Christ spoke of *hyssop*; and according to other versions, some other plant. Secondly, I examined the nature, the uses, the properties of the herb, to which I had restored the true name, and here I heaped up a great number of passages from Aristotle, Pliny, Solmus, Salmasius, and many other authors, who have rendered themselves famous by this kind of erudition. Thirdly having studied *mint* as a critic and as a naturalist, I proceeded at length to examine it as a divine. I inquired why God demanded tithe of this herb. Perhaps thought I, here may be some mystery in this affair. I say *perhaps*, for I acknowledge myself a mere novice in this science, as in a great many others. However, there may be some mysteries in this offering. I was certain, if imagination supplied the place of reason,

and flights of fancy were put instead of facts, it would not be impossible to find mysteries here. If this herb be sweet, said I, it may represent the sweetness of mercy; if it be bitter, it may signify the bitterness of justice. If Jesus Christ meant *hyssop* as some think, it was that very herb of which the famous bunch was made, that was dipped in the blood of sparrows at the purification of lepers. What mysteries! What I had done with *mint* under the first head, I did over again under the second article *anise*, and the same over again under the third head *cumin*. This was my first plan of discussion.

The second method was that which I have chosen. In the former discourse on this text, we endeavoured to convince you that you were under an indispensable obligation to perform the great duties of religion. In this we have been endeavouring to obtain your regard to the little duties of religion; to engage you to submit to the laws of God, even in things of the least importance; and thus, to give you a complete chain of Christian virtues.

My brethren, God forbid that our discourses, which ought always to be animated with a spirit of benevolence, should at any time degenerate into a satire, and that we should enjoy a malicious pleasure in exploding the method of those who entertain ideas different from ours on the best method of preaching. I grant birth, education, and a course of study, have a great deal of influence over us in this respect. But, in the name of God, do not condemn us for treating you like rational creatures, for addressing to you, as to intelligent beings, the words of an apostle, We "speak as to wise men, judge ye what we say," 1 Cor. x. 15. Judge what are the obligations of a minister of a religion, the morality of which is so extensive and pure.

3. Finally, What idea ought you to form of the engagements of such *disciples* as profess to give themselves up to this religion, the morality of which we have been describing? Where are the Christians who have this complete chain of the virtues of Christianity? Where shall we find Christians, who, after they have performed with all due attention, the great duties, hold themselves bound by an inviolable law not to neglect the least? Alas! we are always complaining of the weight of the yoke of the Lord! We are perpetually exclaiming, like the profane Jews mentioned by Malachi, "Behold what a weariness it is!" chap. i. 13. We dispute the ground with God! It should seem he has set too high a price on heaven. We are always ready to curtail his requisitions. What! say we, cannot he be contented with this? will he not be satisfied with that?

Ah! my dear brethren, let us open our eyes to our interest: let us obey the laws of God without reserve: let us observe alike the most important virtues which he has prescribed to us, and those which are least important. We ought to do so, not only because he is our master, but because he is our father, because he proposes no other end but that of rendering us happy: and because so much as we retrench our duties, so much we diminish our happiness. To this God, whose love is always in union with justice, be honour and glory, do-

minion and majesty, both now and for ever. Amen.

## SERMON XLV.

### THE DOOM OF THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED.

REVELATION xxi. 7, 8.

*He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful, and the unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.*

It is a subject deserving the most profound reflections, I mean brethren, that the most irregular being, I mean the devil, is at the same time the most miserable, and that the most holy Being, he who is holy by excellence, is at the same time the most happy, and thus unites in his own essence supreme holiness with sovereign happiness. Satan, who began his audacious projects in *heaven* the "habitation of holiness," 2 Chron. xxx. 27; Satan, who rebelled against God amidst the most noble displays of his magnificence, and who is still a "murderer" and a "liar," John viii. 44; Satan is in the depth of misery. He was hurled down from a pinnacle of glory, expelled for ever from the society of the blessed, and there is a lake of fire "prepared for him and his angels," Matt. xxv. 41. God is the most holy Being. Indeed, the terms *virtue* and *holiness* are very equivocal when applied to an independent Being, whose authority is absolute, who has no law but his own wisdom, no rules of rectitude but his own volitions. Yet, *order*, whatever is sublime in what we mortals call *holiness*, *virtue*, *justice*, eminently dwells in the Deity, and forms one grand and glorious object of the admiration and praise of the purest intelligences, who incessantly make it the matter of the songs which they sing in his honour, and who cry day and night one to another, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty. O Lord, thou king of saints, who shall not fear thee and glorify thy name? For thou art holy; for all nations shall come and worship before thee," Rev. xv. 3, 4. This Being, so holy, so just; this Being who is the source of holiness, justice, and virtue; this Being possesses at the same time the highest possible happiness. He is, in the language of Scripture, the "happy God,"\* and as I said before, he unites in his own essence supreme holiness with supreme happiness.

What boundless objects of contemplation would this reflection open to our view, my brethren, were it necessary to pursue it? Consider it only in one point of light. The destination of these two beings so different, is, if I may be permitted to say so, the rule of the destination of all intelligent beings. All things considered, the more we partake of the impurity of Satan, the more we partake of his

\* 1 Tim. i. 11. See vol. i. p. 36. note. Serm. 1', On the Eternity of God.

misery. It would be absurd to suppose, that in "the time of the restitution of all things," Acts iii. 21, which will soon arrive, and justify Providence against the innumerable censures passed upon it, it would be absurd to suppose, that if we have appropriated the irregularities of the impure spirit we should not at that time partake of his misery; and it would be absurd to suppose, that we can partake of the virtues of the holy Being, without participating his felicity and glory.

Each part of these propositions is contained in the words of my text. "He that overcometh," he who in this world of obstacles to virtue shall take the holiness of God for his rule, as far as it is allowable for frail creatures to regulate themselves by an example so perfect and sublime, "he that overcometh" shall have no bounds set to his happiness. He "shall inherit all things," he shall enter into the family of God himself. "I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars," of what order soever they be, and all those who do "the works of the devil," shall be placed in a condition like his, "shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

We invite you to-day to meditate on these truths, and in order to reduce the subject to the size of a single sermon, we will only insist on such articles of the morality of St. John as are least known and most disputed. We will distinguish in this system such virtues to be practised, and such vices to be avoided, as are most opposite to those prejudices which the world usually forms concerning the final doom of mankind.

I. The first *prejudice* which we intend to attack is, that, *A life spent in ease and idleness is not incompatible with salvation, if it be free from great crimes.* Against which, we oppose this part of our text, "He that overcometh shall inherit." In order to "inherit," we must overcome. Here vigilance, action, and motion, are supposed.

II. The second *prejudice* is, that, *A just God will not impute to his creatures sins of infirmity and constitution, though his creatures should be subject to them during the whole course of their lives.* Against which we oppose these words of the apostle, "The fearful and whoremongers shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone."

III. The third *prejudice* is, that, *Speculative errors cannot be attended with any fatal consequences, provided we live uprightly, as it is called, and discharge our social duties.* Against which we oppose this word, the "unbelieving." The unbelieving are put into the class of the miserable.

IV. The fourth *prejudice* is, that, *Religions are indifferent. The mercy of God extends to those who live in the most erroneous communions.* Against which we oppose the word "idolaters." Idolaters are considered among the most criminal of mankind.

V. The last *prejudice* is, that, *None but the vulgar ought to be afraid of committing certain crimes. Kings will be judged by a particular law:*

*the greatness of the motive that inclined them to manage some affairs of state will plead their excuse, and secure them from divine vengeance.* Against this we oppose these words, "abominable," "poisoners,"\* "and all liars," which three words include almost all those abominations which are called illustrious crimes. However, the abominable, the poisoners, and all the liars, shall have, as well as the fearful, the unbelieving, the unclean, and the idolaters, "their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone."

I. Let us begin with the first prejudice. *A life spent in ease and idleness is not incompatible with salvation, if it be free from great crimes.* St. John takes away this unjust pretext, by considering salvation as a prize to be obtained by conquest. "He who overcometh," implies vigilance, activity, and motion. Two considerations will place the meaning of our apostle in the clearest light. We take the first from the nature of evangelical virtues, and the second from the nature of those vices which are forbidden in the gospel.

1. The nature of evangelical virtues demands vigilance, action, and motion. It is impossible to exercise these virtues under the influence of effeminacy, idleness, and ease. Let us examine a few of these virtues.

What is the love of God? It is that disposition of the soul which inclines us to adore his perfections, to admire with the highest joy his glorious attributes, and to desire with the utmost ardour to be closely united to him as to our supreme good; but this disposition cannot be exercised, cannot be acquired, without vigilance, action, and motion. We must meditate on that sovereign power which formed this universe by a single volition, and by a single volition determined its doom. We must meditate on that supreme wisdom which regulates all the works of supreme power, combining causes with effects, and means with ends, and which by this infinite combination has always adjusted, and continues to arrange and direct all the works which we behold, and others without number which lie beyond the utmost stretch of our imagination. We must meditate on that perfect justice which is engraven on all the productions of the Creator, on all the conduct of providence, and remarkably on the consciences of mankind, which continually "accuse or excuse" their actions, Rom. ii. 15. Conscience is either tortured with remorse or involved in delight, according as we have been attached to virtue, or have violated it. We must meditate on that infinite goodness which is "over all his works," Ps. cxlv. 9. We must not only consider this palace where God has lodged man, a palace of delights before the entrance of sin, but which, since that fatal period, is, alas! nothing but a theatre, and, if I may express myself so, a universal scaffold, on which he exercises the most terrible vengeance, and exhibits his most dreadful executions. We must enter, moreover, into the genius of religion; know the power of that arm which he exerts to deliver us from bondage; the power

\* *Poisoners.* φαρμακιστ. Veneficis. Incantatoribus. Qui malis magie artibus utuntur. The French bible read *empoisonneurs*, poisoners.

of those succours which he affords to enable us to triumph over our depravity; the excellence of revealed mysteries; the value of the pardon set before us; the pleasure and peace poured into our souls; and the magnificence of such objects as the gospel proposes to our hopes. All this requires vigilance, action, and motion. Nothing of this can be acquired under the influence of effeminacy, idleness, and ease. Nothing of this can be done in the circles of pleasure, at gaming-tables, or in places of public diversion.

What is *faith*? It is that disposition of our souls which "brings into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ," 2 Cor. x. 5, and subjects them all to his decisions. In order to this, we must be convinced that God has not left men to their natural darkness, but bestowed on them the light of divine revelation. We must examine this revelation, and understand the proofs of its divinity. We must collect into one body the fundamental truths included in it. We must remove or invalidate those glosses which false teachers have applied to perplex the meaning of it. We must understand how to be deaf to every voice except that of eternal truth; and to say from the bottom of a soul filled with the love of this truth, "Speak, Lord, for thy servants hear," 1 Sam. iii. 9. All this requires vigilance, action, and motion. Nothing of this can be acquired under the influence of effeminacy, idleness, and ease. Nothing of this can be done in circles of pleasure, at gaming-tables, or places of public diversion.

What is *benevolence*? It is that disposition of soul which engages us to consider our neighbour as ourselves, and to study his interest as our own. In order to this, we must examine both his temporal and spiritual wants. If he be in a state of indigence, we must provide for him, either at our expense, or by exciting in his favour the compassion of others. When he is ignorant we must inform him, when in an error undeceive him, when he strays we must recall him, when his spirits are overwhelmed, comfort him; we must visit him when he is confined, edify him by our conduct, and encourage him by our example. All this demands vigilance, action, and motion. Nothing of this can be acquired under the influence of effeminacy, idleness, and ease. Nothing of this can be done in circles of pleasure, at gaming-tables, or at places of public diversion.

What is *repentance*? It is that disposition of our soul, which makes the remembrance of our sins a source of the bitterest grief. This supposes many self-examinations and self-condemnations, much remorse of conscience, many tears shed into the bosom of God, many methods tried to preclude falling again into sins, the remembrance of which is so grievous to us. Above all, this virtue supposes recompenses in great number. If we have propagated any maxims injurious to religion, reparation must be made; for how can we be said to repent of having advanced such maxims, except we abjure them, and exert all our influence to remove such fatal effects as they have produced? If we have injured the reputation of a neighbour, recompense must be

made; for how can we repent of having injured the reputation of a neighbour, unless we endeavour to establish it, and to restore as much credit to him as we have taken away? Repentance also includes restitution of property, "if we have taken any thing from any man," Luke xix. 8. All the exercises of this virtue require vigilance, action, and motion. None of these are acquired under the influence of indolence, idleness, and ease. None of these are practised in circles of pleasure, at gaming-tables, or at places of public diversion.

2. Even the nature of those vices which the gospel forbids, demonstrates that a life wasted in idleness is incompatible with salvation. He who has well studied the human heart, and carefully examined the causes of so many resolutions broken by the greatest saints, so many promises forgotten, so many vows violated, so many solemn engagements falsified, will acknowledge, that these disorders seldom proceed from malice, yea, seldom from a want of sincerity and good faith. You often fall into temptations which you mean to resist. Your misfortune is, that you are not sufficiently prepared for resistance. How, for instance, can we resist temptations to pride, unless we close every avenue by which it enters into the heart; unless we make serious reflections on the meanness of our original, the uncertainty of our knowledge, the imperfection of our virtue, the enormity of our crimes, and the vanity of our riches, titles, dignity, and life? Again, how can we resist the sophisms of error, if we have only a superficial knowledge of religion, if we do not build our faith on foundations immovable and firm? In fine, how can we resist sensual temptations, unless we endeavour to dethrone our passions, unless we frequently and boldly attack and subdue them, assuage their fury, and force them, as it were, to bow to the dominion of reason?

This prejudice refutes itself. They who adopt it furnish us with weapons against themselves. An idle life is compatible with salvation, say you, provided it be free from great crimes. But I say, an idle life cannot be free from great crimes. Indolence is a source of great wickedness, and vigilance and activity are necessary to prevent the exercise of it.

Let us not pass over these reflections lightly, my brethren. The prejudice which we are attacking is very important in its consequences; it is a fatal prejudice, sapping the very foundations of Christian morality. It is not a particular prejudice, confined within a narrow circle; it is general, even among Christians, and spread far and wide. It is not a prejudice secretly revolved in the mind, and covered with a blushing veil; but it is a bold notorious prejudice, and Christians exalt it into a maxim of religion, and a first principle of morality. This is the prejudice of that vain loquacious woman, who, having rapidly read a few devotional books, and hastily repeated a few prayers, which proceeded less from her heart than her lips, spends one part of her life in places of public diversion, and the other in making art supply the place of nature, in disguising her personal defects, and in trying whether by borrowed ornaments she can obtain from the folly of men such incense as she offers to her-

self, such as she derives from her own immoderate vanity and self-admiration. This is the prejudice of that soldier, who, at the end of a campaign, or at the conclusion of a peace, thinks he may employ the rest of his life in relating his adventures, and indemnify himself for his former dangers and fatigues by an idleness which is often a burden to those who are witnesses of it, and oftener still to himself, who petrifies in his own tales. This is the prejudice of a great many people, who have nothing else to say to their preachers, to all their casuists, and to all their religious instructors, but, I wrong nobody, I do no harm. Shall I venture to say, my brethren, why do not you do a little harm? I have, I declare, more hope of a man, who, in a high fever, becomes so delirious, and apparently so mad, that the strongest persons can hardly hold him, than I have of a lethargic patient, all whose senses are stupified, his spirits sunk, and his natural warmth gone. I have more hope for a sinner, who, in a violent passion breaks the most sacred laws, and tramples on the most solemn engagements, than I have for a man, indolent, motionless, cold, insensible to all the motives of religion, and to all the stings of conscience.

My brethren, let us not deceive ourselves: there is something of consequence to do in every moment of a Christian life. There are always in a Christian life temptations to be resisted, and consequently in every moment of a Christian life we must overcome these temptations. All ages require action. In every stage of life we have temptations to surmount, and in every stage of life we must overcome them. We must overcome the temptations of childhood, the temptations of youth, the temptations of old age. All conditions require action. We must surmount some temptations in all conditions, and in all conditions we must overcome them. We must overcome the temptations of poverty, those of prosperity, those of elevated posts, and those which belong to a state of obscurity, a sort of death, a kind of grave. All professions require action. There are in all professions temptations to be surmounted, and in all professions we must overcome them. The statesman must subdue the temptations of his profession, the soldier must vanquish the temptation of his, the merchant of his, and so of the rest. All situations require action. In all situations there are temptations to be conquered, and in all situations we must overcome them. We must get above the temptations of health, those of sickness, and those of death. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things."

I am well aware that to preach this gospel is, in the opinion of some, to teach a severe morality, to mark out a discouraging course, to invite to unequal combats. This morality, however, will seem severe only to lukewarm Christians. This course will appear discouraging only to soft and indolent souls. These combats will seem unequal only to such as have no true courage, listless and dastardly souls. A real Christian will be so inflamed with the love of his God, he will be attracted by so many powerful and comfortable motives, above all, he will be animated with a desire so strong to obtain a victory, which infallibly

follows the combat, that nothing will appear severe, nothing discouraging, nothing unequal in the course of obtaining it. What dominion over his heart will not that voice obtain, which, proceeding from the mouth of the "author and finisher of his faith," addresses him, and says, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things," Heb. xii. 2.

Christian soul dost thou complain of the battle? But in order to conquer you must fight. The glorified saints were once warriors, and are now conquerors. Flesh and blood, earth and hell, were their enemies. Faith and love, and all other Christian virtues, were their armour. The clouds were their triumphal chariots. Angels, thousands of angels, "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands," Rev. v. 21, who wait continually before God, were their witnesses. The approbation of the Son of God, this rapturous declaration, "Well done, good and faithful servant," Matt. xxv. 23, well done, faithful confessor, thou hast nobly endured the cross; well done, martyr for morality, thou hast caused concupiscence to yield to the commandments of God; these ecstasical declarations were their crown. Jesus Christ is their rewarder, and joys unspeakable and full of glory, peace of soul, tranquillity of conscience, rivers of pleasure, "fulness of joy at God's right hand for evermore, the city that hath foundations, Jerusalem which is above, the heavenly country, new heavens and a new earth," the society of angels, perfect knowledge, refined virtues, ineffable sensations, sacred flames, God himself; Lo! these are the recompense, these their great reward. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; I will be his God, and he shall be my son."

II. The second prejudice which we are endeavouring to remove is, that, *A just God cannot impute to his creatures sins of infirmity and constitution, though his creatures should be subject to them during the whole course of their lives.* Against this we oppose these words of the apostle, the *fearful* and the *unclean*.\* The most frequent excuse for impurity is constitution. A certain constitutional turn is generally considered as a ground of justification; and it is eagerly maintained, lest we should be obliged to be holy for want of excuses to sin, and lest the deceitful pleasures of sin should be embittered by remorse. Yet, "the unclean shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone." As to the *fearfulness*, or timidity, what is there in us, that can be more properly called human frailty than this? Let us hear St. John. Whom does he mean by the *fearful*? I fear we shall find several classes of these in religion. There are many sorts of "the fearful, who shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone."

For example, a man who hears the name of God blasphemed, religion opposed, good manners attacked, but who has not the courage to confess Jesus Christ, to say, I am a Christian, and to manifest his indignation against such odious discourses, such a man is *fearful*, he

\* *Illegis.* Our translation renders it *whoremongers*—the old French bibles *pauillards*—Mr. Saurin more accurately *impurs*—i. e. *unclean*.

shall have no part in the inheritance of the children of God. A man who sees his neighbour wounded by calumny and slander, but who has not courage to reprove the slanderer, though in his soul he detests him, such a man is one of the *fearful*, who shall have no part in the inheritance of the children of God. A magistrate who has received from God the sword for the protection of oppressed widows and orphans, but who, terrified with the rank of the oppressor sacrifices to him the rights of widows and orphans, such a man is *fearful*, he shall have no part in the inheritance of the children of God.

But, though these notions of fearfulness are just, and though the proposition in the text is true in all these senses, it is clear, I think, by the circumstances in which St. John wrote the revelation, by the persecutions he foretold, by the exhortations he addressed to believers to surmount them, and by many other considerations, that the holy man had particularly, and perhaps only, that *fearfulness* in view, which induces some to deny that truth for fear of persecution, of which they were thoroughly persuaded. Of this sort of *fearful* persons he affirms, "they shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone."

There is, I acknowledge, an ambiguity in the terms, or rather in the proposition, which may render this article obscure, and those which follow more so. When it is said, that "the fearful, the unbelieving, and the abominable, the murderers and poisoners, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone," we are not to understand either such as have once committed any of these crimes, or such as have lived some time in the practice of any one of them, but have afterward repented. Were we to condemn to eternal flames all such persons as these, alas! who could escape? Not Moses; he was sometimes *unbelieving*. Not St. Peter; he was sometimes *fearful*. Not David; he committed *murder*, was guilty of *lying*, *abomination*, and *impurity*. Not any of you, my brethren; there is not one of you whose conscience does not reproach him with having done some act of *fearfulness*, *unbelief*, and *impurity*. Heaven forbid, we should have to reproach any of you with forming the act into a habit!

St. John speaks then, in this place, of those only who live in a habit of these vices. But, I repeat it again, although this evil habit may originate in human frailty, yet it is certainly that sort of *fearfulness* which we have been explaining; it is the *fearfulness* with which tyrants inspire such as ought to confess the truth. Ask those of our brethren, for whom we utter the deepest sighs, and shed the bitterest tears, what prevents their giving glory to God, by yielding to the exhortations which we have so long addressed to them, and which we continue to address to them. They tell you it is human frailty. Ask that head of a family why he does not flee to some place where he might enjoy such a public worship as he approves, and partake of the sacraments for which he pines. Human frailty makes him fear he cannot live without his dear children. Ask that lady, who is in some sort mistress of her destiny, having neither family nor connex-

ion, and being loaded with silver and gold; ask her why she does not avail herself of her independence to render homage to her religion. Human frailty makes her fear she cannot undergo the fatigue of a journey, or bear the air of a foreign climate, or share the contempt generally cast on other refugees who carry along with them reputation, riches, and honours. Ask that apostate, what obliges him to "receive the mark of the image of the beast on his forehead," Rev. xiii. 16. Human frailty makes him fear prisons, dungeons, and galleys. Yet what says St. John of this *fearfulness* inseparable from human frailty? He says, it excludes people from the inheritance of the children of God. The life of a Christian is a continual warfare. Fearfulness is the most indefensible disposition in a soldier. Fearfulness in war is one of the vices that nobody dares to avow; worldly honour either entirely eradicates it, or animates soldiers to subdue it. Want of courage is equally odious in religion. A timid Christian is no more fit to fight under the standard of the "lion of the tribe of Judah," Rev. v. 5, than a boaster under that of an earthly hero. "The fearful shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone."

After this, my brethren, shall we plead our frailty? Shall we draw arguments for lukewarmness from what ought to invigorate us? Shall we cherish our indifference by such passages as these? "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak," Matt. xxvi. 41. "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh," Gal. v. 17. "The Lord knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are but dust!" Ps. ciii. 14. Shall we attempt to frustrate all the kind intentions of the Holy Spirit, who makes us feel our frailty only for the sake of engaging us to watch and fortify ourselves against it? Believe me, the sentence pronounced by St. John will never be revoked by such frivolous excuses; but it will be always true that "the fearful shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone."

III. Let us attend to the third prejudice. *Speculative errors cannot be attended with any fatal consequences, provided we live uprightly, as it is called, and discharge our social duties.* Nothing can be more specious than this pretence. Of all tyrannies, that which is exercised over the mind is the most opposite to natural right. Fires and gibbets, racks and tortures, may indeed force a man to disguise his ideas, but they can never change them. The violence of torments may indeed make hypocrites, but it never yet made good proselytes.

We not only affirm, that no human power can oblige us to consider a proposition as true which we know to be false, but we add, we ourselves have no such power over our own minds. It does not depend on us to see, or not to see, a connexion between two ideas; to assent to a truth, or not to assent to it. Evidence forces, demonstration carries us away.

Moreover, although God justly requires us to employ all the portion of genius which he has given us, in searching after truth, yet his equity will not allow that we should not regard as evident what the genius which he has given us makes appear evident; and that we should



not regard as false what the genius which he has given us makes appear false. If it should happen, then, that a man, having exercised all the attention, and all the rectitude of which he is capable, in examining the most important questions of religion, cannot obtain evidence enough to determine his judgment; if what appears evident to others seem doubtful to him; if what seems demonstrative to them appears only probable to him, he cannot be justly condemned for unbelief. Consequently, what we have called a *prejudice* looks like the very essence of reason and truth; and this proposition, *Speculative errors cannot be attended with any fatal consequences*, ought to be admitted as a first principle.

My brethren, were it necessary to give our opinion of this article, we should boldly affirm, that the case just now proposed is impossible. We are fully persuaded, that it is not possible for a man who has a common share of sense, and who employs it all in examining whether there be a God in heaven, or whether the Scripture be a divine revelation, to continue in suspense on these important subjects. But our conviction affords no proof to others. There are some truths which cannot be demonstrated; and equity requires us to allege in a dispute only what is capable of demonstration. We confine ourselves to that class of unbelievers whose infidelity of mind proceeds from depravity of heart; and affirm, that they are included in the sentence denounced by our apostle, and deserve to suffer it in all its rigour. Now we have reason to form this judgment of an unbeliever, unless he observes all the following conditions, which we have seen associated in any one person of this character.

1. He ought to have studied the great questions of religion with all the application that the capacity of his mind, and the number of his talents, could admit. These questions belong to subjects the most interesting. To examine them carelessly, to offer them only, if I may venture to speak so, to the surface of his mind, is a full proof of the depravity of his heart.

2. We require an unbeliever to enter upon the discussion of these truths with a determination to sacrifice to them not only his strongest prejudices, but also his most violent passions and his dearest interests. If there be a God in heaven, if the Christian religion be divine, all the plans of our love and hatred, sorrow and joy, ought to be regulated by these great truths. Every man who is not conscious of having examined them in such a disposition, and who has obtained by his examination only doubts and uncertainties, has reason to fear that the emotions of his senses, and the suggestions of his passions, have shackled, yea, imprisoned, the faculties of his mind.

3. We require an unbeliever, who, notwithstanding all these conditions, pretends to be convinced that the ideas of believers are imaginary, to show at least some mortification on account of this affected discovery. Mankind have the highest reason to wish that the hopes excited by religion may be well-grounded; that we may be formed for eternity; that we may enjoy an endless felicity after death. If these be chimeras, behold man stripped of his most

glorious privileges! A person educated with other Christians in the noble hope of immortality, and obtaining afterwards proof that this hope is founded only in the fancies of enthusiasts; a man rejoicing at the discovery; a man congratulating himself on having lost a treasure so rich; a person unaffected with the vanishing of such inestimable advantages;—such a man, I say, discovers an enormous depravity of heart.

4. We require an unbeliever to acknowledge, that religion has at least some probability. A man who can maintain that the system of infidelity is demonstrative, that this proposition, *There is no God*, is evident; that this other is incontestable, *Religion has not one character of divinity*; a man who can maintain that a good philosopher ought not to retain in his mind the least doubt or uncertainty on these articles, that for his own part he has arrived at mathematical demonstration;—such a man, if he be not the most extravagant of mankind, is, however, one of the most corrupt.

5. In fine, we require an unbeliever, on supposition that his system were probable, that the plan of religion were only probable, that had his a hundred degrees of probability, and ours only one degree, I say, we require this unbeliever to act as if our system was evidently true, and as if his was demonstratively false. If our system of faith be true, all is hazarded when the life is directed by a system of infidelity; whereas nothing is hazarded if the life be regulated by religion, even supposing the system of religion groundless. An unbeliever who is not ready to sacrifice his dearest passions even to a mere probability of the truth of the doctrine of a future life, gives full proof of the depravity of his heart.

Whether there be any one in the world, who, in spite of these dispositions, can persuade himself that religion has no character of truth, we leave to the judgment of God: but as for those who sin against any of the rules just now mentioned (and how many reasons have we to conclude that there are numbers of this character!) they are included in the sentence of our apostle, and they deserve to feel its utmost rigour. "The unbelieving shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone."

IV. Let us advert to the fourth prejudice. *Religions are indifferent*. We will not go through the various sects of Christianity, and decide these litigious questions, Which of these religions are compatible with salvation? Which of these religions are destructive of it? We will affirm only with our apostle, that "idolaters shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone." We intend particularly to wipe off that imputation which the church of Rome constantly casts on our doctrine. Under pretence that we have never been willing to denounce a sentence of eternal damnation against members of the most impure sects, they affirm, that, in our opinion, people may be saved in their community, and this, they say, is one of the articles of our faith.

This is a sophism which you have often heard attributed to a prince, who had united, as far as two such different things could be united, the qualities of a great king with those

of a bad Christian. Having a long time hesitated between the peaceable possession of an earthly crown, and the steadfast hope of a heavenly crown, his historians tell us, he assembled some doctors of the Roman communion, and some of ours. He asked the first, Whether it were possible to be saved in the Protestant communion? They answered, No. He then asked the second, Whether it were possible to be saved in the Roman communion? They replied, They durst not decide the question.\* On this, the prince reasoned in this manner. "The Roman Catholic doctors assure me there is no salvation in the Protestant communion. The Protestants dare not affirm that there is no salvation in the communion of Rome. Prudence, therefore, requires me to abandon the Protestant religion, and to embrace the Roman; because in the opinion of the Protestants, it is at most only probable that I should perish in the church of Rome, whereas, in the opinion of the Roman Catholics, it is demonstrative that I should be damned in the Protestant community." We will not attempt to investigate this point of history, by examining whether these Protestant ministers betrayed our religion by advancing a proposition contrary to it, or whether these historians betrayed the truth by altering the answer attributed to our ministers. Whatever we think of this historical fact, we affirm with St. John, that "Idolaters shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone."

However, we ought to make a cautious distinction concerning doctrines, as we do concerning precepts, a distinction between questions of *fact* and questions of *right*. There is a question of right in regard to precepts; as for example—Is a course of life opposite to the precepts of the gospel a damnable state? To this we reply, Undoubtedly it is. There is also a question of fact, as for example—Shall all those who follow such a course of life suffer all the rigour of damnation? A wise man ought to pause before he answers this question; because he does not know whether a man who has spent one part of his life in a course of vice, may not employ the remaining part in repentance, and so pass into a state to which the privileges of repentance are annexed. In like manner, there are questions of fact and questions of right in regard to doctrines. The question of right in regard to the present doctrine is this: Can we be saved in an idolatrous community? Certainly we cannot. The question of fact is this: Will every member of an idolatrous community be damned? A wise man ought to suspend his judgment on this question, because he who had spent one part of his life in an idolatrous community, may employ the remaining part in repenting, and consequently may share the privileges of repentance. Except in this case, according to our principles, "Idolaters shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone." But, according to our principles, the Roman Catholic church is guilty of idolatry;

consequently, according to our principles, the members of the church of Rome, if they do not forsake that community, are among such as "shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone."

If it be necessary to prove, that, according to our principles, the church of Rome is guilty of idolatry, the evidence is easily obtained. Let us form a distinct idea of what, agreeably to Scripture, we call *idolatry*. To regard a simple creature as God supreme; to render to a simple creature the worship that is due only to the Supreme God, is what we call idolatry. Now, according to our principles, the members of the church of Rome do render to a creature, to a bit of bread, such worship as is due only to the supreme God. By consequence, according to our principles, the members of the church of Rome are guilty of idolatry.

They defend themselves by a somewhat specious but groundless argument. It was employed by a man\* who disgraced his name by abandoning the Protestant religion, though, thanks be to God, I hope, I and my family shall always be enabled to continue it in the list of sincere Protestants. His words are these: "Two or three articles," says he, "excited strong prejudices in my mind against the church of Rome; transubstantiation, the adoration of the holy sacrament, and the infallibility of the church. Of these three articles, that of the adoration of the holy sacrament led me to consider the church of Rome as idolatrous, and separated me from its communion. A book which I one day opened without design, instantly removed this objection. There I found a distinction between *error of place* in worship, and *error of object*. The Catholic worships Jesus Christ in the eucharist, an object truly adorable. There is no error in this respect. If Jesus Christ be not really present in the eucharist, the Catholic worships him where he is not; this is a mere error of *place*, and no crime of idolatry." A mere sophism! By the same argument the Israelites may be exculpated for rendering divine honours to the golden calf. We must distinguish error of *place* from error of *object*. The Israelite worships in the golden calf the true God, an object truly adorable. "To-morrow is a feast to the Lord, the God, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt," Exod. xxxii. 5. There is no error in this respect; if God be not really present in the golden calf the Israelite worships him where he is not, a mere error of *place*, and not the crime of idolatry. But St. Stephen says expressly that this calf was an idol. "They made a calf, and offered sacrifice unto the idol," Acts vii. 41. By consequence, error of place in worship does not exculpate men from idolatry. As, therefore, according to our principles, there is an error of place in the worship which Roman Catholics render to their host, so also, according to our principles, they are guilty of idolatry.

But are we speaking only according to our own principles? Have we seen any thing in the wilderness of Sinai which we do not daily see in the Roman communion? Behold, as in the desert of Sinai, an innumerable multitude,

\* This artifice of Henry the Fourth is differently told by the Catholics: they say that the Protestant doctors answered,—A Catholic may be saved.

\* Mr. Saurin of Paris.

tired of rendering spiritual worship to an invisible God, and demanding "gods to be made, which shall go before them!" Behold, as in the desert of Sinai, a priest forming, with his own hands, a god to receive supreme adoration! See, as in the desert, a little matter modified by a mortal man, and placed upon the throne of the God of heaven and earth! Observe, as in the desert, the Israelites liberally bestowing their gold and their jewels, to deck and adorn, if not to construct the idol! Hark! as in the desert of Sinai, priests publish profane solemnities, and make proclamation, saying, "Tomorrow is a feast to the Lord!" Behold, as in the desert, the people rising early on festivals to perform matins! Harken! criminal voices declare, as in Sinai, "These are thy gods, or this is thy god, O Israel, who brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." What am I saying? I hear expressions more shocking still. This is, O shame to Christianity! O scandal in the eyes of all true Christians! This is, yea, this bit of bread, on which a priest has written, Jesus Christ the *saviour of mankind*, this is thy God. This is the God whom all the angels in heaven adore. This is the God "by whom all things were created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, principalities, or powers." This is the God, who upholds all things by the word of his power. This is the God who, in the fulness of time, took mortal flesh. This is the God who, for thy salvation, O Israel, was stretched on the cross. This is he, who in the garden of Gethsemane said, "O my father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me," Matt. xxvi. 39, who rose conqueror over death and the grave, who passed into the heavens, and at whose ascension the heavenly intelligences exclaimed, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, even lift them up, ye everlasting doors, that the Lord of hosts, the King of glory, may come in," Ps. xxiv. 7, &c. "O Judah, Judah, thou hast justified thy sister Samaria. O ye deserts of Sinai, never did ye see any thing equal to what our weeping eyes behold! Who is on the Lord's side? Let him come hither. Ye sons of Levi, separated to the service of the Lord, consecrate yourselves to-day to Jehovah." But what are we about? Are we interrupting the soft still voice of the gospel, to utter the thundering commands of mount Sinai? Shall we command you to-day, as Moses did formerly the Levites, "put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out, from gate to gate, throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour." Ah, Rome! Were we to adopt this method, you could not reproach us; you could only complain that we were too ready to learn the lessons you have taught us, and too eager to imitate your bloody example! Even in such a case we should have one great advantage over you; our hands would grasp the murdering sword to destroy thee only for the glory of God, whereas thine has butchered us for the honour of an idol! We are not come with fire, and blackness, and darkness, and tempest; but Zion, though all mangled by thy cruelty, utters only cool exhortations, affectionate remonstrances, and tender entreaties;

she fights only with the "sword of the Spirit," and the "hammer of the word," Eph. vi. 17; Jer. xxiii. 29. Ah poor people! How long will you live without perceiving the golden candlestick which Jesus Christ has lighted up in his church! May God take away that fatal bandage, which hides the truth from thine eyes! Or, if this favour be refused us, may God enable us to take away from thee such of our children as thou hast barbarously torn from the breasts of their mothers, in order to make them, like thine own, the children of a harlot.

V. To proceed to the last prejudice. *None but the vulgar ought to be afraid of committing certain crimes. Kings and statesmen will be judged by a particular law. The greatness of the motive that inclined them to manage some affairs of state will plead their excuse, and secure them from divine vengeance.* What reason would subjects have to complain, and, I will venture to add, how insecure would princes and magistrates be, my brethren, if these pretences were well-grounded; if they who hold our lives and fortunes in their hands, were under no restraint in the abuse of sovereign power; and if, under our oppressions, we could not inwardly appeal to a Supreme Governor, and say, at least to ourselves, in private, "I saw under the sun the place of judgment, that wickedness was there, and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there. I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked; for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work," Eccles. iii. 16, 17.

But if this be a claim of tyranny, it is not, however, a privilege derived from religion. It is destroyed by St. John in the words of our text, "abominable, and murderers, and poisoners, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone." We do not understand that the apostle speaks here only of such eminent persons as govern mankind. There are liars, murderers, poisoners, and abominable of all ranks and conditions; but it is only in the courts of kings, it is on thrones, it is at the head of armies, and in the persons of such as are usually called *heroes* in the world, that crimes of this sort are ennobled: here altars are erected, and these detestable actions elevated into exploits worthy of immortal glory; they are inserted in our histories, in order to be transmitted to the latest posterity.

False protestations, by which a statesman, if I may speak so, obtains leave to lodge in the bosom of an ally, that he may be the better able to stab him to the heart; indeterminate treaties, and frivolous distinctions between the letter and the spirit of a public instrument; these, which we call illustrious *lies*, these are exploits worthy of immortal glory! Bloody wars, undertaken less for the good of the state than for the glory of the governors; cruel expeditions, tragical battles, sieges fool-hardy and desperate in a theory of the military art, but practicable in the eyes of ambition, or rather raving madness; rivers discoloured with blood; heaps of human bodies loading the earth; these which we call illustrious *murders*, these are exploits thought worthy of immortal glory! Dark machinations, in which treason supplies the

place of courage, assassination of the right of war, secret poison of public battle: these are actions truly *abominable*, yet these are thought worthy of immortal glory, provided they be crowned with success, and provided an historian can be found to disguise and embellish them! An historian, who can celebrate and adorn such heinous crimes, is, if possible, more *abominable* than his hero who committed them.

Shall we go back to the periods of fable? Shall we take example from those nations which lived without hope, and without God in the world? Shall we narrate ancient history? Shall we publish the turpitude of modern times? Ye horrid crimes! ye frightful actions! ye perfidious outrages! more fit for the hearts of infernal furies than for the bosoms of mankind, depart into eternal silence, and never show your ghastly features again! Never were propositions more unwarrantable than these: the vulgar only ought to be afraid of certain crimes. Kings and statesmen will be judged by a particular law. The greatness of the motive that inclined them to manage some affairs of state, will plead their excuse, and secure them from divine vengeance.

Why were so many commands given to princes concerning administration of justice, breaches of peace, and declarations of war? To what purpose have so many Pharaohs been drowned, Nebuchadnezzars reduced to the condition of beasts, Herods devoured by worms, and strokes of divine vengeance fallen upon the proudest heads, except to teach us that no creature is so august, no throne so magnificent, no dominion so invincible, as to free a creature from the necessity of obeying his Creator? What means that law which God formerly gave by the mouth of Moses? "When thou shalt set a king over thee, he shall not multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away," Deut. xvii. 14, &c. He shall not amass for himself silver and gold. "And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write himself a copy of this law in a book, and it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law, and these statutes, to do them; that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left." What mean these thundering words? "Thou profane wicked prince of Israel! thy day is come, thine iniquity shall have an end. Thus saith the Lord God, Remove the diadem, and take off the crown; I will overturn it, and it shall be no more," Ezek. xxi. 25—27. In one word, what does St. John mean by the words of my text? "All liars and poisoners, murderers and abominable, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone."

It would be difficult, my brethren, for men who never saw any thing greater than the courts of princes, a sort of earthly gods, to imagine a more pompous and venerable image than that which St. John exhibits here to our

view. He brings forth the terrible day in which the supreme Lawgiver will bring earthly judges to account for that power with which he intrusted them, and of which most of them have made a very criminal use. There, all their flattering titles will be laid aside, no more emperors, monarchs, arbiters of peace or war; or rather, there will these titles be repeated to mortify the pride, and to abate the insolence, of every one who abused them. There, pale, trembling, and afraid will appear those tyrants, those scourges of Almighty God, those disturbers of mankind, who once made the earth tremble with a single cast of their eyes. Then will be produced the vexations they have caused, the unjust decrees they have pronounced, the families they have impoverished, the houses, the cities, the kingdoms they have burnt to ashes. Then will be judged the famous quarrels of Alexander and Darius, Cyrus and Cræsus, Pyrrhus and Fabricius, Hannibal and Scipio, Cæsar and Pompey, ill decided, in Cato's opinion, by the gods themselves in the battle of Pharsalia. And you, you who hold the reins of this republic, you, in regard to whom we often say to this people, "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers; the powers that be are ordained of God; whosoever resisteth power, resisteth the ordinance of God, and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation," Rom. xiii. 1, 2; you, our governors and lords, what appearances will you make in that great day, and what sentence will you then receive? Ah! if it be possible for you to be so intoxicated with your own grandeur as to forget the majesty of that God, who placed you at the head of this people, and so neglect the duties of your station; if it be possible for the cries of the oppressed to sound in vain in your ears, and bribes to blind your eyes; if it be possible for you to bestow the rewards due to fidelity and courage upon solicitation and intrigue, to sacrifice the public interest to private views; if a personal pique dissolve a union essential to the good of the state; if love of pleasure consume time devoted to the administration of justice; if the tears of Sion in distress be not tenderly wiped away; if religion and good manners be derided, and trampled on with impunity; if Lord's-days and public solemnities be openly profaned; if, in a word, Christianity be sacrificed to worldly policy, what will your condition be!

God grant this people may always be as happy in the character of their governors as in the gentle constitution of their government! May a visible and bountiful benediction rest upon those, who, "in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, shine as lights in the world!" Phil. ii. 15. Never, never may any be at the head of the state who are unworthy of being members of the church! God grant we may behold you who are intrusted with the public welfare, models worthy of our imitation: and by imitating your conduct in this life may we follow you into the world of glory! Amen. To God be honour and glory for ever Amen.

## SERMON XLVI.\*

## GOD'S CONTROVERSY WITH ISRAEL

MICAH vi. 1—3.

*Hear ye now what the Lord saith. Arise, contend before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice. Hear ye, O mountains, the Lord's controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth: for the Lord hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel. O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me.*

THE wickedness of Sodom was so abominable, when God was about to consume it by fire, that we can never remark without astonishment his condescension to Abraham, when he gave him leave to plead for that detestable city. Abraham himself was amazed at it. He was afraid of inflaming that anger which he endeavoured to abate. "Oh!" said he, "let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak. Behold now, I, who am but dust and ashes, have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord," Gen. xviii. 30. 27. Yet God heard him, and agreed to spare Sodom, and to pardon an innumerable multitude of guilty persons, on condition that a small number of righteous people could be found among them. Abraham asked, "Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city, wilt thou not spare the place, for the fifty righteous that are therein?" God replied, "If I find in Sodom fifty righteous, I will spare all the place for their sakes." Abraham continued: "Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty? Peradventure there shall be forty, peradventure thirty, peradventure twenty, peradventure ten," Gen. xviii. 24. 26. 28, 29, &c. God heard Abraham, and suffered him to proceed to the utmost of his compassion, waiting, if I may speak so, till his servant gave the signal for the destruction of Sodom. So true is it, that his essence is love, and that "mercy and grace" are the strongest emanations of his glory! Exod. xxxiv. 6.

But, my brethren, if we admire the goodness of God, when he suffers only one worm of the earth to reason against his judgments, and to plead the cause of those criminals whose ruin was determined, what emotions, pray, ought the objects set before us in the text to produce in our minds to-day? Behold! in the words of my text, behold! God not only permitting the sinner to plead his cause before him, and suspending his sovereign rights, but behold him offering himself to plead before the sinner, behold him descending from his tribunal, accounting for his conduct, and submitting himself not only to the judgment of one of his creatures, but proposing to do so to us all. "Hear ye what the Lord saith. Arise, contend thou before the mountains; and let the hills hear thy voice. Hear ye, O mountains, the Lord's controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth; for the Lord hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel. O my people, what have I done unto

thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me."

This is the unheard of action which we are going to exhibit to you, in order to excite in you such sentiments of contrition and repentance as the solemnity of the day requires of you, especially now that the arm of the Lord is lifted up and stretched out over your heads, shall I say to destroy or to defend you?

At such a time can it be necessary to prepare your minds, and solicit your attention? If I have yet any more wishes to form for your felicity, I conjure you by the walls of this church, now indeed standing, but doomed to be razed by the enemy; by the interests of your wives and children, whose death is determined; by your regard for your civil and religious liberties; in the name of your magistrates, generals, and soldiers, whose prudence and courage cannot succeed without the blessing of the Almighty; I conjure you to address yourselves to this exercise with attentive minds and accessible hearts. May all worldly distractions, may all secular anxieties, troublesome *birds of prey*, always alighting on our sacrifices, O may you all be driven away to-day! God grant we may be *left alone* with him! O Lord, help us to repair the breaches made in our Jerusalem, to prevent others yet threatened, to engage thee, the God of armies, on our side, and to draw down by our prayers and tears thy benedictions on the state and the church! Amen.

Before we enter into the spirit of our text, let us take a cursory view of the terms; each deserves our attention. Hear ye what the Lord saith. "Hills, mountains, ye strong foundations of the earth, hear ye what the Lord saith." What loftiness in these terms! This is to prepare the mind for great things. It is a bad maxim of orators to promise much to auditors. The imagination of the hearer often outflies that of the speaker. Artful rhetoricians choose to surprise and amaze their hearers by ideas new and unexpected, so that the subjects of their orations may appear sublime by being strange.

But has the Holy Spirit need of our rules of rhetoric, and is the everlasting gospel subject to our oratorical laws? There is no proportion between the human soul, to which the prophet addresses himself, and the spirit of that God who animates the prophet. How great soever your expectation may be, your expectation will be always exceeded. Great objects will not be wanting to exercise your capacities, your capacities indeed may want ability to investigate them. "The thoughts of God will always be higher than your thoughts, as the heavens will always be higher than the earth," Isa. lv. 8. A prophet frequently seems at first to present only one object to view; but on a nearer examination his one object includes many; he seems at first only to speak of a temporal deliverer, but he speaks of the Messiah; at first the present life seems only intended, but at length we find eternity is contained in his subject. Our prophet had reason, therefore, to exclaim, "Mountains, hills, ye strong foundations of the earth, hear ye."

"Hear ye what the Lord saith," adds the prophet. It is the Lord, who speaks by the

\* This Sermon was preached on a fast-day, at the opening of a campaign in the year 1706.

mouths of his servants; to them he commits his treasure, the ministry of reconciliation. These treasures indeed, are in earthen vessels; but they are treasures of salvation, and whatever regards salvation interests you. Ministers are frail and feeble; but they are ministers of the Lord, and whoever comes from him ought to be respected by you. When we censure a sinner, when we make our places of worship resound with *Anathemas*, *Maranathas*, instantly we excite murmuring and complaints. My brethren, if at any time we stretch these hands to seize the helm of the state, if we pretend to counteract your sound civil polity, if under pretence of pious purposes we endeavour officiously to intermeddle with your domestic affairs, mark us for suspicious and dangerous persons, and drive us back to our schools and studies; but when we are in this pulpit, when we preach nothing to you but what proceeds from the mouth of God himself, and no other laws than those which come from his throne, be not surprised when we say to you, hear us with respect, hear us with attention. "We are ambassadors for Christ. The Lord hath spoken." This is our commission, these are our credentials.

"Arise, contend thou before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice. Hear ye hills, hear ye mountains, hear ye strong foundations of the earth, hear ye what the Lord saith. When God speaks, all ought to attend to what he says. He causes the most insensible creatures to hear his voice. "The voice of the Lord is powerful, the voice of the Lord is full of majesty, the voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon, it maketh Sirion to skip like a young unicorn, it divideth the flames of fire, it shaketh the wilderness, it maketh the forests bare," Ps. xxix. 3, &c. The whole universe knows this voice, the whole universe submits to it. The voice of God does more than I have mentioned. It reigns in empty space; "It calleth those things which be not as though they were. By it the heavens, and all their host, were made. God spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast," Rom. iv. 17.

There is but one being in nature deaf to the voice of God; that being is the sinner. He, more insensible than the earth and harder than the rocks, refuses to lend an ear. The prophet is forced to address himself to inanimate creatures, to hills and mountains, and strong foundations of the earth, "Hear ye hills, hear ye mountains, ye strong foundations of the earth," and put my people to the blush. "The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people do not consider," Isa. i. 3. "Israel hath forgotten the God that formed him, and is unmindful of the rock that begat him," Deut. xxxii. 18.

Alas! how exactly does Israel now resemble Israel in the days of Micah! When we speak for God, we generally observe absent minds, wandering eyes, and insensible hearts. In vain we say, "The Lord hath spoken, hear what the Lord saith." It does not signify, the answer given us is, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?" Each wants a gospel of his own. Each seizes the sacerdotal censor. A rigid morality is not suited to the taste of our auditors. Every sinner says of the preacher

of it, as an impious king once said of Micaiah, "I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil," 1 Kings xxii. 8. Henceforth, then, we must address ourselves to these arches, and pillars, and walls, our auditory is insensible.

"The Lord hath a controversy with his people." What a controversy, my brethren! Never was such a cause heard before any judges. Never was a court concerned in an affair of such importance. The controverting parties, the manner of pleading, and the matter in dispute, are all worthy of attention.

The parties, who are they? On the one part the Lord of universal nature, he "before whom all nations are as a drop of a bucket, he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and considereth the inhabitants thereof as grasshoppers; he that weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance," Isa. xl. 15. 22. 12. On the other part, man, Israel, the church. So that it is a husband pleading against his wife, a parent against his children, the Creator against his creature. Who ever heard of a controversy between parties more worthy of consideration!

The manner of pleading this cause is yet more remarkable, "The Lord hath a controversy with his people." Who can coolly hear this language! At the sound of these words conscience takes affright, the sinner flees to the clefts of the rocks, and calls to the mountains to fall on him, and cover him from the wrath of Jehovah. Each exclaims with a prophet, "Who among us can dwell with devouring fire? Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?" Isa. xxxiii. 14. Each cries with the ancient Israelites, "Let not God speak with us, lest we die," Exod. xx. 19, and with Job, "How should man be just with God?" chap. xi. 2. But peace be to your consciences! God does not come to you to-day with the dreadful ensigns of his vengeance. If he intends to cast the sinner, it is not by angry reproaches, but by reproofs of his love. Hear him. "O my people, what have I done unto thee? wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me." He knows you have nothing to allege, but he means to affect you by generous motives; he means to excite in you that repentance which is not to be repented of, that godly sorrow, that broken and contrite heart which is of inestimable value in his sight.

As for you who have need of thunder and lightning, all you who must have hell opened under your feet, all you whose souls are insensible to motives of justice and equity, depart from this assembly. We are not preaching to you to-day. We speak to the people of God. "The Lord hath a controversy with his people. The Lord will plead with Israel." We address such of you as have hearts to feel these tender expressions, expressions so tender that nothing in uninspired poets and orators can equal them; "O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me."

In fine, the matter of this controversy is remarkable; it is the whole conduct of man to God, and the whole conduct of God to man. God is willing to exercise his patience to hear the complaints of his people, but he requires in

return, that his people should hear his against themselves.

This is a general view of our text; but are general observations sufficient on a subject that merits the most profound meditation? We must go into the matter; we must go even to the bottom of this controversy: we must hear both parties, how disproportionate soever they may be, and how improper soever it may seem to confront them; we must examine whether the fault lie in God or in man. Forgive, O God! if worms of the earth presume to agitate the rash question, and to plead thus in thy presence! Thy condescension will only display thy glory. "Thou wilt be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest," Ps. li. 4.

Let us first hear what complaints man has to bring against God, and what God has to answer. Then let us see what complaints God has to bring against man, and what man can allege in his own defence. But, as we have already hinted, you will not be surprised, my brethren, if we sometimes forget the prophet and the Jews, to whom he spoke, and consider the text as it regards Christians in general, and this congregation in particular.

That a creature should complain of his Creator should seem a paradox. Of him every creature holds his life, motion, and being. The air he breathes, the animation of his frame, the sun that gives him light, the earth that bears him up, all are emanations of the goodness of his Creator. Yet, strange as it may appear, it is certain, man complains of God. To set the Deity at nought, to trample his laws under foot, to blaspheme his holy name, to harden under the tenderest marks of his love, as we do every day, is not this to murmur? Is not this to complain?

Let us hear these complaints. You have your wish, my brethren, and are all of you to-day in the condition in which Job desired to be, when, in excess of grief, he uttered these emphatical words, "O that I knew where I might find Him! I would go even to his seat. I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments. I would know the words which he would answer me, and understand what he would say unto me," chap. xiii. 3. 5. Order this cause, mortals, prepare these arguments, God is ready to hear you. When we enter into our own hearts, we find we are apt to complain of God on three accounts: his law seems too severe; his temporal favours too small; and his judgments too rigorous. Let us follow man in these three articles.

The laws of God seem too severe. "My people, what have I done unto thee?" To this concupiscence answers, I choose to domineer in the world; but God would have me be humble, wash the feet of his disciples, "esteem others better than myself," Phil. ii. 3, and place myself, so to speak, in the meanest post in the world. I like to amass riches; but God requires my "conversation to be without covetousness," Heb. xiii. 5, and he would have me learn of lilies and sparrows to confide in his Providence. I love to live well, and to fare sumptuously every day; but God requires me to be sober, to "keep under my body, and bring it into subjection," 1 Cor. ix. 27, and in-

stead of living to myself, to take from voluptuousness, and expend what I save in charity to others. I love to divulge the vices of a neighbour, and to erect my reputation on the ruin of his; but God threatens to exclude slanderers from his kingdom. In a word, the law of God controls every passion of my heart. Ah! why did God give me laws so opposite to my inclinations, or why did he give me inclinations so opposite to his laws?

I understand you, sinners, you wish God had formed religion, not only on the eternal rules of "righteousness and judgment, which are the base of his throne," Ps. xcvi. 2, but on the suggestions of such passions as animate you. Religion, intended by its wisdom to free the world from the vices that disfigure it, should have revealed, in your opinion, more ample methods of committing these very vices, and provide for the hardening of such consciences as the justice of God means to terrify. You wish that the sovereign God, by a condescension incompatible with the purity of his perfections, had imbibed, as it were, the wicked views and inclinations of sinful man, sinful man being so base and so wicked as to refuse to conform to the holiness of the Supreme God.

But hast thou, man, sufficiently reflected on this article? Thou complainest of the laws of God. Who art thou? Whence dost thou come? Who gave thee thy being? Is not God thy governor? This firmament before thine eyes, that infinite space in which thine imagination is absorbed, those heavenly bodies revolving over thy head, the earth beneath thy feet, is not this the empire of God? And you, vile creature, confined in a corner of the universe, you house of clay, you worm of the earth, you nothing, lighter than vanity itself, you, who are only a vain phantom, walking in a vain show, do you murmur at the laws of God? would you be Lord of religion? would you either say to God, command this, forbid that, or would you mount his throne, and give the universe law? What presumption!

You complain of the laws of God. Are not these laws just in themselves? God requires you to love him. Is it possible to refuse obedience to this just command, considering the eminent perfections, the majesty, and benevolence of him who requires your esteem? God requires you to love your neighbour. And would it be right that you, made of the same dust as your neighbour, and doomed both to return to dust again: would it be right for you, under pretence of some exterior advantages in your own condition, to cherish a self-complacency that would debase the dignity of human nature, and teach mankind to estimate their worth by external appendages? Would it be fair in civil society that each should contribute to your happiness, that the artist should assist you by his industry, the scholar by his learning, the statesman by his wisdom, the soldier by his courage, and that you, a simple spectator of all these things, should think of nothing but enjoying yourself at the expense of all mankind? Would this be right? Are your complaints well grounded? "My people, what have I done unto thee? wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me."

You complain of the laws of God. But

what is the design of all these laws! Is it not to make you as happy as possible? Judge again yourself. Imagine yourself violating all the divine laws, having no veneration for God, no love for your neighbours, being haughty, overbearing, a liar, and a slanderer. Imagine yourself, on the other hand, humble, pious, zealous, patient, charitable. Is it not clear, that, in spite of the violence of your passions, you would like yourself best in the condition last mentioned? If your passions have so blinded your mind as to incapacitate you for entering into these reflections, imagine two men, the one animated with the vices, and the other with the virtues just spoken of, and if you can prefer the vicious man before the virtuous, I agree you shall complain of the laws of God.

You complain of the divine laws. But are not these laws infinitely proper to make you happy in this world? In what state would the human heart be, what bloody scenes would it revolve, were God to give it up to the infernal passions of envy, to excessive sensuality, to the miserable anxieties of avarice, or to the tumultuous rage of ambition? Imagine a society where robbery, assassination, and adultery were allowed; a society in which self-interest was the only motive, passion the only law, and no bounds set to sin but such as ambition chose; where the magistrate was oppressing the people, the people revolting against the magistrate; where friend was betraying friend, and the receiver stabbing his benefactor; would you consent to live in such a society? Imagine an opposite plan, stretch your fancy as far as possible, and the farther you go the more fully will you perceive, that nothing can be so well contrived to produce present human felicity as the divine law; and that, even supposing some particular cases, in which obedience is attended with loss, affliction, and pain, yet in all cases there is ample indemnity both in a hope of future happiness, and in an enjoyment of present pleasure, arising from a consciousness of real rectitude and upright self-approbation.

You complain of the laws of God. But does not God exemplify all these laws himself? He commands you to be just. Is not he himself just? *Righteousness and judgment, justice and equity, are the bases of his throne.* He requires you to be humble. But although this virtue may seem repugnant to the divine nature, yet we have beheld the prodigy of God humbling himself, of one, who "thought it not robbery to be equal with God, making himself of no reputation, and taking upon himself the form of a servant." Phil. ii. 6, 7. God requires us to be benevolent. Is not he "love?" Are we not all overwhelmed with his favours? Has he not given us his Son? O admirable beauty of religion! My brethren, it transforms a creature into the image of his Creator! O matchless condescension of the God we adore! He unites true happiness to an imitation of his attributes, and invites us to participate his happiness by partaking of his holiness.

You complain of the laws of God. But what does God require of you but to endeavour to please him? Does he not promise to accept your sincere obedience, though it be accompanied with many frailties and great im-

perfections? Has he not engaged to assist you by the essential aid of the Holy Spirit? Brethren, enter into your own hearts, listen to the suggestions, the joys, the hopes excited in your own consciences. This is the hand of the Lord drawing you; this is the light of heaven "shining in your hearts;" this is the Holy Spirit "converting the soul," Ps. xix. 7. Should God descend and stand among you, amidst thunders and fires like those of Mount Sinai; should he stand among you surrounded with "blackness and darkness, and tempest;" should he, from the centre of all these formidable ensigns of dreadful majesty, declare, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them," Gal. iii. 10, human frailty might serve for an excuse; but he speaks, as we said before, to *his people*, to them he presents himself with all the attractives of grace.

Ah! were you to deplore your depravity! Were you to say in the bitterness of your soul, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Rom. vii. 24. God himself would comfort you, he would tell you, that "he would not break a bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax," Matt. xii. 20. If, sinking under a sense of sin, you were to cast yourself at his feet, and implore his assistance, he would give you his Holy Spirit, whc, conveying light and strength through all your hearts, would eradicate all your sins. But you love sin, you thrust back the mighty hand stretched out to help you, you "grieve the Holy Spirit of God, turn the grace of God into lasciviousness," Eph. iv. 30; Jude 4, and then complain that the laws of God are too severe. You consider God the Lawgiver as a mortal enemy, who attacks all your pleasures. Ah! how unjust are your complaints! "O my people, what have I done unto thee? Are my commandments grievous, is not my yoke easy, my burden light? Am I not mild and lowly in heart? O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me."

The second class of human complaints against God regard him as the *governor* of the world. Man complains of Providence, the economy of it is too narrow and confined, the temporal benefits bestowed are too few and partial.

Let us do justice to human nature, my brethren. If we cannot justify this complaint, let us acknowledge there is an appearance of equity in it. This complaint we allow, has some colour. God presents himself to us in religion under the tenderest relations, as a friend, a brother, a parent, a husband; "the earth" belongs to this Friend, "and the fulness thereof" is at the disposal of this God, and a single act of his will would instantly fill our houses with pleasures, riches, and honours: yet he leaves us in misery and indigence, and it would be in vain to search the New Testament for a single passage to ground a hope that we should become rich, reputable, and honourable in the world by sincerely practising the precepts of Christianity.

If this complaint at first sight seem unanswerable in the mouth of a Christian, it is precisely from the mouth of a Christian that it cannot come without extreme ignorance and



ingratitude. If you be Christians you must be so affected with the numberless benefits bestowed on you, that it is inconceivable how an idea of such temporal blessings as you think necessary to complete your happiness, can make such an impression on your mind, or find a place in your heart. Being Christians, you are persuaded that God has "blessed you with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. That he hath chosen you in him before the foundation of the world, that he predestinated you unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ himself, according to the good pleasure of his will," Eph. i. 3, &c. Being Christians, you believe, that "God so loved you, that he gave his only begotten Son, that you believing in him should not perish but have everlasting life," John iii. 16. As you are Christians, you are persuaded, that for your sakes the Lord has "shaken the heavens, the earth, the sea, and the dry land," and "hath sealed you and given you the earnest of the Spirit in your hearts," Hag. ii. 6; 2 Cor. i. 22. Being Christians, you are convinced that the public ministration of the divine word, the ordinances of religion so often administered to you, are evidences of the watchful care of that Providence over you, which gives "some apostles, some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, and for the work of the ministry," Eph. iv. 11, 12. You believe, for you are Christians, that, when you die, heaven will be opened to you as it was formerly to Stephen; that angels will uphold you in your agony, as they once comforted your Redeemer; and that, how difficult soever the race may be, you shall surmount all, and finish with a song of ecstatic triumph. Being Christians, you believe there are "in your father's house many mansions," that Jesus Christ is "gone to prepare a place for you," and that, throughout all eternity, your happiness shall suffer no diminution. Yea, being Christians, you are already "quicken'd with Christ," and even now "sit with him in heavenly places," Ephes. ii. 5, 6.

Is it imaginable, that people enjoying so many advantages, favoured with so many benefits, and elevated with such glorious hopes, should complain for want of a few temporal gratifications, or spend a thought on such momentary accommodations as fire the unruly passions of worldlings?

This is not all. If the morality of Jesus Christ be thoroughly examined, it will be found almost incompatible with worldly prosperity. Such is the state of the human heart, that either Jesus Christ must alter his religious laws, in order to put us into the possession of temporal prosperity, or he must deprive us of temporal prosperity in order to establish his morality in our hearts. You wish, you say, that he had promised pleasures to moderation, riches to charity, and worldly grandeur to humility. Instead of gratifying your wishes, he sees it necessary to the being of your moderation to remove from you the dangerous snares of pleasure; he does not make the charitable man rich, lest riches should excite avarice; and he does not bestow worldly grandeur on the humble, lest it should diminish his humility. This is a well-known truth of universal experience. It is generally seen, that every tem-

poral good conveys a mortal poison into the heart of its possessor. The temptations attending prosperity are infinitely more difficult to overcome than those which belong to adversity. He who has triumphed over persecutors, executioners, and tyrants, has not unfrequently fallen a prey to pride, luxury, and intemperance, when objects proper to kindle these passions have presented themselves to him.

Temporal prosperity is not only opposite to our duty; but it is for this very reason hostile to our happiness. Had God given us a life full of charms, we should have taken little thought about another. It is natural to be delighted with an agreeable situation, and whatever attaches us to the world, cools our ardour for heaven; the inward man is renewed, as the outward man perishes, and faith commonly grows as fortune decays. When the dove first flew out of the ark, finding nothing but wind and rain, and rolling waves, she returned to the ark for shelter and rest; but when, in her second flight, she saw plains and fields, there she alighted and staid. Behold, my soul, thine own image. When the world exhibits to thy view prosperity, riches, and honours, thou art captivated with the beauty of the enchantress, and fallest a prey to her charms. But when the world puts on the gloom of poverty, anxiety and misery, thou turnest thine eyes towards heaven, and seekest happiness in its natural source. Even as things are now, in spite of all the distresses that belong to life, we find it difficult to detach our affections from the world; but what would be the case, if all prospered according to our wishes? Speak to a man who talks of dying, exhaust philosophical and religious arguments to determine him to die contentedly; place him between two objects, heaven and earth, the world he is leaving, and the eternal state to which he is going: describe to him on the one hand the vanity and uncertainty of worldly enjoyments, tell him of the anxieties, the indigence, poverty, and nullity of every thing here; then open heaven to him, show him happy angels for his companions, "the Lamb in the midst of the throne to feed him, and lead him unto living fountains of eternal joy," Rev. vii. 17. Amidst so many just reasons for his detachment from the world, this world is yet dear to him; this life, this short life, this indigent life, this life which is nothing but vanity and deception, this life appears more desirable than heaven, and all its eternal glory. If, then, in spite of so many disagreeables in this life, it be so hard to quit it with content, what would be our condition were God to give us a firmer health, a longer life, and a more flourishing state of affairs? What would be our condition, were there no mortifications in high rank, no uncertainty in friendships, no vicissitudes in fortune?

Our third complaint against God regards the *rigour of his judgments*: The Jews of Micah's time had experienced this in many cases, and the prophet threatened more. "Behold! the Lord cometh out of his place, and will tread upon the high places of the earth. The mountains shall be molten under him, and the valleys shall be cleft before him. Therefore I will wail and howl, I will go stript and naked,

I will make a wailing like the dragons, and make a mourning as the owls, for her wound is incurable. Jerusalem shall become heaps. Zion shall be plowed as a field," chap. i. 3, 4, 8, 9, and iii. 12.

We have been treating of our text as it regards you, my brethren, we will therefore leave the prophet and his countrymen, in order to give you full liberty to exhibit your complaints, and to say now, in the presence of heaven and earth, what ills God has inflicted on you. "O my people, what have I done unto thee?" Ah, Lord! how many things hast thou done unto us! Draw near, ye mourning ways of Zion, ye desolate gates of Jerusalem, ye sighing priests, ye afflicted virgins, ye deserts peopled with captives, ye disciples of Jesus Christ, wandering over the face of the whole earth, children torn from your parents, prisons filled with confessors, galleys freighted with martyrs, blood of our countrymen shed like water, carcasses, once the venerable habitation of witnesses for religion, now thrown out to savage beasts and birds of prey, ruins of our churches, dust, ashes, and remains of houses dedicated to our God, fires, racks, gibbets, punishments till now unknown, draw nigh hither, and give evidence against the Lord.

My brethren, if we consider God as a judge, what a number of reasons may be assigned to prove the equity of all the evils that he has brought upon us? The abuse of his favours, the contempt of his word, the slighting of all the warnings given us by his ministers, the pride and worldly-mindedness, the lukewarmness and indifference, and many other odious vices, which preceded our miseries, are evidences too convincing that we deserved all; and they ought to make our complaints give place to the sorrowful, but sincere confession, which a prophet puts in the mouth of the church, "The Lord is righteous, for I have rebelled against him," Lam. i. 18.

But as we said that in this text God is to be considered as a father, we affirm all these chastisements, even the most rigorous of them, are perfectly consistent with this character. It was his love that engaged him to employ such severe means for your benefit. You know, my brethren, and you know but too well, that the ease with which the enjoyment of the presence of God is obtained, too often lessens the favour in our eyes. I appeal to experience. Recollect the time so dear to you, when the gospel was preached to you in your own country, and when God, with a bounty truly astonishing, granted you both spiritual and temporal prosperity. Did you, I appeal to your consciences, did you value these blessings according to their real worth? Were you never disgusted with the manna that fell every morning around your habitations? Did you never say with the Israelites, "There is nothing at all, besides this manna, before our eyes?" Num. xi. 6. It was necessary, in order to reanimate your zeal for God, to take his candlestick away; it was necessary for you to learn the importance of salvation, by the difficulty of obtaining it; and to kindle your love to your spiritual husband by his absence. These events excited abundance of piety among you; and, though the misfortunes of the times have produced too many

examples of human frailty, yet to these unhappy times we owe the bright examples of many eminent persons, whose names will go down with honour to the latest posterity.

Let us then acknowledge, my brethren, that, although we have insulted the rectitude of God, we are willing now to do homage to it; let us confess, God has given his people no just ground of complaint; in all his conduct he has displayed the power of a God, the fidelity of a husband, the tenderness of a parent; and we have nothing to reply to him, when he asks, "O my people, what have I done unto thee? wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me."

As God has answered the complaints of his people, let us proceed to inquire, how his people will answer the complaints of their God. Let us see what we ourselves can reply. He has heard us, can we refuse to hear him? Let us proceed in this astonishing cause between God and his church. "The Lord hath a controversy with his people, the Lord will plead with Israel."

The history of the Jews is so well known, that every one of us is acquainted with their irregularities. They corrupted both natural and revealed religion. They had "as many gods as cities," Jer. ii. 28. They chose rather to sacrifice their children to Moloch, than their sheep and oxen to Jehovah. There was no opinion so absurd, no worship so puerile, no idolatry so gross, as not to be admitted among them. Having shaken off the ties of religion, the bridles of corrupt passions, they threw the reins on the necks of the most ungovernable dispositions, and rushed furiously into all the worst vices of the nations around them. With this conduct the prophets were always reproaching them, and particularly Ezekiel in these words, in which he describes this wretched people under an image the most odious that can be imagined. "O how weak is thine heart, saith the Lord God, seeing thou doest all these things! O wife committing adultery, taking strangers instead of thy husband! They give gifts to all whores: but thou givest thy gifts to all thy lovers, and hirest them that they may come unto thee on every side for thy whoredom. The contrary is in thee from other women in thy whoredoms, whereas none followeth thee to commit whoredoms, and in that thou givest a reward, and no reward is given unto thee," Ezek. xvi. 30, &c. These words give us shocking ideas of this people: for if it was an abomination under the law to "bring the hire of a whore into the house of the Lord," Deut. xxiii. 18, for an offering, how much greater abomination must it be to apply the offerings of the Lord to the support of prostitutes!

Their crimes were aggravated, too, by the innumerable blessings which God bestowed on them. The prophet reminds them of these in the words that follow the text. "Remember, O my people, I redeemed thee out of the house of servants, remember what Balak consulted, and what Balaam answered." What favour did this people receive! What numberless engagements to fear God! He made a covenant with them, he divided the sea to let them pass over, he gave them bread from heaven to

eat, he cleft the rock to give them drink, he brought them into the country of which Moses had said, "The land whither ye go is a land which the Lord thy God careth for; the eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year, even unto the end of the year," Deut. xii. 12. Moreover, all their temporal blessings were types and pledges of spiritual benefits, either then bestowed, or promised in future. After so many favours on God's part, after so many crimes on the part of the people, had not the Lord reason to complain? Was ever controversy more just than this?

My brethren, you have certainly been often shocked at reading the history of this people; you have blamed their idolatry; you have detested their ingratitude; you have condemned the carelessness of their pastors, and all the vices of the people. But what would you say if we could prove that the excesses of priests and people are greater under the gospel than under the law? The Lord's controversy with you affirms this, and this we must now examine.

But which of us ministers, which of us has courage to enter into this detail? And which of you Christian people would have humility enough to hear us out without murmuring, trembling with indignation, and exclaiming against your reprover, "Away with him, away with him!" Surprising! When we now pleaded the unjust cause of man against the Creator, the patient Creator satisfied every inquiry; the earth did not open under our feet to swallow us up; no fire from heaven came down to destroy us; but every article of the controversy received a full answer. Now that we ought to proceed to hear the complaints of the Creator against us, I already hear every one murmuring, and refusing to pay as much regard to the just complaints of God, as God condescended to pay to those which had no foundation in reason and equity.

Well, we will speak to you in your own way; we will treat you as sick people are treated when their physicians are obliged to disguise remedies, and conceal operations necessary to their recovery, we will decide nothing; but we will leave each of you to judge of his own conduct. We will only produce a few of the articles of God's controversy with you, and propose a few maxims for you to examine; but if there remain the least degree of rectitude in you, we conjure you to apply these maxims in earnest to yourselves.

First. *When God distinguishes a people by signal favours, the people ought to distinguish themselves by gratitude to him.* The equity of this maxim is clear to every one of us, and nobody will dispute it. I ask then were any people in the world ever favoured of heaven as the people of these provinces have been? A people (permit me to go back to your origin,) a people formed amidst grievous oppressions and barbarous impositions; a people subject to tyrants more cruel than the Pharaohs of Egypt; a people not ashamed to call themselves beggars, and to exhibit poverty on their standards; a people who, in the space of six months, gave up six thousand of themselves to racks and gibbets; a people risen from this low condition

into the present state of magnificence: a people who, placed in a corner of the world, and occupying only a few acres, extend their influence over the whole world; a people opposing at the same time two great kings; a people in whose favour the sea suspended its usual flux on the day that was to decide the fate of these provinces for ever; a people whose forts were all occupied by the enemy, and who, when they had nothing to trust to but the unavailing fidelity of a few citizens, saw the enemy "that came out against them one way, flee before them seven ways," Deut. xxviii. 7. A people inhabiting a country formed, (if I may speak so) against the laws of nature, but which the God of nature supports as it were by miracle; a people taxing, governing, and making laws for themselves; a people walking in the light of the gospel shining in all its glory, and enjoying the reformation in its utmost purity. This is only an imperfect sketch of the blessings which God in distinguishing mercy confers on you. Do you distinguish yourselves by your gratitude? Is there more piety among you than among other nations? Is there a greater attention to the word of God, and more deference to his laws? Are there more good examples in parents, and are their children better educated than others? Is there more zeal for family religion; is the truth more highly esteemed, and is more done for the propagation of the gospel? Do the sufferings of pious persons for religion excite more compassion? I pronounce nothing. I decide nothing. I leave you to judge of your own conduct.

Perhaps some of my hearers, whom the correcting hand of God has long pursued, and whom he seems to reserve as monuments of his lasting displeasure, perhaps they may think this maxim concerning the blessings of Providence does not regard them. But shall we be so ungrateful as not to acknowledge the benefits bestowed on us? And shall we be so insensible as not to mourn over our own ingratitude?

My brethren, let us look back a little. Let us for a moment turn our eyes to the land of our nativity, from which we are banished; let us remember the time, when, to use the language of the psalmist, we went in "a multitude to the house of God with the voice of joy and praise," Ps. xli. 4; nor let us forget the many advantages, which we enjoyed till the day of our exile. How happy a climate! What an agreeable society! What opportunities for commerce! What a rapid progress in arts and sciences! Was our gratitude proportioned to the liberal gifts of God? Alas, the exile we lament, the dispersion that separates us from our nearest relations, the lassitude we feel, the tears we shed, are not these sad, but sufficient proofs of our insensibility and ingratitude? This is the first article of God's controversy against us, and this is the first maxim of self-examination.

The second regards the chastisements of God. *When men are under the hand of an angry God, they are called to mourning and contrition. Pleasures, innocent in other circumstances, are guilty in this case.* You perceive at once the truth of this maxim. God by his prophet says to you, "Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it," Micah vi. 9. One of his most

cutting reproofs to his people was this, "In that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth; and behold, joy and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine; let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die. And it was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of hosts, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die," Isa. xxii. 12, &c. Thus, in like manner, another prophet complained to his God, "O Lord, thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive instruction; they have made their faces harder than a rock, they have refused to return," Jer. v. 3.

Now, my brethren, though the blessings of Providence surround us, yet it is plain we are at present under the rod of correction. I lay aside all the afflictions just now mentioned; I will not remind you of gibbets, and racks, and tortures, subjects so proper to banish from our minds the senseless joy that fills them, were we either "grieved for the affliction of Joseph, or pleased to remember the dust of Zion." I will speak only of the cause of our assembling now, of this cruel and tragical war. Is not the destroying angel gone abroad? Does not the "sword of the Lord, drunk with blood," turn the whole universe into one vast grave? Are your fortunes, your liberties, or your religion safe? Should your fleets and armies be always victorious in future, would not your husbands, and relations, and friends be in imminent danger? Would our victories cost us no tears? Would not our laurels be bloody? Alas! the tears of some mother having lost her son, the sighs of some wife having lost her husband, the complaints of some friend who had lost a friend, would not these interrupt our songs of triumph, and mix mournful sounds among our shouts of joy?

We are, then, under the correcting hand of God. Yet what impressions do these frightful objects make on us? What effects are produced in our souls by objects so proper to fill them with fear and trembling? Have we broke up any party of pleasure? Have we kept away from any public amusement? Have we laid aside any festivals and public shows? Is nothing to be seen among us but fasting and weeping, sackcloth and ashes? Would not any stranger who should see us, say every thing succeeded according to our wishes; that there was no danger, no war, no blood-shedding, no probability of another campaign, that should cover the earth with the limbs of the dead? This is the second article of God's controversy with us. This is the second ground of examination. I pronounce nothing. I decide nothing. I leave you to judge of your own conduct.

The third maxim regards the end of preaching and the ministry. *To attend public worship is not to obtain the end of the ministry. Not to become wise by attending, is to increase our miseries by aggravating our sins.* On this principle we affirm, that every time our places of worship are opened, every time you attend public service, every time you hear a sermon, you are required to derive some real benefit, answerable to the end proposed. Is it so? When we survey this assembly, and look on it with the

eyes of flesh, the sight strikes every beholder with surprise and awe. Here are princes, magistrates, generals, men excelling in learning and science of every kind. We can hardly find in all Europe so many venerable personages assembled in so small a place. Moreover, here is all the exterior of piety, assiduity, attention, eagerness, a great concourse of people, and every thing that looks like zeal and fervour. Yet the end, the great end of the ministration of the divine word, is it even known among us?

When each of you come into this holy place, do you think what you are going to do? When you enter the house of God, do you *keep your feet*, according to the language of a prophet? When you approach this desk, does your heart accompany him who prays? Does your fervour rise up with his petitions, and does your soul warmly unite itself with his requests to supplicate the throne of grace, and to avert the anger of Almighty God? When you hear a sermon, have you the docility requisite to such as receive instruction? Does your memory retain the doctrines taught? Does your heart apply to itself the searching truths sometimes delivered? When you return home do you recollect what you have been hearing? Do you ever converse about it afterward? Do you require any account of your children and servants of their profiting? In a word, what good comes of all the exhortations, expostulations, and arguments used among you? I pronounce nothing. I decide nothing. I leave you once more to judge of your own conduct.

Our fourth maxim regards slander. *Slander is a vice impure in its source, dangerous in its effects, general in its influence; irreparable in its consequences; a vice that strikes at once three mortal blows; it wounds him who commits it, him against whom it is committed, and him who sees it committed. It is tolerated in society, only because every one has an invincible inclination to commit it.* Examine this place on this article. Are not your slanders famous even in distant climes? Do not strangers and travellers observe your propensity to this vice? Are not many of you cruelly attentive to the conduct of your neighbours, and always asking, Where is he? Whence does he come? What is he about? What are his opinions? Have you no pleasure in discovering people's imperfections? Does not malice publish some vices, which charity ought to conceal? Are no tales invented? none enlarged? no calumnies added? Are not the characters of the most respectable persons attacked, of heads of families, magistrates and ministers? Is not one unreasonably taxed with heresy, another with fraud, another with criminal intrigues, and so on? This is the fourth article of God's controversy. I pronounce nothing. I decide nothing. I leave you to judge of your own actions.

Fifthly. *If the dangers that threaten us, and the blows that Providence strikes, ought to affect us all, they ought to affect those most of all who are most exposed to them.* To explain ourselves. There is not one of us so secure, there is no credit so firm, no house so established, no fortune so safe, as not to be affected by this war. Consequently, there is not any one person who ought not, by fervent prayer, and genuine piety,

to endeavour to engage Heaven to prosper our armies.

It is, however, clear beyond a doubt, that our generals, officers, and soldiers, have a particular and personal concern in the approaching campaign. Men who, besides all the infirmities and dangers to which human nature is subject, and to which they are exposed in common with all mankind, are going to expose themselves to the dangers of sieges and battles, and all other concomitants of war; they who are always contending with death; they who march every day through fires and flames; they who have always the sound of warlike instruments in their ears, crying with a thundering voice, "Remember ye are mortal;" people of this profession, ought not they to be more affected with these objects than we who see them only at a distance? And, consequently, ought not they to enter with greater sincerity into the religious dispositions which such objects are apt to excite? This is the maxim, the fifth article of God's controversy with us.

See, examine. Is piety respected among your troops? Does the ark of the Lord always go at the head of your army? Does the pillar of a cloud direct your steps? Does benevolence animate you towards one another, partners as you are in common danger? Do the mouths that are ready to utter the last sigh, open only to bless the Creator, and to commit to him a soul hovering on the lips, and ready to depart? Are offences against Jesus Christ punished as severely as offences against officers in the army? "Do ye provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are ye stronger than he?" 1 Cor. x. 22. Would you force a victory in spite of him? Would you triumph without God, or would you have him succeed your attempts, when you carry impiety on your foreheads, irreligion in your hearts, and blasphemy in your mouths? I pronounce nothing. I decide nothing. I leave each of you to draw such inferences from this maxim as naturally belong to it.

Our sixth maxim regards gaming. *If gaming be innocent in any circumstances, they are uncommon and rare. It is easier to renounce this pleasure than to enjoy it without excess.* Examine yourselves on this article. Are there none of us to whom gaming is become necessary? None who relish no other pleasure? Are there no fathers and mothers who train up their families in it, and embolden them by their examples? Is there no opulent man who imagines he has a right to spend his fortune in gaming? Is there no necessitous person who hazards the support, yea, the daily bread of his family in this practice? I determine nothing. I pronounce nothing. I leave you to judge of your own actions.

But why not pronounce? Why not decide? Wherefore respect false delicacy? "Why not declare the whole counsel of God?" Acts xx. 37. "Why strive to please men?" Gal. i. 10. Ah, my brethren! were I to hold my peace, the walls, and the pillars, and the arches of this building, the hills and the mountains, would rise up in judgment against you. "Hear, ye mountains, hear ye hills, hear the Lord's controversy. The Lord hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel." Yea, the Lord has a controversy with you. His reproofs would

cleave your hearts asunder, and dissolve you in floods of tears, were you capable of reflections and emotions. He complains of all the vices we have mentioned. He complains that you are insensible to the most terrible threatenings of his mouth, and the heaviest strokes of his hand. He complains that you bite and devour one another like wild and savage beasts. He complains that impiety, irreligion, and intemperance, reign over those souls which are formed for the honour of having God for their king. He complains that you forget the excellence of your nature, and the dignity of your origin, and that you occupy your immortal souls with amusements unworthy of the attention of creatures having the least degree of intelligence. He complains that exhortations, expostulations, and entreaties, the most forcible and affecting, are almost always without success. He complains of some abominable crimes which are committed in the face of the sun, and of others that are concealed under the darkness of the night, the horrors of which I dare not even mention in this place dedicated to the service of God. He complains that you force him, as it were, to lay aside his inclination to bless you, and oblige him to chastise you with severity. Behold! the storm gathers, the thunder mutters and approaches, the lightning is ready to flash in our faces, unless our fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes, avert these judgments which threaten us, or, shall I rather say, which are already falling upon us?

Such is the controversy of God with you; these are his complaints. It is your part to reply. Justify yourselves, plead, speak, answer. "O my people, what have I done unto thee?" What have you to say in your own behalf? How can you justify your ingratitude, your insensibility, your luxury, your calumnies, your dissipations, your lukewarmness, your worldly-mindedness, your pride, your unworthy communions, your forgotten fasts, your false contracts, your broken resolutions, the hardening of your hearts against threatenings, and promises, and personal chastisements, some public calamities already inflicted on the church, and others ready to overwhelm it? Have we any thing to reply? Again I say, justify yourselves, plead, speak, answer.

Ah, my brethren, my brethren! am I deceiving myself; I think I see your hearts in your countenances, and read in your faces the reply you are going to make. Methinks I see your hearts penetrated with genuine grief, your faces covered with holy confusion, and your eyes flowing with tears of godly sorrow. I think I hear the language of your consciences, all "broken and contrite, and trembling at the word of the Lord," Ps. li. 19; I think I hear each of you say, "though I were righteous, yet would I not answer; but I would make supplication to my judge," Isa. lxvi. 2; Job ix. 15. This was the disposition of the people after they had heard Micah. God said, "O my people, what have I done unto thee? wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me." And the people, afflicted on account of their sins, afraid of the judgments of God, all wounded and weighed down with a sense of guilt, confused and astonished at their condition, replied, "Wherewith shall I come before

the Lord, and bow myself before the high God."

This was the answer of the Jews, and this is the answer we expect of you. Let each of you say, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? How shall I turn away those torrents of divine judgments which threaten to overwhelm the Christian world? We, the ministers of Christ, we answer in the name of God, prevent them by sighs and tears of genuine repentance, prevent them by cool, constant, and effectual resolutions, by effusions of love, and by increasing zeal for universal obedience.

This ought to be the work of this day; it is the design of the fast, and the aim of this sermon; for it is not sufficient, my brethren, to trace the controversy of God with you, it must be finished, the parties must be reconciled, and each of us must yield obedience to the voice that says to every one of us, "he may make peace with me, he shall make peace with me," Isa. xxvii. 5.

Magistrates, princes, noblemen, ministers, people, parents, children, will you not all of you embrace this invitation? Do you not solemnly protest, in the presence of heaven and earth, and before the angels that wait in this assembly, that you prefer this peace before all the riches in the world? Do you not all resolve, with the utmost sincerity and good faith, never more wilfully to break the commandments of God? O Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest the hearts of all mankind, thy searching eyes survey the most secret purposes of the souls of all this assembly!

If each of us reply thus to God, let us cherish the pleasure that is inspired by the return of his favour. Christians, what came you out to-day to see? what came you out to hear? God pleading before you, God justifying himself, God convicting you: yet, after all, God pardoning you. What may we not expect from a God so patient and kind?

Lo! I see on a happy future day the tears of Zion wiped away, the mourning of Jerusalem ended, our captives freed from bondage, our galley-slaves from chains.

I see on a happy future day victory following our march, our generals crowned with laurels, and every campaign distinguished by some new triumph.

Methinks I behold, on some future day, our prayers exchanged for praise, our fasts for solemn festivals, our mourning for joy and triumph, and all the faithful, assembled to-day to implore the aid of the God of armies, again convoked to bless the God of victory, and making this place echo with repeated shouts, "The right hand of the Lord is exalted." The right hand of the Lord hath done valiantly. The sword of the Lord and Gideon," Ps. cxviii. 16; Judg. vii. 20.

I see on some happy future day our enemies confounded; one post running to meet another, one messenger to meet another, to show the king of Babylon that his army is routed. I see commerce flourishing among this people, and liberty for ever established in these provinces.

Go, then, generous warriors, go verify these pleasing omens, go, sacredly prodigal of spilling your blood in defence of liberty, religion, and

your country. May the God of armies return you victorious as rapidly as our wishes rise! May he reunite the many hearts, and reassemble the many families which this campaign is going to separate! May he prevent the shedding of human blood; and while he makes you conquerors, may he spare the people subdued by you! May he return you to wear the crowns and laurels which our hands will be eagerly preparing for you! May he, after he shall have granted you all a long and happy life, useful and glorious to the state and to your families, open the gates of eternal happiness to you, and fix you for ever in the temple of peace! To him be honour and glory henceforth and for ever. Amen.

## SERMON XLVII

### THE HARMONY OF RELIGION AND CIVIL POLITY.

PROVERBS xiv. 34

*Righteousness exalteth a nation.*

To propose maxims of civil polity in a religious assembly, to propose maxims of religion in a political assembly, are two things, which seem alike senseless and imprudent. The Christian is so often distinguished from the statesman, that it would seem, they were opposite characters. We, have been lately taught to believe, that Jesus Christ, by giving us an idea of a society more noble than any we can form upon earth, has forbidden us to prevent the miseries of this state, and to endeavour to procure the glory of it. It has been said, that kingdoms and states cannot be elevated without violating the laws of equity, and infringing the rights of the church.

How general soever this odious notion may have been, hardly any one has appeared openly to avow it till of late. The impudence of pleading for it was reserved for our age, for a Christian admitted into your provinces, cherished in your bosom, and, O shame of our churches! appearing among protestant refugees, as the devil formerly presented himself before the Lord, among the angels of God.\*

We propose to-day, my brethren, to endeavour to unravel the sophisms of this author, to show you the agreement of religion with civil polity, and to establish this proposition, that as there is nothing in religion to counteract the design of a wise system of civil polity, so there is nothing in a wise system of civil government to counteract the design of the Christian religion. It was the wisest of all kings who taught us this lesson. He speaks of the *exaltation* of a nation, and this is the end of civil polity. He speaks of *righteousness*, and this is the design of religion, or rather this is religion itself. He affirms that the latter is the foundation of the former, and this is the agreement of religion with civil government. It is "righteousness," says he, it is "righteousness" that "exalteth a nation."

This proposition of Solomon needs both explanation and proof; and this discourse is intended to furnish both.

\* Voyez Bayle, Continuat. des pensees divers. tom. ii. p. 596.

In our first part we will state the question, fix the sense of these terms, *righteousness, exaltation*; we will set aside the various false senses which occasioned the opinion that we intend to oppose; and by these means we will preclude such objections as may be made against our doctrine.

In the second part we will allege some arguments in favour of the proposition contained in the text, when properly explained, and so prove that "righteousness exalteth a nation."

This nation is exalted, my brethren; but, allow me to say, it is not by its "righteousness." We have not therefore chosen this text to create an opportunity of making encomiums on you; but we treat of the subject in order to fix your attention on the proper means of preserving and augmenting your elevation. Happy if our design meet with success; happy if we contribute, though not according to the extent of our wishes, yet, according to the utmost of our ability, to the glory of this state.

I. We just now insinuated, that the false glosses put upon the maxim of the Wise Man, were the principal causes of our backwardness to admit the truth of it. It is therefore important to state the question clearly.

1. When we affirm that *righteousness* and religion in general (for it would be easy to prove that the word "righteousness" in the text, is to be taken in this vague sense,) I say, when we affirm that religion "exalteth a nation," we do not mean such a religion as many imagine. We ingenuously acknowledge, and would to God the whole world acknowledged, that neither the religion of a cruel man, nor the religion of a superstitious person, nor the religion of an enthusiast, can "exalt a nation."

How can the religion of a *cruel* man "exalt a nation?" The religion of such men is too well known for the peace of Europe. Such as these, under pretence of devotion, cut a free course for their own black and inflexible passions. These arm themselves with the civil sword, to destroy all who doubt the truth of their systems; they put violence in the place of demonstration, and endeavour to establish the gospel as if it were the Koran of Mohammed, by force and constraint. These characters, as I just now said, are too well known for the peace of Europe. Even now while I speak, I behold many who have suffered under such cruelty, and have opposed the strongest arguments against it. No, my brethren, this is not the religion that "exalteth a nation." Such a religion depopulates states, ruins commerce, and is a never failing source of civil wars and intestine commotions. The religion of which we speak, is a kind, patient, gentle religion; a religion, the grand character of which is forbearance, benevolence, and fraternal love; a religion, inimical to error and heresy; but which, however, pities the erroneous and the heretic; a religion which exerts itself to eradicate false doctrines; but which leaves each at liberty to admit the truth; a religion which has no other sword than the "sword of the Spirit," nor any other weapon than that of the word.

How can the religion of a *superstitious* man "exalt a nation?" It makes devotion degenerate into idleness, it increases the number of

ecclesiastics, and so renders many members useless to society. It wastes in pretendedly pious foundations, immense sums, which might have contributed to the advancement of arts and sciences. It generates scruples in the minds of statesmen and so restrains the exercise of those fine faculties which God created for the good of the state. It puts the casuist in the place of the prince, and the prince in the place of the casuist; the casuist on the throne, and the prince in confession at his feet. No, my brethren, this is not the religion of which we speak. The religion of which we speak, is opposite to superstition. It is just and solid, requiring us to "render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's," Matt. xii. 17. It prescribes bounds to sovereigns, but it requires casuists also to know their place.

How can the religion of an *enthusiast* contribute to the exaltation of a nation? The soul of an enthusiast is always agitated with visions and reveries. He incessantly thrusts himself into the company of the great, in order to inspire them with his own spirit, and to breathe into them the soul of enthusiasm. He endeavours to animate governors called to watch over a state, and to conduct the people to national happiness, with his wild schemes. He is always talking of extirpating the reformation, and thundering excommunications against those who do not enter into his extravagant projects; his anathemas are as extravagant and wild as the projects themselves. This is not the religion of which we speak. The religion that "exalteth a nation" is derived from the treasures of the Divine Intelligence; it was formed in the mind of that sublime Spirit from whom wisdom proceeds, as the stream flows from the spring: and not in the ideas of a disordered brain, nor in the dreams of a visionary.

We wish you to take religion and righteousness in the true sense of the terms. This is our first elucidation. This is the first precaution that must be used to understand the state of the question.

2. We do not mean to affirm that the true religion is so necessary in all its doctrines, and in all the extent of its precepts; that there are no instances of the flourishing of societies, which have not been wholly regulated by it. We acknowledge that some societies of men, who have been only partially governed by its maxims, have enjoyed long and glorious advantages upon the theatre of the world; either because their false religions contained some principles of rectitude in common with the true religion; or because God, in order to animate such people to practise some virtues, superficial indeed, but, however, necessary to the being of society, annexed success to the exercise of them; or because he prospered them to answer some secret designs of his wisdom: or because, finally, rectitude was never so fully established on earth as to preclude injustice from enjoying the advantages of virtue, or virtue from suffering the penalties of vice. However it were, we allow the fact, and we only affirm that the most sure method that a nation can take to support and exalt itself, is to follow the laws of righteousness and the spirit of religion.

This is a second elucidation, tending to state the question clearly.

3. We do not affirm, that in every particular case religion is more successful in procuring some temporal advantage than the violation of it; so that to consider society only in this point of light, and to confine it to this particular case, independently of all other circumstances, religion yields the honour of prosperity to injustice. We allow some state crimes have been successful, and have been the steps by which some people have acquired worldly glory. We even allow, that virtue has sometimes been an obstacle to grandeur. We only affirm, that if a nation be considered in every point of light, and in all circumstances, if all things be weighed, it will be found that the more a society practises virtue, the more prosperity it will enjoy. We affirm, that the more it abandons itself to vice, the more misery will it sooner or later suffer; so that the very vice which contributed to its exaltation, will produce its destruction; and the very virtue, which seems at first to abase it, will in the end exalt its glory. This is a third elucidation.

4. We do not mean by exaltation that sort of elevation at which worldly heroes, or rather tyrants, aspire. We acknowledge that, if by "exalting a nation" be understood an elevation extending itself beyond the limits of rectitude, an elevation not directed by justice and good faith, an elevation consisting of the acquisitions of wanton and arbitrary power, an elevation obliging the whole world to submit to a yoke of slavery, and so becoming an executioner of divine vengeance on all mankind; we allow that, in this sense, exaltation is not an effect of righteousness. But, if we understand by "exalting a nation" whatever governs with gentleness, negotiates with success, attacks with courage, defends with resolution, and constitutes the happiness of a people, whatever God always beholds with favourable eyes; if this be what is meant by "exalting a nation," we affirm a nation is exalted only by righteousness.

5. In fine, we do not affirm that the prosperity of such a nation would be so perfect as to exclude all untoward circumstances. We only say, that the highest glory and the most perfect happiness which can be enjoyed by a nation in a world, where, after all, there is always a mixture of adversity with prosperity, are the fruits of righteousness. These elucidations must be retained, not only because they explain the thesis which we are supporting, and because they are the ground of what we shall hereafter say; but also because they serve to preclude such objections, to solve such difficulties, and to unravel such sophisms, as the author whom we oppose urges against us.

One argument against us is taken from the abuses which religion has caused in society; but this objection is removed, by taking away false ideas of religion. A second objection is taken from the case of some idolatrous nations, who, though they were strangers to revealed religion, have yet arrived at a great height of worldly glory; but this objection is removed by our second elucidation. A third objection is taken from some particular case, in which vice

is of more advantage to a state than virtue; but this objection falls before the manner in which we have stated the question. A fourth objection is taken from extravagant notions of glory; but this objection is removed by distinguishing true exaltation from false. Finally, an objection is taken from the evils which the most virtuous societies suffer; and we have acknowledged, that this world will always be to public bodies what it is to individuals, a place of misery; and we have contented ourselves with affirming, that the most solid happiness which can be enjoyed here, has righteousness for its cause. The narrow limits to which we are confined, will not allow us to carry our reflections any farther. They, however, who meditate profoundly on the matter, will easily perceive that all these objections are, if not abundantly refuted, at least sufficiently precluded by our explications.

We will now proceed to show the grounds of the maxim of the Wise Man. We will open six sources of reflections; an idea of society in general; the constitution of each government in particular; the nature of arts and sciences; the conduct of Providence; the promises of God himself; and the history of all ages. These articles make up the remainder of this discourse.

II. 1. Let us first form an idea of society in general, and consider the motives which induced mankind to unite themselves in society, and to fix themselves in one place. By doing this we shall perceive, that "righteousness" is the only thing that can render nations happy. Every individual has infinite wants; but only finite faculties to supply them. Each individual of mankind has need of knowledge to inform him, laws to direct him, property to support him, medicines to relieve him, aliments to nourish him, clothing and lodging to defend himself against the injuries of the seasons. How easy would it be to enlarge this catalogue! Similar interests form a similar design. Divers men unite themselves together, in order that the industry of all may supply the wants of each. This is the origin of societies and public bodies of men.

It is easy to comprehend that, in order to enjoy the blessings proposed by this assemblage, some fixed maxims must be laid down and inviolably obeyed. It will be necessary for all the members of this body to consider themselves as naturally equal, that by this idea they may be inclined to afford each other mutual succour. It will be necessary that they should be sincere to each other, lest deceit should serve for a veil to conceal the fatal designs of some from the eyes of the rest. It will be necessary for all to observe the rules of rigid equity, that so they may fulfil the contracts which they bound themselves to perform, when they were admitted into this society. It will be necessary that esteem and benevolence should give life and action to righteousness. It will be necessary that the happiness of all should be preferred before the interest of one; and that in cases where public and private interests clash, the public good should always prevail. It will be necessary that each should cultivate his own talents, that he may



contribute to the happiness of that society to which he ought to devote himself with the utmost sincerity and zeal.

Now, my brethren, what can be more proper to make us observe these rules than religion, than *righteousness*? Religion brings us to feel our natural equality; it teaches us that we originate in the same dust, have the same God for our Creator, are all descended from the same first parents, all partake of the same miseries, and are all doomed to the same last end. Religion teaches us sincerity to each other, that the tongue should be a faithful interpreter of the mind, that we should "speak every man truth with his neighbour," Eph. iv. 25; and that, being always in the sight of the God of truth, we should never depart from the laws of truth. Religion teaches us to be just, that we should "render to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour; that whatsoever we would men should do unto us, we should do even so unto them," Rom. xiii. 7; Matt. vii. 12. Religion requires us to be animated with charity, to consider each other as creatures of one God, subjects of the same king, members of one body, and heirs of the same glory. Religion requires us to give up private interest to public good, not to seek our own, but every one another's wealth; it even requires us to lay down our lives for the brethren. Thus, by considering nations in these primitive views, it is "*righteousness*" alone that "exalts" them.

2. But all this is too vague. We proceed next to consider *each form of government in particular*. It is impracticable for all the members of society, on every pressing occasion, to assemble together and give their suffrages. Public bodies, therefore, agree to set apart some of their number who are accounted the soul, the will, the determination of the whole. Some nations have committed the supreme power to one, whom they call a monarch; this is a monarchical state. Others have committed supreme power to a few of their own body called magistrates, senators, nobles, or some other honourable appellation; this is a republic, called in the schools an aristocracy. Others have diffused supreme power more equally among all the members of their society, and have placed it in all heads of families; this is a popular government, usually called a democracy. Society gives its authority and privileges into the hands of those persons; it intrusts and empowers them to make laws, to impose taxes, to raise subsidies, to make peace, or to declare war, to reward virtue, to punish vice, in one word, to do whatever may be beneficial to the whole society, with the felicity of which they are intrusted.

If we consider those various forms of government, we shall find that each nation will be more or less happy in its own mode of governing, will more or less prevent the inconveniences to which it is subject, according as it shall have more or less attachment to religion or righteousness.

What are the particular inconveniences of a monarchical government? In what cases is monarchy fatal to the liberty, and so to the felicity of the nation? When the monarch, in-

stead of making the good of the people his supreme law, follows nothing but his own caprice. When he thinks himself vested with supreme power for his own glory, and not for the glory of his kingdom. When, by stretching his authority beyond its lawful bounds, he endeavours arbitrarily to dispose of the lives and fortunes of his subjects. When, in order to avenge a private quarrel, or to satiate his thirst for glory, from which his people derive no benefit, he engages them in bloody wars, and sacrifices them to a vain and imaginary grandeur. When he wastes the substance of his people in superb buildings, in excessive embellishments, and in sumptuous equipages. When he imposes on them enormous tributes, and exorbitant taxes. When he is inaccessible to the widow and the orphan. When he gives himself up to indolence, and does not study the wants of his subjects. When, though he appropriates to himself the advantages of empire, yet, in order to free himself from the fatigue of governing, he commits the reins to a rash counsellor or to an insolent favourite. When he entertains such an idea of royalty as one anciently formed, who defined it a right to do whatever we will with impunity; such an idea as that, which a mean flatterer gave of it to Alexander the Great, do as many unjust actions as you will, impoverish your subjects by exactions, extortions, and rapines, to satisfy your luxury and ambition, it is all right, it is all lovely, because you choose to have it so.\* When, instead of being the father of his people, he strives to be the executioner, like that brutal emperor who wished the Roman empire had but one head that he might strike it off at a blow.† These are the inconveniences of the first kind of government.

In what cases is the second kind of government hurtful? Is it not when any one of the magistrates, instead of considering himself as a single member of the assembly, aims to be the head of it? When he intrudes into office by sinister means. When he uses his power not for the public good, but for the advancement and glory of his own family. When he is mean enough to sell his vote. When he ingratiates himself with a number of seditious people, in order to form cabals, and to engross supreme power. When he does not take pains to inform himself of the merits of a cause, before he determine it. When he associates colleagues with himself, whose incapacity is intended to be made a foil to his own abilities, instead of calling in men more able than himself to supply his own defects. In fine, when he makes himself judge in his own cause.

Let us observe, lastly, when a popular government becomes hurtful. Is it not when, by a mere principle of levity, laws are made and unmade by caprice? When under pretence of equality, a proper deference to superior understandings is refused? When intrigue and cabal give effect to evil counsels? When a powerful faction oppresses the virtuous few? When popular liberty degenerates into licentiousness and anarchy, and when the ambition of many becomes an evil as enormous and fatal as the ty-

\* Plutarch ad princip. induct.  
† Sueton. Calig. Chap. xxx.

ranny of one? These, and many more, are the imperfections of these three sorts of government. Need we to take up your time in proving, that all these ills are most and best precluded by religion? Do we not all recollect some Scripture maxims which would restrain these excesses? I need not therefore multiply quotations to prove this point. Is not each of us convinced that, if we thus consider nations in regard to the forms of their government, it is righteousness alone that exalts them?

3. Our doctrine will appear in clearer light still, if we proceed to examine the *liberal arts and sciences*. The more a society follows the spirit of religion, the more will religion cherish them under its fostering wing. Jurisprudence will flourish, because law will be disengaged from ambiguity, which perpetuates animosities; because counsellors will plead none but just causes; and because judges will never suffer themselves to be corrupted by "gifts, which blind the eyes of the wise," but will always decide according to the spirit of the law, and the dictates of conscience.

The *military art* will flourish, because the soldier will not defraud the officer, the officer will not defraud the soldier; because both will go into the army not merely to obtain the favour of their governors, but to please God; because, being prepared to die by an anticipated repentance, their ardour will not be restrained by the fear of falling into the hands of an angry God; because, should they have neglected to conciliate the favour of God before a battle, they would be persuaded, even in the heat of it, that the best way to please him would be to discharge the duty of their office; whereas, when soldiers feel their consciences agitated, when amidst the discharge of the artillery of their enemies they discover eternal flames, when they see hell opening under their feet, and the horrors of eternal punishment succeeding those of the field of battle, they always fight with reluctance, and endeavour to avoid future misery by running away from present death.

In a virtuous state *commerce* will flourish, because the merchant, always speaking the truth, and dealing with good faith, will attract general credit and confidence; always following the rules of wisdom and prudence, he will never engage in rash undertakings, which ruin families and subvert whole houses; not being animated with avarice or vain glory, he will not first acquire riches by injustice, and next waste them with indiscretion; depending on the blessing of heaven, all his labours will be enlivened with courage and joy.

In such a state *divinity* will flourish, because each, burning with zeal for the glory of God, will carefully cultivate a science which has God for its object: because, being free from a party-spirit, he will receive the truth, whatever hand may present it to him; because, by referring religion to its chief end, he will not spend his life in the pursuit of trifles: because, full of zeal for his salvation, he will be attentive to every step towards it; because, not being enslaved by his passions, he will not be enveloped in the darkness produced by them, or, to express myself in the language of Scripture, because by doing the will of God, he will know whether such and such doctrines come

from the Supreme Being, or from the preacher only, John vii. 17.

The *mechanical arts* will flourish in a virtuous state, because they, on whom God has not bestowed genius equal to the investigation of abstract sciences, whom he has fitted for less noble stations in society, will fill up those stations with the utmost care, and will be happy in deriving from them such advantages as they produce. Thus a just notion of arts and sciences opens to us a third source of arguments to prove the truth of our text.

4. The doctrine of *Providence* opens a fourth, as others have observed. The conduct of Providence in regard to public bodies is very different from that which prevails in the case of individuals. In regard to the latter, Providence is involved in darkness. Many times it seems to condemn virtue and crown injustice, to leave innocence to groan in silence, and to empower guilt to riot and triumph in public. The wicked rich man fared sumptuously every day, Lazarus desired in vain to be fed with the crumbs that fell from his table, Luke xvi. 19. 21. St. Paul was executed on a scaffold. Nero reigned on Cesar's throne. And to say all in one word, Jesus Christ was born in a stable, and Herod lived and died in a palace.

But Providence is directed in a different method in regard to public bodies. Prosperity in them is the effect of righteousness, public happiness is the reward of public virtue, the wisest nation is usually the most successful, and virtue walks with glory by her side. God sometimes indeed afflicts the most virtuous nations; but he does so with the design of purifying them, and of opening new occasions to bestow larger benefits on them. He sometimes indeed prospers wicked nations; but their prosperity is an effort of his patience and long-suffering, it is to give them time to prevent their destruction; yet, after all, as I said before, prosperity usually follows righteousness in public bodies, public happiness is the reward of public virtue, the wisest nation is the most successful, and glory is generally connected with virtue.

They to whom we are indebted for this reflection have grounded it on this reason—A day will come when Lazarus will be indemnified, and the rich man punished; St. Paul will be rewarded, and Nero will be confounded; Jesus Christ will fill a throne, and Herod will be covered with ignominy. Innocence will be avenged, justice satisfied, the majesty of the laws repaired, and the rights of God maintained.

But such a retribution is impracticable in regard to public bodies. A nation cannot be punished then as a nation, a province as a province, a kingdom as a kingdom. All different sorts of government will be then abolished. One individual of a people will be put in possession of glory, while another will be covered with shame and confusion of face. It should seem then, that Providence owes to its own rectitude those times of vengeance in which it pours all its wrath on wicked societies, sends them plagues, wars, famines, and other catastrophes, of which history gives us so many memorable examples. To place hopes altogether on worldly policy, to pretend to derive

advantages from vice and so to found the happiness of society on the ruins of religion and virtue, what is this but to insult Providence? This is to arouse that power against us, which sooner or later overwhelms and confounds vicious societies.

5. If the obscurity of the ways of Providence, which usually renders doubtful the reasonings of men on its conduct, weaken the last argument, let us proceed to consider in the next place the declarations of God himself on this article. The whole twenty-eighth chapter of Deuteronomy, all the blessings and curses pronounced there fully prove our doctrine. Read this tender complaint which God formerly made concerning the irregularities of his people. "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end! How should one chase a thousand, or two put ten thousand to flight? chap. xxxii. 29, 30.

Read the affecting words which he uttered by the mouth of his prophet, "O that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries. Their time should have endured for ever. I should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat; and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied them," Ps. lxxxi. 13, &c. Read the noble promises made by the ministry of Isaiah, "Thus saith the Lord thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way thou shouldest go. O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea; thy seed also had been as the sand, and thy name should not have been cut off, nor destroyed from before me," chap. xlvi. 17, &c. Read the terrible threatenings denounced by the prophet Jeremiah, "Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be towards this people; cast them out of my sight, and let them go forth. And it shall come to pass, if they say unto thee, whither shall we go forth? then thou shalt tell them, thus saith the Lord, such as are for death, to death; and such as are for the sword, to the sword; and such as are for the famine, to the famine; and such as are for the captivity, to the captivity. And I will appoint over them four kinds, saith the Lord; the sword to slay, and the dogs to tear, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the earth, to devour and destroy. For who shall have pity upon thee, O Jerusalem; or who shall bemoan thee? or who shall go aside to ask how thou doest? Thou hast forsaken me, saith the Lord, thou art gone backward; therefore will I stretch out my hand against thee, and destroy thee; I am weary of repenting," chap. xv. 1, &c. The language of our text is agreeable to all these passages; it is "righteousness," says the text, it is righteousness that "exalteth a nation." Thus God speaks, moreover, thus he acts, as we shall show you, in the next article.

6. *The history of all ages* affords us another class of arguments in defence of our doctrine, and so proves the truth of it by experience.

Had ever preacher a wider or more fruitful field than this which opens to our view in this

part of our discourse? Shall we produce you a list of Egyptians, Persians, Assyrians, and Greeks, or Romans, who surpasses them all? Shall we show you all these nations by turns exalted as they respected righteousness, or abased as they neglected it?

By what mysterious art did ancient Egypt subsist with so much glory during a period of fifteen or sixteen ages? By a benevolence so extensive, that he who refused to relieve the wretched, when he had it in his power to assist him, was himself punished with death; by a justice so impartial, that their kings obliged the judges to take an oath that they would never do any thing against their own consciences, though they the kings themselves, should command them; by an aversion to bad princes so fixed as to deny them the honours of a funeral; by invariably rendering to merit public praise, even beyond the grave; for when an Egyptian died, a sessions was held for the direct purpose of inquiring how he had spent his life, so that all the respect due to his memory might be paid; by entertaining such just ideas of the vanity of life, as to consider their houses as inns, in which they were to lodge, as it were, only for a night, and their sepulchres as habitations, in which they were to abide many ages, in which, therefore, they united all the solidity and pomp of architecture, witness their famous pyramids; by a life so laborious, that even their amusements were adapted to strengthen the body and improve the mind; by a readiness to discharge their debts so remarkable, that they had a law which prohibited the borrowing of money except on condition of pledging the body of a parent for payment, a deposit so venerable, that a man who deferred the redemption of it was looked upon with horror; in one word, by a wisdom so profound, that Moses himself is renowned in Scripture for being *learned in it*.

By what marvellous method did the Persians obtain such a distinguished place of honour in ancient history? By considering falsehood in the most horrid light, as a vice the meanest and most disgraceful; by a noble generosity, conferring favours on the nations they conquered, and leaving them to enjoy all the ensigns of their former grandeur; by a universal equity, obliging themselves to publish the virtues of their greatest enemies; by observing as an inviolable secret state affairs, so that, to use the language of an ancient author, neither promises nor threatenings could extort it, for the ancient laws of the kingdom obliged them to be silent under pain of death; by a decorum so regular, that queens and all court ladies quitted the table as soon as ever the company began to lay aside moderation in drinking; by religiously recording noble actions, and transmitting them to posterity in public registers; by educating their children so wisely, that they were taught virtue as other nations were taught letters; by discovering no grief for such youths as died uneducated. The children of the royal family were put at fourteen years of age into the hands of four of the wisest and most virtuous statesmen. The first taught them the

\* Diodor. Sicil. lib. i. sect. 2. Herod. lib. ii.

† Herod. lib. i. iii. Plat. Alcib. 1.

worship of the gods; the second trained them up to speak truth and practice equity; the third habituated them to subdue voluptuousness, to enjoy real liberty, to be always princes, and always masters of themselves and their own passions; the fourth inspired them with courage, and by teaching them how to command themselves, taught them how to maintain dominion over others.

We purposely omit the noble and virtuous actions of the Assyrians, the Medes, the Greeks, and other nations, who were the glory of the ages in which they lived. But let us not pass by ancient Rome. Was ever nation more exalted? \* One expression of Cesar will give us a just notion of their excellence. Cicero recommended a friend to him, and this was his answer; "In regard to Marcus Furius, whom you have recommended to me, I will make him king of Gaul. If you have any other friends you wish to have promoted, you may command me." † But by what unheard-of prodigy did old Rome, composed at first of no more than three thousand inhabitants, carry conquest in less than six hundred years to the ends of the earth? Thus speaks the emperor Julian. By what impenetrable secret did this confused mixture of vagabonds and thieves become a seminary of heroism and grandeur? By a wise docility, so that even kings sometimes submitted to the advice of individuals; witness Tullus Hostilius, who durst not decide the case of Horatius, but referred it to the people; ‡ by an observation of the law so strict, that Brutus condemned his two sons to die by the hand of the public executioner, for having listened to the ambitious proposals of the Tarquins, who were conspiring to enslave the citizens and remount the throne; by a frugality so great, that such men as Curius, Fabricius, Regulus, Æmilius Paulus, and Mummius, these great deliverers of the Roman people, were seen to feed their own cattle, to cultivate their lands, and to live without pomp and parade; by an excellent economy, so that Atilius Regulus, who commanded a Roman army in Africa, demanded leave of the senate to go home and provide for the wants of his family, from whom a day-labourer had stolen the working-tools used in cultivating his estate of seven acres; a requisition so just that the senate engaged to buy tools to cultivate his land, and to support his wife and children at the public charge; § so far did they carry this virtue, that the elder Cato, returning from Spain to Italy, sold his horse to save the charge of freight; and usually, when he travelled, carried his own knapsack, which contained all his travelling necessities; by an ardent love for the general good, so that every thing was reserved for the public; temples, baths, roads, aqueducts, triumphal arches, all were superb when the national glory was in view, as all things for the use of individuals were plain; by an utter aversion to useless bravery, so that they considered in a light equally mean the general

who exposed his person needlessly, and him who avoided danger when the public good rendered it necessary for him to expose himself; \* by a scrupulous caution not to undertake unjust wars; to guard against which they had a college at Rome, where it was coolly examined whether an intended war were just or unjust, before it was proposed to the senate and the people; † by an insurmountable aversion to every species of military fraud, so that Lucius Marcius, (my brethren, how ought this idea of pagan heroes to cover some with confusion, who ostentatiously affect to play the hero in the Christian world!) Lucius Marcius, I say, having deceived Perseus, king of Macedonia, by giving him false hopes of peace, and having conquered him by this stratagem, was adjudged by the senate to have violated the Roman laws, and to have swerved from the ancient customs, according to which it was a maxim to conquer by valour and not by fraud.

If having shown the cause of the prosperity of ancient nations, we were to inquire into the reasons of their decline; were we to compare the Egyptians under their wise kings with the Egyptians in a time of anarchy, the Persians victorious under Cyrus with the Persians enervated by the luxuries of Asia; the Romans at liberty under their consuls, with the Romans enslaved by their emperors, we should find, that the decline of each of these nations was owing to the practice of vices opposite to the virtues which had caused its elevation; we should be obliged to acknowledge, that vain-glory, luxury, voluptuousness, disunion, envy, and boundless ambition, were the hateful means of subverting states, which in the height of their prosperity expected, and in all appearance justly expected, to endure to the end of time; we should be obliged to allow, that some excesses, which in certain circumstances had contributed to exalt these nations, were in other circumstances the means of ruining them.

True, ambition impelled Cesar to elevate the republic of Rome to a pitch as high as it is possible for human grandeur to attain. Armed for the defence of the republic, he fought for it, though less for it than for his own glory, and displayed, we grant, the Roman eagle in the farthest parts of Asia; rendered Gaul tributary, swelled the Rhine with German blood, subdued the Britons, and made all the Adriatic coasts resound the fame of his victories.— But did not the same ambition impel him to excite a civil war, to arm Rome against Rome, to cover the Pharsalian field with carnage, and soak the ground with Roman blood, to pursue the shattered remains of Pompey's army into the heart of Africa, to give a queen, or rather a prostitute, the kingdom of Egypt, to reduce the first and most free of all nations to a state of meanness and servility beneath the most abject of mankind? For, my brethren, what were these Romans after they had lost their liberty, and given themselves up to absolute masters? These Romans, who had given the universal law; these Roman citizens, even the meanest of them, who would have thought themselves disgraced had they mixed their

\* Montagne de la grandeur Romaine, liv. ii. chap. 24.

† Cicero, *Epist. ad. famil. lib. vii. 5.* Some copies read not Furius, but *M. Orfius.* See Spanheim in the *Cæsars*, p. 161.

‡ Liv. lib. i. 16.

§ Liv. *Epitom. liv. 18.* Montagne de la parsimonie des anciens, liv. i. chap. 52.

\* Sallust de bell. *Catil. ix.*

† Coll. des. *sciaux. Dion. Halic. lib. ii. Antiq. Rom. liv. i. 32.*

blood with that of kings; these Romans, once so jealous of their liberty, have we not seen these very people, under their emperors, submit to vassalage so as to become a scandal even to slaves? Infamous flatterers, did not they erect altars to Claudius, Caligula, and Nero? Did not Rome hear one of its citizens address this language to the last of these monsters? "Choose, Cæsar, what place you will among the immortal gods. Will you sway the sceptre of Jupiter, or mount the chariot of Apollo? There is not a deity who will not yield his empire to you, and count it an honour to resign in your favour."<sup>18</sup>

But is it necessary to quote ancient history in proof of what we have advanced, that is, that the same vices which contribute at first to exalt a nation, in the end cause its decline and ruin? There is a NATION,† in favour of which all things seem to promise a general and lasting prosperity. It has an advantageous situation, a fruitful soil, a temperate climate, an agreeable society, an easy access, a mutual generosity, an inimitable industry, quick penetration in council, heroic courage in war, incredible success in trade, surprising dexterity in arts, indisputable reputation in sciences, an amiable toleration in religion, severity blended with sweetness, sweetness tempered with severity.

Does this nation pass the bounds? At first it acquires advantages more than nature and art had given it. The boundless ambition of the monarch inspires the subject with a noble pride. Authority, established by despotical power, enslaves the judgments of all to the will of one. A treacherous policy at first imposes on neighbouring states. Troops, impelled by a rash valour, at first surmount all obstacles. Toleration is banished, the prince takes the place of God himself, and exercises his prerogative. Violating the faith of edicts, procures some present advantages. An insatiable avidity adds fortress to fortress, city to city, province to province, kingdom to kingdom. But where is divine Providence? Where is the truth of our text, "righteousness exalteth a nation?" What pitch of grandeur can religion obtain for a people, which cannot be obtained by other means?

Stop. The objection made to our doctrine demonstrates the truth of it. The ambition of the monarch, communicated to his subjects, will there produce all the fatal effects of ambition. Despotical power, which enslaved the judgments of all to the absolute will of one, will cause the judgments of all to resist the will of one. That deceitful policy, which took neighbouring states by surprise, will inspire them with distrust and precaution.—Troops hurried on by rashness will find out that rashness is the high road to defeat. Toleration disallowed will affect the hearts of faithful subjects, and industry will flee to foreign climes. The violation of edicts will destroy confidence in all the public instruments of government. An insatiable avidity of territorial acquisitions, of possessing forts, cities, provinces, and kingdoms without number, will require more attention, and greater expense

than any nation can furnish. A state in this condition, will sink under the weight of its own grandeur, it will be attenuated by being expanded; and, if I may use such an expression, impoverished by its abundance. Each passion put in motion will give a shock peculiar to itself, and all together will unite in one general blow, fatal to the edifice which they had erected. A prince by becoming an object of the admiration of the world, becomes at the same time an object of jealousy, suspicion and terror. Hence some civil commotions and foreign wars. Hence the forming of leagues and deep concerted plots. Hence mortality, scarcity, and famine. Hence heaven and earth in concert against a state that seemed to defy both earth and heaven. Hence an eternal example to justify Providence in all future ages, and to demonstrate to the most obstinate the doctrine of the text, that only rectitude can procure substantial glory.

Thus we think, we have sufficiently established our prophet's proposition; and we will finish the arguments by which we have supported it, by giving you the character of that author who has taken the greatest pains to subvert it.\* He was one of those inconsistent men whom the finest genius cannot preserve from self-contradiction, and whose opposite qualities will always leave us in doubt whether to place them in one extreme, or in another diametrically opposite. On the one hand, he was a great philosopher, and knew how to distinguish truth from falsehood, for he could see at once a connexion of principles, and a train of consequences: on the other hand, he was a great sophister, always endeavouring to confound truth with falsehood, to wrest principles, and to force consequences. In one view admirably learned and of fine parts, having profited much by the labours of others, and more by the exercise of his own great sense: in another view, ignorant, or affecting to be ignorant of the most common things, advancing arguments which had been a thousand times refuted, and starting objections which the greatest novice in the schools durst not have mentioned without blushing. On the one hand, attacking the greatest men, opening a wide field for them to labour in, leading them into devious and rugged paths, and, if not going beyond them, giving them a world of pains to keep pace with him: on the other hand, quoting the meanest geniuses, offering a profusion of incense to them, blotting his writings with names that had never been pronounced by learned lips. On the one hand, free, at least in appearance, from every disposition contrary to the spirit of the gospel, chaste in his manners, grave in his conversation, temperate in his diet, and austere in his usual course of life; on the other, employing all the acuteness of his genius to oppose good morals, and to attack chastity, modesty, and all other Christian virtues. Sometimes appealing to a tribunal of the most rigid orthodoxy, deriving arguments from the purest sources, and quoting divines of the most unsuspected soundness in the faith: at other times, travelling in the high road of heretics, reviving the objections of ancient he-

\* Luc an. Pharsal. lib. i.

† This sermon was preached in 1706.

\* Mr. Bayle.

resiarchs, forging them new armour, and uniting in one body the errors of past ages with those of the present time. O that this man, who was endowed with so many talents, may have been forgiven by God for the bad use he made of them! May that Jesus, whom he so often attacked, have expiated his crimes! But, though charity constrains us to hope and wish for his salvation, the honour of our holy religion obliges us publicly to declare that he abused his own understanding; to protest, before heaven and earth, that we disown him as a member of our reformed churches, and that we shall always consider a part of his writings as a scandal to good men, and as a pest of the church.

We return to our prophet. Let us employ a few moments in reflecting on the truths we have heard. Thanks be to God, my brethren, we have better means of knowing the "righteousness that exalts a nation, and more motives to practise it, than all the nations of whose glory we have been hearing." They had only a superficial, debased, confused knowledge of the virtues which constitute substantial grandeur; and, as they held errors in religion, they must necessarily have erred in civil polity. God, glory be to his name! has placed at the head of our councils the most perfect legislator that ever held the reigns of government in the world. This legislator is Jesus Christ. His kingdom, indeed, is not of this world; but the rules he has given us to arrive at that, are proper to render us happy in the present state. When he says, "seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all other things shall be added to you," Matt. vi. 33, he gives the command, and makes the promise to whole nations, as well as to individuals.

Who ever carried so far as this divine legislator ideas of the virtues of which we have been treating in several parts of this discourse, and by practising which "nations are exalted." Who ever formed such just notions of that benevolence, that love of social good, that generosity to enemies, that contempt of life, that wisdom, that veneration for noble exploits, that docility and frugality, that devotedness to public use, that distance from false glory, that magnanimity, and all the other virtues which render antiquity venerable to us? Who ever gave such wise instruction to kings and subjects, magistrates and people, lawyers and merchants, soldiers and statesmen, the world and the church? We know these virtues better than any other people in the world. We are able to carry our glory far beyond Egyptians and Persians, Assyrians and Medes, Lacedæmonians, Athenians, and Romans; if not that sort of glory which glares and dazzles, at least that which makes tranquil and happy, and procures a felicity far more agreeable than all the pageantry of heroism and worldly splendour.

Christians, let not these be mere speculations to us. Let us endeavour to reduce them to practice. Never let us suffer our political principles to clash with the principles of our religion. Far from us, and far from us for ever be the abominable maxims of that pernicious Florentine,\* who gave statesmen such fatal lessons

as these! A prince who would maintain his dignity, ought to learn not to be virtuous, when affairs of state require him to practise vice: he ought to be frugal with his own private fortune, and liberal with public money; he ought never to keep his word to his own disadvantage; he ought not so much to aspire at virtue as at the semblance of it; he ought to be apparently merciful, faithful, sincere, and religious, but really the direct opposite; that he cannot possibly practise what are accounted virtues in other men, because necessity of state will often oblige him to act contrary to charity, humanity, and religion; he ought to yield to the various changes of fortune, to do right as often as he can, but not to scruple doing wrong when need requires. I say again far from us be these abominable maxims! Let us obey the precepts of Jesus Christ, and by so doing let us draw down blessings on this nation more pure and perfect than those which we now enjoy.

The blessings we now enjoy, and which Providence bestowed on us so abundantly a few days ago,\* should inspire us with lasting gratitude; however, my brethren, they are not, they ought not, to be the full accomplishment of our wishes. Such laurels as we aspire at are not gathered in fields of battle. The path to that eminence to which we travel, is not covered with human gore. The acclamations we love are not excited by wars and rumours of wars, the clangour of arms, and the shouting of armed men.

Were our pleasure, though not of the purest sort, perfect in its own kind, we should experience a rise in happiness! But can we enjoy our victories without mourning for the miseries which procured them! Our triumphs indeed abase and confound our enemies, and make them lick the dust; yet these very triumphs present one dark side to us. Witness the many wounds which I should make a point of not opening, were it not a relief to mourners to hear of their sufferings, were it not equitable to declare to those whose sorrows have procured our joy, that we remember them, that we are concerned for them, that we sympathize with them, that we are not so taken up with public joy as to forget private wo. Witness, I say, so many desolate houses among us. Witness this mourning in which so many of us appear to-day. Witness these affectionate Josephs, who lament the death of their parents. Witness these Marys and Marthas weeping at the tomb of Lazarus. Witness these distressed Davids, who weep as they go, and exclaim, "O Absalom my son! my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee! O Absalom my son, my son!" 2 Sam. xviii. 33. Witness these Rachels, who make Rama echo with their cries, "refusing to be comforted, because their children are not," Jer. xxxi. 15.

My dear brethren, on whom the hand of God is heavy, ye sorrowful Naomis, ye melancholy Maras, with whom the Almighty has dealt very bitterly, Ruth i. 20, we share your griefs, we mix our tears with yours, we feel all the blows that strike you. O fatal victory! O bloody glory! you are not fruits of righteousness.

\* Machiavel, Prince. xv. xvi. xvii.

\* At the battle of Ramil'es, May 23, 1708.

Christians, if our joy be mixed, it is because our righteousness is mixed. Let us not search for our misfortunes in any other cause. Let us do, when any thing is wanting to complete our joy, what the ancient people of God did, whenever they were conquered. The congregation was assembled, the ephod was put on, the oracle was consulted, inquisition was made from tribe to tribe, from family to family, from house to house, from person to person, who it was, whose sin had caused the loss of the victory, or the loss of a regiment; and when he was discovered, he was put to death. Joshua, after he had met with a repulse before Ai, and had lost thirty-six men, rent his garments, and lay on his face upon the earth, before the ark of the Lord. In like manner, let us, my brethren, at the remembrance of infected countries, fields of battle covered with carcases, rivers of blood dying the soil, confused heaps of dead and dying fellow-creatures, new globes of fire flying in the air, let us examine ourselves. Happy if, as in the case just now mentioned, only one criminal could be found among many thousands of innocent persons! Alas! we are obliged, on the contrary, to lament, that there is hardly one innocent among thousands of the guilty.

Where is the Achan who embitters the glorious and immortal victories which God grants to Israel? What tribe, what family, what house shall be taken? Is it the magistrate? Is it the people? Is it the pastor? Is it the flock? Is it the merchant? Is it the soldier? Ah! my brethren! do you not hear the oracle of the Lord answering from the terrible tribunal erected in your own consciences? It is the magistrate; it is the people; it is the pastor; it is the flock; it is the merchant; it is the soldier.

It is that *magistrate*, who, being required to have always before his eyes that God by whom kings reign, and that throne before which the greatest monarchs of the world must be judged, is dazzled with his own grandeur, governed by a worldly policy, and has more at heart to enforce the observation of his own capricious orders than those rules of eternal rectitude which secure the safety and happiness of a nation.

It is that *people*, who, instead of considering the felicity of "that nation whose God is the Lord," are attempting to be happy independently of God; choosing rather to sacrifice to blind chance than to him, who is the *happy God*, and who alone dispenses prosperous and adverse circumstances.

It is that *minister*, who, instead of confining his attention to the discharge of all the duties of his office, performs only such parts as acquire him a popular reputation, neglecting private duties, such as friendly and affectionate remonstrances, paternal advice, private charities, secret visits, which characterize the true ministers of the gospel.

It is that *congregation*, which, instead of regarding the word dispensed by us as the word of God, licentiously turns all public ministrations into ridicule, and under pretence of ingenuity and freedom of thought, encourages infidelity and irreligion; or, at best, imagines that religion consists more in hearing and knowing than in practice and obedience.

It is that *soldier*, who, though he is always at war with death, marching through fires and flames, hearing nothing but the sound of warlike instruments crying to him with a loud voice, *Remember you must die*, yet frames a morality of his own, and imagines that his profession, so proper in itself to incline him to obey the maxims of the gospel, serves to free him from all obligation to obedience.

Ah! this it is, which obscures our brightest triumphs; this stains our laurels with blood; this excites lamentations, and mixes them with our songs of praise. Let us scatter these dark clouds. Let us purify our righteousness in order to purify our happiness. Let religion be the bride, the rule, the soul of all our councils, and so may it procure us unalterable peace, and unmixed pleasure! or rather, as there is no such pleasure on earth, as imperfection is a character essential to human affairs, let us elevate our hearts and minds to nobler objects, let us sigh after happier periods, and let each of us seek true glory in the enjoyment of God. God grant us this grace! To him be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

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## SERMON XLVIII.

### THE LIVES OF COURTIERS.

2 SAMUEL xix. 32—39.

*Barzillai was a very aged man, even fourscore years old, and he had provided the king of sustenance while he lay at Mahanaim; for he was a very great man. And the king said unto Barzillai, come thou over with me, and I will feed thee with me in Jerusalem. And Barzillai said unto the king, how long have I to live, that I should go up with the king unto Jerusalem? I am this day fourscore years old; and can I discern between good and evil? can thy servant taste what I eat, or what I drink? can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women? wherefore then should thy servant be yet a burden unto my Lord the king? Thy servant will go a little way over Jordan with the king; and why should the king recompense it me with such a reward? Let thy servant, I pray thee, turn back again, that I may die in mine own city, and be buried by the grave of my father and of my mother; but behold thy servant Chimham, let him go over with my Lord, the king, and do to him what shall seem good unto thee. And the king answered, Chimham shall go over with me, and I will do to him that which shall seem good unto thee; and whatsoever thou shalt require of me that will I do for thee. And all the people went over Jordan; and when the king was come over, the king kissed Barzillai, and blessed him; and he returned unto his own place.*

We propose to examine to-day, my brethren, how far business, the world, a court, are fit for a young man, and how far they agree with a man in the decline of life. It is a prejudice too common in the world, that there are two ways to heaven, one way for young men, and another way for men in years. Youth is considered as a sort of title to licentiousness, and

the most criminal pleasures. Virtue is usually regarded as proper for those who cannot practise vice with a good grace. God forbid such a pernicious maxim should be countenanced in this pulpit! Let us not deceive ourselves, my brethren, the precepts of the moral law are eternal, and fitted to all ages of life. At fifteen, at twenty, at thirty, at forty, at fourscore years of age, what the apostle affirms is true, "they that do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God," Gal. v. 21. These things are "adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like." There is no dispensation in these cases on account of age. At any age "they that do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

It is, however, clear, that circumstances sometimes change the nature of moral actions; that an action is innocent, when done in some circumstances, which ceases to be so when it is done in different circumstances; and, to come to the design mentioned at the beginning of this discourse, it is clear, that business, the world, a court, to a certain degree suit a young man, and that they are unfit for a man in the decline of life.

Each part of this proposition, my brethren, is contained in the text, as we are going to show you. Barzillai, by committing his son to king David, and by allowing Chimham to avail himself of the favour of his prince, teaches us how far business, the world, and a court, become a young man. Barzillai, by wishing only to retreat into retirement and silence himself, teaches us how far a court, the world, and business, become an old man; or rather he teaches us, that they do not become him at all, and that there is a certain time of life when the wise man takes leave of the world.

1. We suppose Barzillai was a good man, and that his example sufficiently proves it. Indeed this man is very little known. I recollect only three places in Scripture where he is spoken of. The first is in the seventeenth chapter of the second book of Samuel. There we are told, that Barzillai "was of the tribe of Gilead, of the city of Rogelim," ver. 27, and that he was one of those who brought refreshments to David and his court, when he fled from his barbarous son. This passage tells us how he became so dear to David. The second is our text. The third is in the first book of Kings, where David gives this commission to his son Solomon. "Show kindness unto the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and let them be of those that eat at thy table; for so they came to me when I fled because of Absalom thy brother," chap. ii. 7. This passage gives us reason to conjecture, or rather it proves, that Chimham was the son of Barzillai; for the commission given by David, when he was dying, to Solomon, certainly refers to these words of our text, "Behold thy servant Chimham, let him go over with my Lord the king, and do to him what shall seem good unto thee." Thus, all we know of Barzillai contributes to persuade us that he was a good man; that his example sufficiently proves it; that as he consented that his son should go into

the world, and even into the most pompous and dangerous part of it, he thought it might be innocently done. A good father would not have consented that his son should enter on a course of life criminal in itself. If we have deceived ourselves in our notion of Barzillai, it will not affect the nature of our reflections. Our question is this, How far does the world, a court, or business, become a young man? We shall elucidate this question by the following considerations: 1. A wise man will never choose a court, or high offices, as most and best fitted to procure true peace. He must be a novice in the world indeed, who does not know the solidity of this maxim. He must have reflected very little on the turbulent condition of courtiers, and of all such as are elevated to any superior rank in the world. He must have paid very little attention to the snares which are every where set to disturb their tranquillity; to the envies and jealousies which are excited against them; to the plots which are formed against their happiness; to the reverses of fortune to which they are exposed; to the treachery of such friends as surround them, and to the endless vicissitudes which they experience. In general, a man must be indifferent to peace, at least he must know but little in what it consists, to seek it in pomp and worldly grandeur. I forgive a young man of fifteen or twenty for making such a mistake. At that time of life, young men deserve pity; their eyes are too childish not to be dazzled by a false glare; they have not then learnt to know appearances from realities by their own experience, or by the experience of others. They do not know that happiness consists in a private condition, a moderate revenue, a few tried friends, a chosen circle, a few relations, business enough to preserve vigour of mind without fatiguing it, a wisely directed solitude, moderate studies, in a word, in a happy mediocrity. My brethren, independence is the blessing which deserves to be first of all chosen by us, should God leave to our choice the kind of life which we ought to follow; or if he did not frequently intend by placing us on earth more to exercise our patience than to consummate our felicity. O delicious independence, O inestimable mediocrity! I prefer you before the most glorious sceptre, the best established throne, the most brilliant crown! What are those eminent posts of which the greatest part of mankind are so fond? They are golden chains, splendid punishments, brilliant prisons and dungeons. Happy he, who, having received from Providence blessings sufficient for his rank, easy with his fortune, far from courts and grandeurs, waits with tranquillity for death; and while he enjoys the innocent pleasures of life, knows how to make eternity his grand study, and his principal occupation.

2. A wise man will always consider a court, and eminent posts, as dangerous to his salvation. It is in a court, it is in eminent posts, that, generally speaking, the most dangerous snares are set for conscience. Here it is that men usually abandon themselves to their passions, because here it is that they are gratified with the utmost ease. Here it is that man is tempted to consider himself as a being of a par-



ticular kind, and infinitely superior to those who crawl among the vulgar. It is here where each learns to play the tyrant in his turn, and where the courtier indemnifies himself for the slavish mortifications to which his prince reduces him, by enslaving all his dependants. Here it is that secret intrigues, underhand practises, bloody designs, dark and criminal plots are formed, of which innocence is usually the victim. Here it is that the most pernicious maxims are in the greatest credit, and the most scandalous examples in the highest reputation. Here it is that every disposition of mind changes, if not its nature, at least its appearance, by the false colouring with which all are disguised. Here it is that every one breathes the venom of flattery, and that every one loves to receive it. Here imagination prostrates itself before frivolous deities, and unworthy idols receive such supreme homage as is due to none but the sovereign God. Here it is that the soul is affected with many a seducing image, the troublesome remembrance of which often wholly engrosses the mind; especially when we wish to nourish it with such meditations as are suited to immortal intelligences. Here a confused noise, an infallible consequence of living in the tumult of the world, gets possession of the mind, and renders it extremely difficult to relish that silent retirement, that abstraction of thought, which are absolutely necessary to self-examination, and to the study of our own hearts. Here it is that men are carried away in spite of themselves by a torrent of vicious examples, which, being thought, and called by every body about them illustrious, authorize the most criminal actions, and insensibly destroy that tenderness of conscience and dread of sin which are very powerful motives to keep us in the practice of virtue. These general maxims, admit of some exception in regard to Chimham. He saw, in the person of his king, the virtues of a pastor, and the excellence of a prophet. David's court was an advantageous school for him on many accounts; but yet was it altogether exempt from all the dangers we have mentioned? O Chimham, Chimham, I will not detain thee in the port, when Providence calls thee to set sail! But that sea with the dangers of which thou art going to engage, has many, many rocks, and among them, alas! there have been innumerable shipwrecks.

3. A wise man will never enter a court, or accept of an eminent post, without fixed resolutions to surmount the temptations with which they are accompanied, and without using proper measures to succeed in his design. Far from us for ever be, my brethren, that disposition of mind, which, by fixing the eye upon the prince, makes us lose sight of him, "by whom kings reign, and princes decree justice!" Prov. viii. 15. Far from us be such an avidity to make our fortunes as to engage us to forget that we have souls to save, and an internal interest to pursue! Far from us be that desire of elevating ourselves in this world, which debases the dignity of our nature, and inclines us to practices unworthy of men whom the God of heaven and earth has called into his family! Those holy men who are proposed to us for examples, have been sometimes at court; and they

have sometimes filled the highest offices of state, but they have always made it an inviolable law to set before their eyes that God, in the presence of whom "all nations are a drop of a bucket, and as the small dust of the balance," Isa. xl. 15. Moses was at court; but it was with that heroic firmness, with that noble pride, with that magnanimity, which became him whom the Lord of hosts had chosen for his messenger, and placed at the head of his people. Moses was at court; but it was to say to Pharaoh, "Let my people go that they may serve me. Let my people go. And if thou refuse to let them go, behold, I will smite all thy borders with frogs. They shall come into thine house, and into thy bed-chamber, and upon thy bed, and into the house of thy servants. Let my people go, or the hand of the Lord shall be upon thy cattle, upon thy horses, upon the asses, upon the camels, upon the oxen, and upon the sheep, and there shall be a very grievous murrain," Exod. vii. 16; viii. 2; and ix. 3. Nathan was at court; but it was to say to David, "Thou art the man; wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord to do evil in his sight?" 2 Sam. xii. 7. 9. Elijah was at court; but it was to resist Ahab, who said to him, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" No, replied he, "I have not troubled Israel, but thou and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim," 1 Kings xviii. 17, 18. Micaiah was at court; but it was to resist the projects of an ambitious prince, and to say to him, "I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd, chap. xxii. 17. Jehu was at court; but it was to mortify Joram, who asked him, "Is it peace?" "What peace," replied he, "What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel, and her witchcrafts are so many?" 2 Kings ix. 22. John the Baptist was at court; but he went thither to tell Herod, "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife," Mark vi. 18.

Some of these holy men have filled the highest posts, and discharged the most important offices of state; but they have done so with that integrity of mind, and with that piety and fervour of heart, which would seem incompatible with worldly grandeur, were we not informed, that to the pure all things are pure, and that God knows how to preserve the piety of his elect amidst the greatest dangers, when zeal for his glory engages them to expose themselves for his sake. Samuel discharged important offices, he occupied an eminent post; but he could render a faithful account of his administration, and ventured to face the people with this noble appeal, "Behold here I am, witness against me before the Lord, and before his anointed; whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed?" 1 Sam. xii. 3, 4. And what is more than all this, and what we wish to inculcate more than all this, is what he subjoins, "of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you." To which the people replied, "Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken aught of any man's hand." Nehemiah was elevated to high offices, he was even a favourite of the king; but he

availed himself of his elevation to procure the rebuilding of Jerusalem, and the restitution of divine worship in the temple. When the idolatrous prince put this question to him, "Why is thy countenance sad?" He replied, "Why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?" Nehem. ii. 2, 3. Daniel filled a high office, even in an idolatrous court; but there he continued his humble diet; he would not hold his office at the expense of his conscience; amidst the tumult of the world he knew how to manage his affairs so as to find time "to understand by books the number of the years" predicted by the prophets, to attend to the condition of Jerusalem, "to make supplication with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes." Is there any one of you, my brethren, so much master of himself? Have you courage enough to resist so many enemies? Are you able to withstand so many temptations, and to escape all these dangers? Go then, not only to the courts of Davids, but to those of the most profligate of princes. "Go shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation;" go, be the "salt of the earth;" rise, not only to the great offices of state, but ascend a throne, take the government and reign.

4. The evils which imbitter the lives of courtiers, and of all who are elevated to eminent posts, and (what may seem a paradox) the hazard of being damned among human grandeurs, ought not to discourage those from occupying the highest offices who are capable of doing great good to society and the church.

The first part of this proposition is indisputable. The difficulties which belong to the lives of courtiers, and of all persons elevated to eminent posts, ought not to discourage those who are able to benefit society and the church. It is clear, I think, to all who know the first principles of Christianity, that the design of God in placing us in the world, was not to enable us to follow that kind of life which is the most conformable to our inclinations, though such a kind of life should have nothing in it contrary to the laws of God. God intended to exercise us in a painful state of probation. I allow, virtue has charms of its own, and often brings its reward along with it in this world; but also it often requires us to mortify our dearest passions, and our strongest inclinations. How often, by the heavy afflictions in which piety involves us, is that celebrated expression of an apostle verified, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable," 1 Cor. xv. 19. A good man will consult, when he is choosing a course of life (and you will have spent this hour well, my brethren, if you retain only this maxim, and reduce it to practice,) a good man, when he is choosing a course of life, will consult not what will render his family most illustrious, not what will be most likely to transmit his name to posterity, not what will most advance his fortune, and will best gratify his own inclinations, but what will be most useful to society and religion. Do not say the pleasures of a court are insipid, the life of a courtier is intolerable, perpetual consultations are burdensome, a multitude of business is tiresome;

ceremonies disgust me; splendid titles give me pain; I like a tranquil life, I prefer obscurity and quiet, I love to cultivate my garden, and to spend much of my time in reading and retirement. Noble effort of devotion, indeed! to choose temporal tranquillity as the chief end of your studies and actions! And, pray, what benefit do religion and the state derive from your reading your books and cultivating your flowers? What! is it a question between God and you, whether the course of life that he prescribes to you be disagreeable, whether perpetual consultations be troublesome, whether much business fatigue, whether ceremonies disgust, and whether titles be unsatisfying? Is this the dispute between God and you? Is the question what kind of life you prefer? Do you suppose, if God had left to the martyrs the choice of what course they would have taken through life, they would have chosen that to which God called them? Would they have preferred, before every other path, that in which they were "stoned, sawn asunder, tempted, slain with the sword;" would they have "wandered about in sheep-skins, and goat-skins, destitute, afflicted, and tormented?" Heb. xi. 37. You say, you shall become a martyr, if you execute the elevated office to which you are called. Very well, God calls you to this martyrdom. The first part of our proposition is indisputable. The disagreeables in the lives of courtiers, and of all other persons elevated to eminent posts, ought not to deter any man from accepting an office, when it is probable he may, by discharging it well, do great good to society in general, and to the church in particular.

I go farther, and I maintain the second part of the proposition. The snares, which are thick set in high life, and which endanger our salvation, ought not to deter us from accepting high offices, when we can do good to society and the church by executing them. There is some difficulty in this subject, we will endeavour to explain it. Our principal concern is to be saved. Our highest engagement is to avoid every thing that would endanger our salvation. Our first exercise should be diffidence, distrust of ourselves. The son of Sirach has taught us, that he "who loveth danger shall perish therein," Eccles. iii. 26. What law, then, can oblige us to pursue a course of life, which all assure us is almost impassable to men who would walk in the way of salvation? Is it not presumption, is it not tempting God to expose one's self in this manner?

I reply, it is presumption, it is a tempting of God, to expose one's self to danger, when no good will come of it. For example, you know by experience, that if gaming were innocent in itself, it is, however, dangerous to you; that always, when you allow yourself to game, you receive some injury, you either play with an avidity of gain too great, or you lose all patience with the loss of your money, or, some way or other, your mind is always disconcerted. Leave off gaming, then. What good do you do to society at large, or to the church in particular, by gaming? Were it probable, that in future you should always escape unhurt, even a probability of suffering is enough to deter you, and you cannot expose yourself with-

out a presumptuous tempting of God. Again, you know, by sad experience, that the company you keep, is fatal to you; that always, when you are in it, you violate the laws of piety, charity, and modesty. Quit this company, then. What good is done to the state and the church by your frequenting this company?—Were it probable that in future you should receive no damage, the bare probability that you might, ought to induce you to avoid it. In like manner, you are convinced, that your opponent, who is, as well as yourself, a candidate for a certain office, will execute it as well as you would. The office is dangerous, and you fear you have not virtue enough to execute it with safety to your salvation. Renounce your pretensions, then. Choose a way of life less dangerous.

Let us go a step farther. It is rash, it is tempting God to expose ourselves to difficulties which cannot possibly be surmounted. A pretence of doing good to the state and the church will not alter the case. A court is pestiferous. A king, who ought to maintain order, lives only to subvert it; he consults no law but his passions, and his will is his only reason. You may, perhaps, moderate his passions, if not wholly regulate them; you may, perhaps, if not wholly terminate the misfortunes of his reign, yet diminish them. But how must you procure this advantage? You must rise into an opportunity to do good, by becoming yourself an instrument of his extortions, by passing encomiums on his guilty pleasures, by disgracing yourself to become the panegyrist of his tyranny. In such a case, it would be better to quit the court, to give up the favour of such a prince, to obey the divine laws, and to leave the government of the world to God. It must be granted that, when crimes are necessary to public good, it is not you who are appointed to commit them, this is not your calling. "O my soul, come not thou into their secret, unto their assembly mine honour be not thou united," Gen. xlix. 6.

But, when temptations are surmountable, when God offers to assist us to surmount them, when nothing but our own idleness can prevent our conquering, and when we are able, by exposing ourselves to danger, to serve society and the church; I affirm, that we are then called to expose ourselves, and to meet, resist, and surmount all difficulties. I affirm, in such a case, it is our duty not to avoid, but to approach difficulties, and to take pains to surmount them. A minister of the gospel has more difficulty in his way of salvation than a private person. A private Christian, in general, is responsible only for his own soul; but a minister of the gospel is accountable for the souls of all whom God has committed to his care. Every part of his office is a source of difficulties and trials. If he have great abilities, I fear he will become vain; if he have not, I fear he will envy his superiors. If he be set in some conspicuous place, I fear his feeble eyes will be dazzled with his situation; if he live in obscurity, I fear he will sink into indifference. If he be appointed to speak to the great, I fear he will become pliant and mean; if he be confined to people of ordinary rank, I fear he will become indifferent to their souls,

and not take sufficient pains to procure the salvation of them. Snares and temptations everywhere! *Who is sufficient for these things?*—But what! must a man then bury his talents lest he should abuse them? No. This is not to choose the way by which it is the pleasure of God to save us. It does not belong to us to choose what kind of virtue he shall think fit to exercise. The duty of a Christian is, not to omit the acquisition of knowledge, but to endeavour not to be puffed up with it. It is not to avoid conspicuous places, but to guard against being infatuated with them. It is not to flee from the notice of the great, but to watch against servility and meanly cringing in their presence.

In like manner, you are sure you may be very useful to religion and society by filling a high office. You are aware of the intrigues of a court. You are certain that, if the small number of virtuous men, who fill high offices, were to retire from public business, the state would be abandoned to injunctive and oppression, and become the prey of tyrants. You are one of these virtuous characters. You ought then to fill this post, and the difficulties you meet with cannot dispense with your obligation. I repeat it again, it does not belong to us to choose the way in which it shall be the pleasure of God to save us. It is not our business to single out a particular virtue, and insist on such a course of life as shall exercise it: whether it be a noisy or a silent path, whether it be a frequented or a solitary way, whether it be the practice of public or private virtue. But, say you, I cannot help, while I execute this office, my impatience; I am obliged to give audience to a man who torments me with tedious and confused harangues in a course of business; I wish to eradicate this evil, and to get rid of this trial of my patience, by quitting my place. No, do not get rid of this man; do not quit your place: but take pains with yourself to correct your impatience; try to cool your blood, and regulate your spirits. It is by the way of patience that God will save you. But I shall not have courage to plead all alone for rectitude; I shall have the weakness to sacrifice it, if it should happen at any time not to be supported by others. I will eradicate this evil, and avoid the temptation by quitting my employment. No. Do not quit an employment in which your influence may be serviceable to the interests of virtue; but take pains with your own heart, and subdue it to the service of rectitude, that you may be able to plead for virtue without a second. But I shall certainly sink under temptation, unless God afford me extraordinary support. Well, ask for extraordinary support then; you have a right to expect it, because the place you fill renders it necessary for the glory of God. Let us finish this article, and let us form a clear notion of what we mean by a *calling*. That place, in which it is probable, all things considered, we can do most good, is the place to which Providence calls us. To fill that is our calling. This establishes our fourth maxim, that the evils which imberter the lives of courtiers, and of all who are elevated to eminent posts, the danger of perishing by the ills which accompany human grandeurs, ought not to deter

from occupying them such persons as have it in their power to render signal services to the state and the church.

Thus we have made a few reflections serving to determine how far the honours and affairs of a court suit a young man. Let us proceed to show that they are improper for an old man. This is the principal design of the text. "The king said unto Barzillai, come thou over with me, and I will feed thee with me in Jerusalem. And Barzillai said unto the king, how long have I to live, that I should go up with the king unto Jerusalem? I am this day fourscore years old; and can I discern between good and evil? can thy servant taste what I eat or what I drink? can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women? wherefore then should thy servant be yet a burden unto my lord the king. Thy servant will go a little way over Jordan with the king; and why should the king recompense me with such a reward? Let thy servant, I pray thee, turn back again, that I may die in mine own city, and be buried by the grave of my father and of my mother." This is the subject of our second part.

Were it proper for me, my brethren, to make a digression from the principal object of our present attention, I could not deny myself the pleasure of making an observation of another kind. Before I spoke of Barzillai, who modestly refused human grandeur, I should speak of the gratitude of David, who, to his praise be it spoken, made him the offer. This latter example deserves consideration, my brethren, were it only for its singularity. Gratitude is very rare among princes, it is not a virtue at court. Devote yourselves, poor courtiers! I say, devote yourselves sincerely and heartily to earthly princes, devote to them your rest, your fortune, your lives; be lavish of your blood in their service; for their security and glory expose yourselves in the most desperate undertakings, attempt the most bloody sieges and battles; what will you find princes after all your services? Ingrates. Do not expect to meet with a David eager to give you substantial proofs of his gratitude, to say to you, "Come over with me, and I will feed you with me in Jerusalem;" to perpetuate his goodness, to transmit it to your posterity and to say to his successor, "Show kindness unto the sons of Barzillai, and let them be of those that eat at thy table." How often do partiality and intrigue prevail, in the distribution of royal favours, over reason and equity? How often are the children of those, who, with a generous courage sacrificed their lives for the public good, obliged to beg their bread. How often have they urged in vain the meritorious services of their parents; how often have they without success produced blood yet warm shed for the public safety? How often have they in vain demanded that subsistence from charity, which they had a right to expect from equity? David, distinguished among all believers, distinguishes himself also among all kings. "Come over Jordan with me," said he to Barzillai, "and I will feed you with me in Jerusalem."

A king thus offering grandeurs from a principle of gratitude is an uncommon sight. It is, perhaps, a sight more unusual than that of a

man refusing them from a principle of wise moderation. "How long have I to live," replies good Barzillai, "that I should go up with the king unto Jerusalem? I am this day fourscore years old; and can I discern between good and evil? can thy servant taste what I eat or what I drink? can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women? wherefore then should thy servant be yet a burden to my lord the king? Let thy servant, I pray thee, turn back again, that I may die in mine own city, and be buried by the grave of my father and of my mother." His refusal proceeds from three causes; the insensibility of old age, the misfortune of old age, and the nearness of old age to death. "I am fourscore years of age; can I discern between good and evil? can thy servant taste what I eat or what I drink? can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women?" This is the insensibility of old age, and the first cause of his refusal.

"Why should thy servant be a burden to my lord the king?" This is the misfortune of old age, and the second cause of his refusal.

"How long have I to live? I pray thee let thy servant return, and let me die in mine own city, and be buried by my father and my mother." This is the nearness of old age to death, and this is the third cause of his refusal. These are three sources of many reflections.

1. The *insensibility* of old age is the first cause of the refusal of Barzillai. "I am this day fourscore years of age; can I discern between good and evil? can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women?" This insensibility may proceed either from a principle of wisdom, or from constitution. It may proceed, first, from wisdom. A man, who has experienced the vanity of human grandeur; a man who has often asked himself, of what use is this kind of life? what good comes of this pomp and pleasure? a man, who by frequently reflecting on all he sees and hears, has formed a just notion of man, and of his real wants; a man, whose reiterated meditations have purified his taste, and formed in him a habit of employing himself about things of importance; such a man does not entertain a very high idea of the privilege of living with the great, of eating at their tables, and of participating their pleasures. Only such pleasures as have God immediately for their object, and eternity for their end, can always satisfy. Such pleasures are approved by reason, ripened by age, and such pleasures are satisfactory at all times, and in all stages of life. All other pleasures are fatiguing, and in the end extremely disgusting. "Can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women? Why should the king recompense me with such a reward?"

But there is also a constitutional insensibility. The senses, which transmit pleasures to us, become blunt, and pleasures are blunted with them. Indeed, we sometimes see old people, to the shame of human nature, pretending to rise above the ruins of a decaying body, and trying to support the inconveniences of old age by the pleasures of youth. We sometimes see men, whose relaxed and trembling hands are too feeble to hold a box of dice or a hand of cards, supported by others, and gaming with a

part of themselves, as they cannot do so with the whole. We have seen some, who, not being able to go themselves to a play, have caused themselves to be carried thither, exposing their extravagance on a theatre, intended for the exhibition of other scenes, and so acting a real tragedy along with a fictitious one. We have seen some, who having bodies decaying with diseases contracted by youthful passions, or, to use an emphatical expression of an apostle, having "received within themselves that recompense of their error which was meet," covered with wounds brought upon themselves by their debaucheries; we have seen them trying to divert the pain of reflecting on the cause of their decline by the absurd method of gazing still on the very objects which were first fatal to their innocence, and by glutting their imaginations, now their senses can relish no more. We have seen men dedicate the last moments of life to the god of pleasure, just as they sacrificed their youth and manhood to the same deity. We have seen old men, who, too dim-sighted themselves to see the glitter of diamonds and jewels, have taken a pleasure in exposing the brilliancy of them to the eyes of others; who, not having a body to adorn, have ornamented a skeleton, and who, lest they should be taken for dead corpses, have decked themselves with trinkets fit only for people in the vigour of life. However, these shameful phenomena do not destroy our reflection. It is always true, that pleasure loses its point at a certain age. If the old men, of whom we have been speaking, yet love pleasure, it is not taste that tempts them. Like the inhabitants of the most abominable city that ever disgraced the world, they weary themselves, though they were some time ago struck blind to find the door, the door of Lot, towards which their brutal passions had given a direction to their bodies, before they lost their sight. They act thus, because, though musical entertainments no more delight their ears, yet they keep them from hearing the cries of conscience, which would rend them asunder. They act thus, because, though they have only a confused sight of the charms of worldly objects, yet these objects serve, like a wall, to keep out of sight a future world, a glimmering of which would confound and distract them. However, the irregularity of the heart of an old man does not alter the infirmities of his body. It is always true, that at a certain time of life, we acquire a constitutional, organical insensibility. Isaac, that good old man, arrives at a very advanced age, but his eyes are become dim, he cannot distinguish one of his children from another, he mistakes the hands of Jacob for those of Esau, "the voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau." He cannot distinguish venison from goats' flesh. He confers that benediction on the youngest which he intended for the eldest. If nature grants to a few of mankind the privilege of a very long life, the privilege is sold, and a part of the pleasure of living must be given for the purchase; objects of pleasure must retire, and senses to be pleased with these objects not unfrequently retire first. Before this earthly house falls by its own frailty, to use an expression of the Wise Man, "the years arrive in

which we are obliged to say, we have no pleasure," Eccles. xii. 1, &c. Then, according to the description of the same author, "the sun, the moon, the stars, are darkened, and the clouds return not after the rain. The keepers of his house," that is, the hands, "tremble; his strong men," that is, his legs and feet "bow themselves; his grinders," that is, his teeth, "cease to perform their functions, because they are few; those that look out of the windows," that is, the eyes, "are darkened; the doors," that is, the ears, "shall be shut in the streets; the daughters of music," that is, the organs of speech, "shall be brought low; the almond tree shall flourish," that is, the head shall become white with age; "the silver cord," that is, the spinal marrow, "shall be broken; the grasshopper," that is, the stomach, "shall be a burden; the golden bowl," the brain, "shall be broken; the pitcher," that is, the lungs, "broken at the fountain; and the wheel," the heart, "shall be broken at the cistern." A sad, but natural description, my brethren, of the infirmities of old age. A condition very unfit for the world and pleasure, for business and a court. "How long have I to live, that I should go up with the king unto Jerusalem? I am this day fourscore years old, and can I discern between good and evil? can thy servant taste what I eat or what I drink? can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women?"

2. The *infirmities* of old age are a second reason of the refusal of Barzillai. "Why should thy servant be a burden to my lord the king?" Certainly an old man ought to be treated with the greatest respect and veneration. The Scripture gives us a precept, which humanity, to say nothing of religion, should induce us to obey: "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man," Lev. xix. 32. What can claim our patient attention so much as a man stooping under the weight of age and infirmities? What duty can be more indispensable than that of rendering to the infirmities of old age such assistance as these old people once rendered to the helplessness of our infancy? Particularly, what can be more venerable than an old man, who has spent his youth in procuring those benefits to society which his old age now hardly suffers him to enjoy? What more just than to respect a soldier grown gray in his arms, whose venerable silver head has been preserved by miracle? Who more worthy of esteem than an ancient magistrate, whose life has been devoted to the felicity of the state? What more respectable than an old minister of the gospel, whose spirits have been exhausted in studying and preaching the truth? To people of this character the words of the Wise Man belong, "the hoary head is a crown of glory, being found in the way of righteousness," Prov. xvi. 31.

Whatever idea Barzillai formed of the equity and benevolence of David, he did justice to himself. He well knew that a man of eighty would be a burden to this good king. "Why should thy servant be a burden to my lord the king?" A man at this time of life too strikingly exhibits human infirmities to give pleasure in circles of company, where such morti-

fying ideas are either quite forgotten, or slightly remembered. The tokens of death, which an old mart carries about with him, excite reflections too dismal to contribute to the pleasure of a company, which endeavour to sweeten life by innocent recreations, or by others which concupiscence adds to those of religion. Involuntary complaints and sighs but ill accord with musical instruments and the vocal melody of gay assemblies. Pressing infirmities, continual fears and cares, the anticipated dying of a man of fourscore, ill assort with sumptuous tables. The last years of my life, all heavy, dull, and frozen, disconcert a festival celebrated by people full of fire, vivacity, and vigour. Barzillai felt his frailty, and, though he was fully convinced that David had a fund of goodness sufficient to bear with him, yet he would not abuse his politeness. "How long have I to live, that I should go up with the king to Jerusalem? Why should the king recompense me with such a reward? Why should thy servant be yet a burden to my lord the king?"

Wo be to him who has rendered worldly pleasures necessary to himself in old age. He will not find a David every where to offer them to him. Here, my brethren, I fear sinning against my own principles; I fear being accused of wanting such veneration for the aged as I just now said was their due; I fear I shall be taxed with despising the ancients, so worthy of our attention and regard. However, I must mention a few reflections tending to justify the conduct of Barzillai, and to unfold the spirit and sense of the text. I must make these reflections, too, for other reasons; in general for the benefit of this whole assembly; for your sakes, in particular, our aged hearers, that you may be induced, by the idea of a world that avoids you, to return to God, who opens his arms to receive you; for your sakes, also, young people, that you may be prevailed on to amass pleasures in your youth which will remain with you in old age. Wo be to him, I say, who renders worldly pleasures necessary to his old age! Happy, on the contrary, he who has laid up treasures for time to come! Happy the man who has prepared for himself pleasures for a time when the pleasures of the world are insipid, and when he himself is intolerable to those who enjoy them! Happy he who, instead of pining after the circles of the gay, and the great, has no other desire than that of making his court to the King of kings! Happy he who, instead of attempting to please himself with "the voices of singing men and singing women," delights himself with pious books and holy meditations! Happy the man who, when he becomes a burden to society, knows, like Barzillai, how to relish the pleasure of retirement and solitude! Happy he who, instead of pursuing a fleeting phantom of felicity and glory, knows how to direct his sighs to the bosom of that God in whom substantial glory and true felicity dwell, objects which never elude his search! Happy he whose eyes, however weakened by age, are not become too dim-sighted to see the gate of heaven! Happy the man whose faltering voice and feeble hands can yet address this prayer to God, and say with a prophet, "Cast me not off in the time of old age,

forsake me not when my strength faileth," Ps. lxxix. 9.

3. In fine, my brethren, Barzillai revolved in his mind *the nearness of old age to death*. This was the principal cause of his refusal. How long have I to live? These words imply a retrospect, how long have I lived? and a prospect, how long have I yet to live? "I am this day fourscore years old. Let thy servant, I pray thee, turn back again, that I may die in mine own city, and be buried by the grave of my father and my mother." This was a very reasonable request, my brethren, both in regard to the principle laid down, and the consequence derived from it. The principle is, that there is very little distance between old age and death. So little, that the good old man thought that there was but just time enough for him to pass over Jordan with the king, to return back, and to prepare for his funeral. "How long have I to live? I am this day fourscore years old. Let thy servant I pray thee, turn back again, that I may die in mine own city, and be buried by the grave of my father and my mother." Was ever principle better founded? How little is necessary to upset and break the frame of a man of this age? What is necessary? A vapour! A puff of wind!

Let us pause here a moment, my brethren, and let us not behold this spectacle without reflecting on the vanity of this life. A life of fourscore years appears to me a most abundant source of reflections on human frailty. True it is, that diseases which consume us, sudden deaths, which cry to us, "children of men, return," and which cut off numbers before they have lived half their days, fires, shipwrecks, assassinations, epidemical diseases, all these are very proper to teach us what a little account we ought to make of the present life. But, how frequently soever these sad accidents happen, we generally take care to harden ourselves against any apprehensions of danger from them, by considering them as extraordinary events, by hoping we shall escape them, and by flattering ourselves that we shall arrive at a good old age.

Well! you are to arrive at this good old age! But how many years will elapse before you do arrive at it? No, no, I repeat it again, nothing is more proper to discover our frailty. Should a thousand uncommon circumstances concur, should a vigorous constitution, a wise and cautious course of action, and a proper choice of diet, unite to preserve you to this age; should you escape water and fire, and thieves, and earthquakes, the frailty of infancy, the impetuosity of youth, and the infirmities of advanced age; should you by a kind of miracle arrive at the utmost limits prescribed to mankind, what then? Must you not presently die? The longest life seldom extends to a century. When a man has lived a hundred years in the world, he is the wonder of the universe, and his age alone renders him famous. The most obscure life becomes conspicuous, when it is drawn out to this length. It is spoken of as a prodigy, it is published in foreign countries; history records the man who had the extraordinary happiness to live to such an age, it writes his name with precision, and transmits his me-

mory to the most distant posterity; it says, at such a time, in such a place, lived a man who attained his hundredth year. After this, he must die. Old age is an incurable malady, and we are old at fourscore. O! shadow of life, how vain art thou! O grass! how little a time dost thou flourish in our field! O wise and instructive principle of Barzillai, there is very little distance between old age and death! "How long have I to live, that I should go up with the king to Jerusalem? I am this day fourscore years old, I pray thee let me return, that I may die in mine own city, and be buried by the grave of my father and my mother."

But if the principle of this good old man be well founded, the consequence derived from it is better founded, that is, that worldly affairs do not suit a man drawing near the end of his life; that when death is so near, a man should be wholly employed in preparing for it. If Barzillai had been a wise man through the whole course of his life, as we may suppose he had, he had not put off till now a preparation for this event, which is certainly the most serious and important of life. Even they who have lived the most regularly, and gone innocent through all the busy scenes of life, have long accounts to settle, and questions of the last importance to agitate, when they come to die. Every thing engages Barzillai to avoid disconcerting himself in his last moments, and to devote the few that remain to seriousness. Yes, every thing engages him to do so; and to confine myself to some reflections, the length of time he had lived, the cares of his mind at present, and the consolation arising from a meditation of death, all incline him to take leave of the king and the court, the pleasures and business of the world, tables richly served, and concerts well performed; all incline him to think of nothing but death.

1. *The long time he had lived.* If the account which God requires every man to give at death be terrible to all men, it should seem particularly so to old men. An old man is responsible for all the periods of his life, all the circumstances he has been in, and all the connexions he has formed. Then before a tribunal of impartial justice, will every instant of that long life, which is now at an end, be examined. Then will all the objects which time seems to have buried in eternal silence be recalled to view. Then sins of youth, which have left no trace on the mind, because the eagerness with which we proceed to the commission of new crimes, does not allow time to examine what we have committed, then will they all rise out of that sort of annihilation in which they seemed to be lost. *Fourscore years spent in offending thee, my God!*\* said a dying man. Too true in the mouth of him who said so! Too true in the mouths of most old men! A motive powerful enough to engage an old man to employ in penitential exercises every moment which the patience of God yet affords, and which, at his age, cannot be many.

2. The continual *cares* which exercised the mind of Barzillai, were a second spring of his action. We consider riches as protectors from

care; but in general they are the direct contrary. A rich man is obliged, as it were, to give himself wholly up to discover and defeat a general plot laid to engross his fortune. He must resist such as would violently force it from him. He must unmask others, who, under colour of justice, and supported by law, involve him in law suits to establish illegitimate claims. He must penetrate through a thousand pretences of generosity, disinterestedness, and friendship, into the soul of a false friend who aims at nothing but gratifying his own avarice or ambition. He must watch night and day to fix his riches, which, having wings, are always ready to fly away. How difficult is it for a soul, distracted with so many cares, to devote as much time to work out salvation, as a labour so important requires! How necessary is it to make up, by retirement and recollection in the last stages of life, what has been wanting in days of former hurry, and which are now no more! I recollect, and I apply to Barzillai, a saying of a captain, of whom historians have taken more care to record the wisdom than the name. It is said, that the saying struck the emperor Charles V., and confirmed him in his design of abdicating his crown, and retiring to a convent. The captain required the emperor to discharge him from service. Charles asked the reason. The prudent soldier replied, *Because there ought to be a pause between the hurry of life and the day of death.*

3. In fine, if Barzillai seemed to anticipate the dying day, by continually meditating on the subject, it was because the *meditation*, full of horror to most men, was full of charms to this good old man. When death is considered as accompanied with condemnatory sentences, formidable irreversible decrees, chains of darkness, insupportable tortures, smoke ascending up for ever and ever, blazing fires, remorse, despair, desperate exclamations, "mountains and rocks, fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?" Rev. x. 11; and vi. 16, 17. When we consider death, as so many men, alas! ought to consider it, and as by their continual irregularities they prepare it for consideration, no wonder the thought is disagreeable, and must be put far away. But when death is considered, as some of you, my brethren, ought to consider it, you, whose faults have been washed with penitential tears, and repaired by a real conversion, your view of death is more delightful, and affords you more pleasure than the tables of the great, the amusements of a court, and the most melodious concerts could procure. Then these expressions, in appearance so mortifying, *let me return, let me die*, are fraught with happiness.

*Let me die*, that I may be freed from the many infirmities, and diseases, and pains, to which my frail body is exposed!

*Let me die*, that I may get rid of the misfortunes, the treachery, the perfidy, the numerous plots and plans which are always in agitation against me, in a society of mankind!

*Let me die*, and let me no more see truth persecuted and innocence sacrificed to iniquity!

\* Mr. de Montausier. See the close of his funeral oration, by Flechier.

*Let me die*, let all my doubts and darkness vanish, let me surmount all my difficulties, and let all the clouds that hide interesting objects from me disappear! Let me go to know as I am known, and let me put off this body of sin! Let me leave a world in which, I cannot live without offending God! Let me kindle the fire of my love at the altar of the love of God!

*Let me die*, and leave this untoward company of men, who seem almost all to have taken counsel against the Lord, and against his anointed, to subvert his throne, and were it possible, to deprive him of the government of the world!

*Let me die*, that I may form intimate connexions with happy spirits, and that I may enjoy that close union with them, that communion of ideas, that conformity of sentiments, which render heaven so delightful.

*Let me die*, that I may behold the patriarchs and the prophets who acquired in the church an everlasting reputation, and on whose heads God has already placed the crowns which he promised to their faith and obedience!

*Let me die*, that I may hold communion with the happy God! I feel a void within me, which none but he can fill; I feel desires elevating me to his throne; I feel "my soul longing and fainting, my heart and my flesh crying out," when I think of presenting myself before him, Ps. lxxxiv. 2. Does my heart say, "Seek his face? Thy face O Lord will I seek," Ps. xxvii. 8. And, as in this vale of tears thou art always hidden, I will seek thee in another economy!

A meditation on death, such as this, has charms unknown to the world; but to you, my brethren, they are not unknown. The prospect of dying is better to Barzillai than all the pleasures of a court. A tomb appears more desirable to him than a royal palace, "Let me turn back, that I may die, and be buried by the grave of my father and my mother!" May we all by a holy life prepare for such a death! God grant us grace to do so! To him be honour and glory for ever! Amen.

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## SERMON XLIX.

### CHRISTIAN CONVERSATION.

COLOSSIANS IV. 6.

*Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt.*

It is a complaint, as old as the study of human nature, that mankind are prone to excess, that they never observe a just mean; that in practising one virtue, they neglect another; that in avoiding one vice, they run into an opposite; in a word, men usually go into extremes. This general maxim, which is exemplified in almost all the actions of men, is particularly remarkable in those familiar conversations, which religion allows, which society renders necessary, and for which God seems to have purposely formed us. Observe the conduct of men in this article, you will find every where excesses and extremes. On the one hand, you will see rude and uncivil people putting

on in the most innocent companies austere looks, ever declaiming against the manners of the world, exclaiming against every body, affecting to be offended with every thing, and converting every company into a court of justice, resounding with sentences against the guilty. On the other hand, you will find people, under pretence of avoiding this extreme, exceeding the bounds of religion, and imagining that, in order to please in conversation, Christianity must be laid aside, and each expression must have an air sordid and vicious.

Nothing is so rare as a wise union of gravity and gentility, piety and sweetness of manners; a disposition that engages us to preserve inviolable the laws of religion without injuring the rights of society, and to do justice to society without violating religion.

However, it is this just medium to which we are called, without which our conversation must be criminal, and which St. Paul teaches us in the text: "Let your speech be always with grace seasoned with salt." "Let your speech be seasoned with salt;" here the rights of religion are preserved, this is the lively of the gospel, the character of Christianity. "Let your speech be always with grace;" here the rights of society are asserted, this is the innocent pleasure which Jesus Christ allows us; this is the sweetness of manners, which, far from opposing, he expressly enjoins us to acquire and practise. The title of my discourse then, shall be, *The art of speaking*; and on this subject we will treat:—*The art of speaking*, not according to the rules of grammar, not in the sense used in polite academies, according to rules of worldly good breeding, an art too insignificant to be taught in this pulpit; but *the art of speaking* according to the laws of the gospel, according to the precepts of Jesus Christ, the Christian art of speaking.

May God, who has called us to treat of this important subject, enable us to treat of it properly! May he so direct us, that this discourse may serve us both for instruction and example! May our language be "seasoned with salt and grace;" with *salt*, that it may be grave and agreeable to the majesty of this place, and to the purity of our ministry; and with *grace*, that we may acquire your attention, and insinuate into your hearts! Amen!

*Salt* must be the first seasoning of our conversation. It is hardly necessary to observe, that this term is metaphorical, and put for purity, of which salt is a symbol. The reason of this metaphor is clear; it is taken from the use of salt, which preserves the flesh of animals from putrefaction. For this purpose it was used in sacrifices, according to the words of Jesus Christ, "Every sacrifice shall be salted with salt." "Let your speech be seasoned with salt," that is, never let your lips utter any discourse which does not savour of the respect you have for the God you adore, the religion you profess, and the Christian name which you have the honour to bear. This is, in substance, the first law of conversation. Let us be more particular.

The spirit of this maxim may be expressed in five rules. The apostle recommends a seasoning of piety, a seasoning of chastity, a seasoning of charity, a seasoning of severity, and



a seasoning of solidity. Consequently he condemns five usual imperfections of conversation. 1. Oaths. 2. Obscene language. 3. Slander. 4. Extravagant complaisance. 5. Futility.— Either I am deceived, my brethren, or every person in this auditory needs instruction in some one of these articles.

1. The first vice of conversation, which the apostle condemns, is *swearing*. The first seasoning, which he recommends to us, is the salt of *piety*. Sad necessity for a Christian preacher, preaching to a Christian audience! Sad necessity, indeed, obliged to prove that blasphemy ought to be banished from conversation! however, it is indispensably necessary to prove this, for nothing is so common among some called Christians as this detestable vice. It is the effect of two principles, the first is a brutal madness, and the other is a most false and fanciful idea of superior understanding and free and easy behaviour.

It is brutal madness that puts some people on swearing. Our language seems too poor to express this disposition, and the words *brutality* and *madness* are too vague to describe the spirit of such as are guilty of this crime. These (shall I call them men or brute beasts?) cannot be agitated with the least passion, without uttering the most execrable imprecations.— Froward souls, who cannot endure the least control without attacking God himself, taxing him with cruelty and injustice, disputing with him the government of the world, and, not being able to subvert his throne, assaulting him with murmurings and blasphemies. Certainly nothing can be so opposite to this *salt* of conversation as this abominable excess. They who practise it ought to be secluded from Christian societies, yea, to be banished even from worldly companies. Thus the Supreme Lawgiver, able to save and to destroy, has determined. Read the twenty-fourth of Leviticus, “The son of an Israelitish woman blasphemed the name of the Lord,” ver. 11, &c. At this news all Israel trembled with horror. The prudent Moses paused, and consulted God himself what to do in this new and unheard-of case. The oracle informed him in these words, “bring forth him that hath cursed without the camp, and let all that heard him lay their hands upon his head, and let all the congregation stone him. And thou, Moses, shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, Whosoever curseth his God shall bear his sin, and he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him.” Have you attended to this sentence? It not only regards the blasphemer, it regards all that hear him. If you be sincere members of the congregation of Israel, you ought, though not to stone the blasphemer, yet to declare your abhorrence of his conduct, and, if he remain incorrigible, to endeavour to rid society of such a monster.

Human legislators have treated such people with the utmost rigour. The emperor Justinian condemned blasphemers to death.\* Some have bored their tongues.† Others have drowned them.‡ Others have branded them

with a red hot iron in the forehead,\* intending, by fixing this mark of infamy in a part so visible, to guard people against keeping company with a blasphemer. It was Lewis the ninth, a king of France, who was the author of this law. I cannot help relating the words of this prince in justification of the severity of the law. A man of rank in the kingdom having uttered blasphemy, great intercession was made for his pardon; but the king's answer was this, “I would submit,” said he, “to be burnt in the forehead myself, if by enduring the pain I could purify my kingdom from blasphemy.”

We affirmed, farther, that some people habituated themselves to swearing from false notions of glory and freedom of conversation. A man sets up for a wit in conversation, he pretends to conciliate the esteem of his company, and affects to put on the air of a man of the world, free from the stiffness of pedants. (This is not an invention of mine, this is a natural portrait, my brethren, and some of you gave me the original.) This man, I say, having taken into his head this design, and not being able to derive means of succeeding from his genius, or education, calls in the aid of oaths; of these he keeps various forms, and applies them instead of reasons, having the folly to imagine that an oath artfully placed at the end of a period renders it more expressive and polite; and, judging of the taste of his hearers by his own, inwardly applauds himself, and wonders what heart can resist the power of his eloquence. An elocution mean and contemptible, and fitter for an unbridled soldiery than for those that command them. An elocution directly opposite to the words of my text, “Let your speech be seasoned with salt.” Never let the name of God go out of your lips without exciting such sentiments of veneration in your minds as are due to that sacred name. Never speak of the attributes of God in conversation without recollecting the Majesty of that Being to whom they belong. “Accustom not thy mouth to swearing,” said the wise son of Sirach, “neither use thyself to the naming of the Holy One; for he that nameth God continually shall not be faultless,” Eccl. xxii. 9, 10. The first vice of conversation to be avoided is swearing and blasphemy, the first seasoning of conversation is piety.

2. The apostle prescribes us a seasoning of *chastity*. Against this duty there are some direct and some oblique attacks. Direct violaters of this law are those nauseous mouths, which cannot open without putting modesty to the blush, by uttering language too offensive to be repeated in this sacred assembly, yea, too filthy to be mentioned any where without breaking the laws of worldly decency. We are not surprised that people without taste, and without education, that a libertine who makes a trade of debauchery, and who usually haunt houses of infamy, should adopt this style; but that Christian women, who profess to respect virtue, that they should suffer their ears to be defiled with such discourse, that they should make parties at entertainments and at cards with such

\* Constitut. lxxi. a. lxxvi. † Beyerline. Theatr. vit. human tom. iii. p. 139. ‡ Ibid.

\* Paul, Emil. de gest. Franc. fol. 164. p. 2. edit. de Vascocean 1576.

people, and so discover that they like to have their ears tickled with such conversation, is really astonishing. We repeat it again, decorum and worldly decency are sufficient to inspire us with horror for this practice. And shall the maxims of religion affect us less than human rules? "Fornication and all uncleanness," said St. Paul, "let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints," Eph. v. 3.

Barefaced immodest discourse is not the most dangerous, for it ought to be then least tolerated, because it is then most execrable when it is uttered equivocally. There is an art of disguising obscenity, and of conveying poison the most fatally, by communicating it in preparations the most subtle and refined. Men in general choose rather to appear virtuous than to be so, and, to accommodate such people, there is an art of introducing vice under coverings so thick as to seem to respect the modesty of the company, and yet so thin as fully to expose it. A fine and delicate allusion, a lively and original tour of expression, an ingenious equivocation, a double meaning, an arch look, an affected gravity, these are the dangerous veils, these are the instruments that wound us when we are off our guard. For what can you say to a man who behaves in this manner? If you suffer his airs to pass without censure, he will glory in your indulgence, and take your silence for approbation. If, on the other hand, you remonstrate, he will tax you only with his own crime; he will tell you that your ear is guilty, his language is innocent; that immodesty is in your heart, not in his expressions; and that of two senses to which his language is applicable, you have adopted the immodest, when you ought to have taken the chaste meaning.

If to talk in this manner be to make an offering of the tongue to the enemy of our salvation, certainly to lend an ear to such conversation, and by certain expressive smiles to promise a favourable attention to it, is to dedicate the ear to him. And do not deceive yourselves, you will never be able to persuade such as know the human heart, that you love virtue, while you take pleasure in hearing conversation injurious to virtue. You will be told, and with great reason, that you are a friend to nothing but the appearance of it. Were virtue itself the object of your esteem, you would not keep company with such as wound it. But by your indulgence of such people, you give us great reason to presume, that were not human laws and worldly decency in your way, you would give yourself up to the practice of vice; for, in spite of these, you take pleasure in beholding it when appearances are saved, and even disguise it yourself under specious pretences.

Farther, we include in our notion of immodest conversation, licentious songs, which lawless custom has rendered too familiar; songs which, under a pretence of gratifying a passion for vocal and instrumental music, disseminate a thousand loose, not to say lascivious maxims, excite a thousand irregular emotions, and cherish many criminal passions. Attend to this article of our discourse, ye parents, who idolize your children, children whom ye ought to dedicate to Jesus Christ, but whom ye lead

into a licentiousness that is a disgrace to your families. Music is an art criminal or innocent according to the use made of it. Those pious men whom the holy Scriptures propose to us for models, did not deny themselves the enjoyment of it; but they applied it to proper subjects. St. Paul even recommends it. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord," Col. iii. 16. Thus also a prophet formerly applied both his voice and his instrument to celebrate the praises of his Creator. "Awake up, my glory, awake psaltery and harp, I myself will awake early. I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people; I will sing unto thee among the nations. Sing aloud unto God our strength; make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob. Take a psalm, and bring hither the timbrel, the pleasant harp, with the psaltery," Ps. lvii. 8, 9; and lxxxii. 1, 2, &c. Thus a christian musician ought to sing; but never, never should his mouth utter licentious verses. An unchaste tongue is a sad sign of a depraved heart. A woman who paints vice in colours so agreeable, proves, that she considers it in a very amiable light, and has no objection to the practice of it. For my part, I shall never be able to persuade myself that any consecrate their bodies to the temples of the Holy Ghost, who, to use an expression of St. Paul, make their tongues "members of an harlot," 1 Cor. vi. 15.

Slander and calumny are a third defect of conversation, and the third law which our apostle imposes on us in a seasoning of charity. I freely acknowledge, my brethren, that I cannot enter on this article without losing that moderation of temper, which is necessary to a preacher who would treat of the subject properly. Whether it be weakness of mind, or self-interest, or whether it be the enormous lengths to which you practise this vice in this place, too much practised, alas, every where! or whatever be the cause, I can scarcely retain my temper; for I feel myself at once ready to confound instruction with reproof. Is there any character among you so respectable, any intention so innocent, any conduct so irreproachable, any piety so conspicuous, as to escape the cruelty of your calumniating conversations?

What shall I say to you, my brethren? I wish I knew how to collect the substance of many sermons into this one article: I would endeavour to exhibit calumny in one small portrait, at which you might continually look, and which might perpetually inspire you with holy horror.

1. Consider this vice in its source. Sometimes it proceeds from littleness of mind, for there are people who cannot converse, they neither understand religion nor government, arts nor sciences, and their conversation would languish and die away, were not the void filled up with a detail of the real imperfections of their neighbours, or of others, which the most cruel malignity ascribes to them, and the number of these always far surpasses that of real defects. Sometimes it comes from pride. People wish to be superior to their neighbours, and not having the noble courage to rise above

them by the practice of more virtue, they endeavour to sink them by slanderous conversation. Sometimes envy is the source. They are persons who place their happiness in the misery of others. A neighbour's prosperity shocks them, his reputation wounds them, and his rest is their torment. Sometimes a guilty conscience generates slander. Bad men fear lest the public eye should discover and fix on their own crimes, and they try to prevent this misfortune by artfully turning the attention of spectators from themselves to the vices of their fellow-citizens.

2. Consider the fatal *consequences* of slander. Judge of the hearts of others by your own. What makes one man invent a calumny, induces another to receive and publish it. As soon as ever the voice of slander is heard, a thousand echoes repeat it, and publish vices which your want of charity, or excess of injustice, attributed to your neighbour. What renders this the more deplorable is the usual readiness of mankind to give credit to calumny; a readiness on the one part to utter calumny, and on the other to believe it, overwhelm a neighbour with all the misery of defamation.

3. Consider the *duties* which they who commit this crime bind themselves to perform; duties so hard, that some would rather die than perform them, and yet duties so indispensable, that no man can expect either favour or forgiveness who neglects the discharge of them. The first law we impose on a man who has unjustly acquired the property of a neighbour, is to restore it. The first law we impose on a man who has injured the reputation of another, is to repair it. There is a restitution of honour as well as of fortune. Which of you, now, who has dealt in slander, dare form the just and generous resolution of going from house to house to publish his retractions? Who is there among you, that by committing this sin does not hazard all his own reputation?

4. Consider how extremely opposite this sin is to the *law of charity*. You know the whole religion of Jesus Christ tends to love. The precepts he gave, the doctrines he taught, the worship he prescribed, the ordinances he instituted, the whole gospel is the breath of love. But what can be more incompatible with love than slander! consequently who deserves less the name of Christian than a slanderer?

5. Consider how many different *forms* calumny assumes. In general all the world agree it is one of the most hateful vices: yet it is curious to see how persons who declaim the most loudly against this crime, practise it themselves. All the world condemn it, and all the world slide into the practice of it. The reputation of our neighbour is not only injured by tales studied and set, but an air, a smile, a look, an affected abruptness, even silence, are envenomed darts shot at the same mark, and it will be impossible for us to avoid falling into the temptation of committing this crime, unless we keep a perpetual watch.

6. Consider the various *illusions*, and numberless *pretexts*, of which people avail themselves, in order to conceal from themselves the turpitude of this crime. One pretends he said nothing but the truth; as if charity did not oblige us to conceal the real vices of a neigh-

bour, as well as not to attribute to him fanciful ones. Another justifies his conduct by pretending he is animated not by hatred, but by equity; as if God had appointed every individual to exercise vengeance, and to be an executioner of his judgments; as if, supposing the allegation true, a man does not sin against his own principles (for he pretends equity) when he shows his neighbour in an unfavourable point of view, by publishing his imperfections and concealing his virtues. Another excuses himself by saying, that as the affair was public he might surely be permitted to mention it; as if charity was never violated except by discovering unknown vices; as if men were not forbidden to relish that malicious pleasure which arises from talking over the known imperfections of their neighbours.

7. Consider, *into what an unhappy situation calumny puts an innocent person, who wishes to avoid it*. What must a man do to preclude or to put down a calumny? Cherish good humour, paint pleasure in your face, endeavour by your pleasing deportment to communicate happiness to all about you; be, if I may speak so, the life and soul of society, and it will be said, you are not solid, you have the unworthy ambition of becoming the amusement of mankind. Put on an austere air, engrave on your countenance, if I may speak thus, the great truths that fill your soul, and you will be taxed with pharisaism and hypocrisy; it will be said, that you put on a fair outside to render yourself venerable, but that under all this appearance very likely you conceal an impious irreligious heart. Take a middle way, regulate your conduct by times and places, "weep with them that weep, and rejoice with them that rejoice," and you will be accused of lukewarmness. Pick your company, confine yourself to a small circle, make it a law to speak freely only to a few select friends who will bear with your weaknesses, and who know your good qualities, and you will be accused of pride and arrogance; it will be said, that you think the rest of mankind unworthy of your company, and that you pretend wisdom and taste are excluded from all societies, except such as you deign to frequent. Go every where, and in a spirit of the utmost condescension converse with every individual of mankind, and it will be said you are unsteady, a city, a province cannot satisfy you, you lay all the universe under contribution, and oblige the whole world to try to satiate your unbounded love of pleasure.

In fine, consider what *punishment* the Holy Spirit has denounced against calumny, and in what class of mankind he has placed slanderers. You, who by a prejudice, which is too general a rule of judging, imagine you possess all virtues, because you are free from one vice, to use the language of a modern author,\* you, who poison the reputation of a neighbour in company, and endeavour thus to avenge yourself on him for the pain which his virtues give you, in what list has St. Paul put you? He has classed you with misers, idolaters, debauchees, and adulterers, "If any man be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, with such a one keep no company, no not to eat,"

\* Flechier.

"Neither fornicators nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor *revilers* (this is your place,) nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God," 1 Cor. v. 11, and vi. 9. But we judge of vice and virtue, not according to the rules laid down in the gospel, but according to such as prevail in the world. It is not Jesus Christ, it is the world, that is our sovereign. We blush at what they censure, and we feel no remorse at committing what they think fit to tolerate. Ah! why are not legislators more indulgent when they condemn to racks and gibbets a wretch whom excess of hunger impelled to steal our property; why do they not inflict one part of their rigour on him, who, in cold blood, and with infernal malice, robs us of our reputation and honour! *Let your speech be seasoned with the salt of charity.*

Fourthly, The apostle intends to inspire us with a seasoning of *severity*, and to banish from our conversations a fourth vice, which we have named extravagant complaisance. When is complaisance extravagant? Are we going to pass encomiums on such untoward spirits as disturb all mankind: on such superstitious martyrs of truth and virtue as render themselves impertinent by affecting regularity, such as represent piety under an appearance so frightful that it cannot be taken for piety, and give it an air so hideous that it is impossible to love it? No, my brethren. In this article we deplore a frailty too common among the best Christians. We fall into a circle of bad company, we hear them blaspheme the name of God, attack religion, profane the most holy mysteries, and calumniate innocence. We tremble at this conversation, and from the bottom of our souls detest it; our spirit is stirred in us, we are like St. Paul, when he saw the Athenian idolatry, but we conceal our pious indignation, we dare not openly avow it, we even embolden the criminal by infirmity, though not by inclination.

A Christian ought to know how to unfurl the banner of Jesus Christ; and as, in times of persecution, a man was reputed ashamed of his faith, and guilty of idolatry by silence and neutrality; as the casting of a single grain of incense on the altar of an idol was accounted an act of apostacy, so when the emissaries of vice attack religion on the practical side, a man ought to say, I am a Christian; he ought not to be ashamed of the gospel of Christ; he ought to restrain the infidel, repress the libertine, resist the calumniator.

Finally, perpetual voids are a fifth defect of conversation, and a fifth duty prescribed to us is a seasoning of *solidity*. It is Jesus Christ himself who furnishes us with this reflection, by informing us in the gospel, that we must give an account for "every idle word." In order to profit by this declaration we must understand it, and in order to understand it, we must avoid two extremes equally opposite to the design of the Saviour of the world, we must neither give the passage a sense too rigorous nor too lax.

First, the words of Jesus Christ must not be taken in a sense too rigorous. He does not mean by "idle words" those discourses, of

which we do not immediately perceive the utility, but which, however, are unavoidable in an intercourse with mankind. There are two ways of proving that our Saviour had not in view this sort of conversation.

1. It should seem, by examining the original, that the passage ought to be rendered not *idle* words, "but *wicked* words." Many expositors adopt this sense, and affirm, that the Greek word here used, answers to a Hebrew word, which signifies both *useless* and *wicked*.\* We are certain the writers of the New Testament frequently use Greek words in a Hebrew sense. As then the Hebrew word signifies *wicked* and *useless*, these expositors thought they had a right to translate the word *wicked*, not *idle*. Moreover, they add, that the original Greek word has this meaning, and is frequently taken in an active sense (forgive this technical term,) and not always in a passive, in good authors; that is, it does not mean only that which is not directed to any good end, but that which actually defeats a good design. Thus Cicero, speaking of the opponents of the Stoics, says, they accuse the doctrine of their philosophers concerning fate, of being an *idle* doctrine; he uses the same term that is used in the passage we are considering, and he means, by an *idle* doctrine, a doctrine which encourages idleness. For, say the enemies of the Stoics, if a blind fate produces our virtues and vices, all our efforts are useless, and we may waste our lives in idleness. By "idle words," then, Jesus Christ means to forbid, not words merely useless, but words which have a bad tendency, as those had which attributed the miracles of Christ to magic.

There is a second way of restraining the meaning of Jesus Christ. Let us retain the term *idle*, used in our version, and let us explain this passage as we explain all other passages in Scripture which forbid idleness. When the Scripture enjoins us to labour, does it mean that we should be always at work! When it forbids us to be idle, does it mean to disallow relaxation and rest! Does it blame an honest recreation! No. It condemns only such as consume all their life in inaction. Thus here, Jesus Christ, by condemning *idle words*, does not mean those innocent conversations which we have observed are necessary, but he means such as are made up of nothing but vanity and unprofitableness.

Let us, however, carefully avoid giving a loose sense to the words of Jesus Christ. He allows vague and superficial conversation only as he allows idleness. He means that, in general, our conversation should turn on grave and useful subjects.

We generally persuade ourselves that churches and closets are the only places where we ought to employ ourselves about solid subjects. Let us undeceive ourselves. We ought to attend to such subjects even while we are in pursuit of pleasure. For example, are we returning from a sermon! Why not entertain one another with the subjects we have been hearing? Why not endeavour to imprint on one another's memories the truths that have been proved, and to impress on one another's

\* Le Clerc in Hammond on Matt. xii. 26.

hearts such precepts as have been enforced? Have we been visiting a dying person? Why not make such reflections as naturally occur on such occasions the matter of our conversation? Why not embrace such a fair opportunity of speaking on the vanity of life, the uncertainty of worldly enjoyments, and the happiness of a pious departure to rest? Have we been reading a good book? Why not converse with our companions on the information we have derived from it? Are we ministers of religion? Surely there is great propriety in entertaining our friends with the subjects which we teach in public, and investigate in our studies. Why should we not apply them to the benefit of such as surround us? Why not endeavour to subdue that resistance which the wretched hearts of mankind make to the truths of religion? Were these rules observed, each company would become a school of instruction, the more useful because the more natural and easy, and knowledge and virtue would be mutually cherished.

What! say some, would you prohibit all the pleasure of life? Must we never open our mouths but to utter sententious discourses? Would you condemn us to eternal melancholy? Ah! this is a gross error. Pleasure is incompatible with piety; Is it? What! is piety so offensive to you that it spoils all your pleasure if it only makes its appearance?

After all, what pleasure can those vain conversations afford, which consume the greatest part of life? Had we been always sequestered from the rest of mankind, perhaps we might imagine that the confused noise made by a company of talkers about nothing might give pleasure; but who that has seen the world can fall into this error? What! superficial chat about the most common appearances of nature! Tiresome tittle tattle about the sun and the rain! Ill-timed visits, perpetually returning, always a burden to those who pay, and to those who receive them! Are these the pleasures which you prefer before a sensible useful conversation! Puerile mistake! It is the solid sense and utility of a conversation that make the pleasure of it. "Let your speech be always seasoned with salt."

Let us proceed to examine the other term, *grace*. St. Paul says, "Let your speech be always with grace." We have before intimated, that the apostle means by the word *grace*, agreeableness, gracefulness. The word *grace*, we allow, must often be taken in Scripture in a very different sense; but two reasons determine us to take it here in this sense. 1. The nature of the thing. It was natural for the apostle, after he had spoken of what sanctifies conversation, to speak of what renders it insinuating. 2. The word is often taken in this sense in Scripture. Thus the Wise Man says, "Grace is deceitful, and beauty is vain," Prov. xxxi. 30. And thus the Psalmist, "Grace is poured into thy lips," Ps. xlv. 2.

\* Our author follows the reading of his own French version in Prov. xxxi. 30. "La grace trompe, et la beauté s'évanouit." Our translation reads, "Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain;" but critics render the original word, *gratia*, graciousness, vetustas, morum, sermonum, actionum, gestum. So that Mr. S. may be justified in giving this sense to the text. In the same sense, it would seem, is that famous passage in John i. 17, "grace and truth came

But what is this *grace*? I think we must have observed, that the disagreeableness of conversation generally proceeds from one of these five causes; either from extravagant raillery, or from proud decisions, or from bitter disputes, or from invincible obstinacy, or from indiscreet questions. Against these five vices we oppose five virtues, or to use the language of the text, five sorts of *graces*, which render conversation charming: the grace of complaisance, the grace of humility, the grace of moderation, the grace of docility, and the grace of discretion. These we call the *graces*, the embellishments of conversation.

1. *Extravagant raillery* generally poisons conversation. Who can bear to be turned into ridicule? Who likes to have his own foibles exposed? Who would choose to be the subject of the wit of a company, especially when, not being able to return wit for wit, a man is obliged tacitly to own himself a genius inferior to those who attack him? Abstract reasonings are not necessary to make this article plain. We appeal only to the feelings of such as make a trade of rallying others. How is it, pray, that you cannot bear to be rallied in your turn? Whence that gloomy silence? How is it, that your vivacity is extinct, and your spirits damped, unless you, as well as the rest of mankind, love to be respected?

We would substitute *complaisance* in the place of extravagant raillery. Instead of making a little genius feel his insignificance, we should stoop to his size. Courtiers understand this art well, and they know as well when to make use of it, either to obtain the esteem of a superior, or to acquire the friendship of an inferior, or an equal. See with what address they show you to yourselves by your bright sides. Observe with what dexterity they entertain you with what you are pleased and interested in. And shall Christian charity yield to worldly politeness?

2. A second vice that poisons conversation is *proud decision*. What can be more intolerable than a man who stalks into company as a genius of the first order, who lays down his own infallibility as a first principle, who delivers out his nostrums as infallible oracles, as the decisions of a judicature so high that it would be criminal to appeal from them? What aggravates the injustice of this character is, that these peremptory people are generally the most ignorant; and that their ignorance is the cause of their positiveness. A little ignorant genius, who has never gone to the bottom of any one article of science, who knows neither the objections that lie against a subject, nor the arguments that support it, who knows nothing but the surface of any thing, quickly fancies that he perfectly comprehends, and can fully ascertain, the subject of his attention. He does not know what it is to doubt, and he pities those who do. On the contrary, a man of real knowledge knows so well by his own experience the weakness of the human mind, and so thoroughly understands his own defects, that he keeps in him-

by Jesus Christ," to be taken. *Grace* signifies here affability, sweetness of deportment, propriety of behaviour, conformity between the good news he brought, and the graceful manner in which he delivered the message.

self a counterpoise for pride; he proposes his opinions only as problems to be examined, and not as decisions to be obeyed. This is what we call the *grace* of humility. A man ought to submit his judgment to the discussion of those to whom he proposes it; he should allow every one a liberty of thinking for himself, and presuppose, that if he has reason, so have others; that if he has learning others have it too; that if he has meditated on a subject, so have others. Even subjects, of the truth of which we are most fully persuaded, ought to be so proposed as to convince people that it is a love of truth, and not a high conceit of ourselves, that makes us speak, and thus we should exemplify the rule laid down by an apostle, "Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves," Phil. ii. 3.

3. *A bitter spirit of disputing* is a third vice of conversation. Yield instantly, yield even when you have reason on your side, rest satisfied with knowing the truth yourself, when they to whom you propose it wilfully shut their eyes against it. The reason of this maxim is this: When a man refuses to admit a proposition sufficiently demonstrated, "the more you press him, the farther he will recede from you. The principle that induces him to cavil is pride, and not weakness of capacity; if you persist in showing him the truth, you will irritate his pride by confounding it; whereas, if you give his passion time to cool and subside, perhaps he will return of himself and renounce his error.

St. Paul was an excellent model of this *grace of moderation*, "unto Jews he became as a Jew, to them that were without law as without law, all things to all men," 1 Cor. ix. 20. Why? was it idleness or cowardice? Neither; for never was servant more zealous for the interest of his master, never did soldier fight with more courage for his prince. It was owing to his moderation and charity. Unto the Jews I became as a Jew, "that I might gain the Jews;" to them that are without law as without law, "that I might by all means save some."

4. *Obstinacy* is incompatible with the *grace of docility*, a necessary ingredient in agreeable conversation. To persist in maintaining a proposition because we have advanced it, to choose rather to heap up one absurdity upon another than to give up the first, to be deceived a thousand times rather than to say once, I am mistaken; what can be more contrary to good manners in conversation than these dispositions? It is a high enjoyment to open one's eyes to the light when it rises on us, and to testify by a sincere recantation that we proposed our opinions rather with a desire to be instructed in what we did not know, than to display our abilities in what we did understand.

Finally, *indiscreet questions* are a fifth pest of conversation; questions which put a man's mind upon the rack, and reduce him to the painful dilemma either of not answering, or of betraying his secrets. Too much eagerness to pry into other men's concerns is frequently more intolerable than indifference; and to determine, in spite of a man, to be his confidant,

is to discover more indiscreet curiosity than Christian charity. St. Paul reproveth the widows of his time for this vice, and in them all succeeding Christians. "Younger widows learn to be idle, and not only idle, but tattlers also, and busy bodies, speaking things which they ought not," 1 Tim. v. 11. 13. The *grace* opposite to this vice is *discretion*.

My brethren, the truths you have been hearing are of the number of those to which in general the least attention is paid. Few people have ideas of piety so refined as to include the duties which we have been inculcating. Few people put into the list of their sins to be repented of, the vices we have been reprovng, few therefore are concerned about them. Yet there are many motives to engage us to use extreme caution in our conversations. I will just mention a few.

First, vices of conversation are daily sins; they are repeated till they form a habit; by slow degrees they impair and destroy conscience; and in a manner the more dangerous, because the process is imperceptible, and because little or no pains are taken to prevent it. Great crimes have a character of horror, which throws us off at a distance. If we happen to be surprised into a commission of them through our own weakness, the soul is terrified, repentance instantly follows, and repetition is not very common: but in the case before us, sin makes some progress every day, every day the enemy of our salvation obtains some advantages over us, every day renders more difficult and impracticable the great work, for which we were created.

Secondly, by practising these vices of conversation we give great ground of suspicion to others, and we ought to be persuaded ourselves, that our hearts are extremely depraved. It is in vain to pretend to exculpate ourselves by pretending that these are only words, that words are but air, empty sounds without effect. No, says Jesus Christ, "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," Matt. xii. 34. Hence this saying of St. Chrysostom, *The tongue often blushes to speak what the heart dictates; but the heart having no witness, gives itself up to irregular passion. It is only owing to a superfluity of depravity within, that the tongue renders it visible.\** If then our reputation be dear to us, if we have at heart the edification of our neighbours, if we wish to assure our hearts that we are upright in the sight of God, who continually sees and thoroughly knows us, let our conversation be a constant and irreproachable witness.

Lastly, the judgment of God should be a prevalent motive with us. You have heard it from the mouth of Jesus Christ. You will be required to "give an account in the day of judgment for every idle word. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned," Matt. xii. 36, 37. We judge of our conversations only by the impressions they make on our minds, and as they seem to us only as sounds lost in the air, we persuade ourselves they cannot materially affect our eternal state. But let us believe

\* Chrysostom, tom. i. Hom. 43. in Matth.

eternal truth; "by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." Dreadful thought! For which of us can recollect all the vain words he has uttered the last ten years? They are gone along with the revolutions of time, they expired the moment they were born. Yet they are all, all registered in a faithful memory, they are all, all written in a book; they will be all one day brought to our remembrance, they will be weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, and will contribute in that day to fix our eternal doom. "O Lord! enter not into judgment with thy servant! O God! cleanse thou me from secret faults;" Ps. cxliii. 2, and xix. 13. These are three motives to animate us to practise the duty under consideration. We will add three rules, to help us the more easily to discharge it.

1. If we would learn to season our conversation, we must choose our company. This is often disputed; however, we affirm, conformity of manners is the bond of this commerce. Seldom does a man pass his life with a slanderer without calumniating. Few people keep company with libertines unless they be profligate themselves. Example carries us away in spite of ourselves. A pagan poet advanced this maxim, and St. Paul, by quoting, has consecrated it. "Evil communications corrupt good manners," 1 Cor. xv. 33. Let us begin a reformation of our conversation by selecting our companies. Let us break with the enemies of God. Let us dread the contagion of poison, and avoid the manufacturers of it. As there is no sinner so obstinate as not to be moved by an intercourse with good men, so there is no virtue so well established as not to be endangered by an intimacy with the wicked.

2. A second great secret in conversation is the art of silence. To talk a great deal, and to reflect on all that is said, are two things incompatible, and certainly we cannot speak wisely, if we speak without reflection. The Book of Ecclesiasticus advises us to "make a door and a bar for the mouth," chap. xxviii. 25. "The fool," said the Wise Man, "is full of words," Eccles. x. 14. "I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue. I will keep my mouth with a bridle." An ancient hermit abused this maxim; for, after he had heard the first verse of the thirty-ninth psalm, he refused to hear the second, saying, the first was lesson sufficient for him. The reader of this verse to him asked him many years after whether he had learnt to reduce this lesson to practice. Nineteen years, replied the hermit, have I been trying, and have hardly attained the practice. But there was some reason in the conduct of this hermit, though he carried the matter to excess. In order to speak well, we must speak but little, remembering always the maxim of St. James, "If any man seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, this man's religion is vain," chap. i. 26.

In fine, the great rule to govern the tongue is to govern the heart. "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life," Prov. iv. 23. In vain do you strive to prevent effects, unless you remove the cause. It is in

vain to purify the streams, while the spring continues polluted. It is in vain to attempt a few forced actions, like those mentioned by the psalmist, "whose words were softer than oil, when war was in their heart," Ps. lv. 21. It is extremely difficult to act long under constraint. The heart insensibly guides the tongue. Would you avoid rash judging, obscenity, calumny, fawning, all the vices of which we have shown the enormity, begin with your own heart. There establish the love of God. Love piety, respect virtue, and talk as you will, you cannot but speak well.

Let us feel these motives, my brethren. Let us obey these rules. Let us practise these duties. Let us blush for having so long lived in the neglect of them. Henceforth let us dedicate our voices to the praise of our Creator. Let us praise God. To praise God is the noblest of all employments. To praise God is the incessant employment of all the angels in heaven. To praise God must be our eternal exercise. Let us this instant, on the spot, begin to reduce this new plan of conversation to practice. Let us cry, with blessed spirits, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts: and let these first fruits of holy conversation consecrate all the remainder of life. God grant us this grace. To Father, Son, and Spirit, be honour and glory for ever! Amen.

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## SERMON L.

### THE DUTY OF GIVING ALMS.

LUKE xi. 41.

*Give alms of such things as you have.*

OUR churches are houses of God: places where he bestows his favours in richest profusion. Indeed his omnipresence cannot be confined; heaven, and the heaven of heavens cannot contain him, the whole universe is the theatre of his liberality. It is, however, in his churches that he affords the most distinguishing proofs of his presence, and opens his most magnificent treasures. Hence Solomon, after he had erected that superb palace described in the first book of Kings, addressed this prayer to God, "May thine eyes be open toward this house night and day, even toward the place of which thou hast said, My name shall be there. When thy people Israel shall pray toward this place, when they are smitten down before the enemy; when heaven is shut, and there is no rain; when there be in the land famine, pestilence and blasting; when they pray toward this place, when they spread forth their hands toward this house, then hear thou in heaven, thy dwelling-place," 1 Kings viii. 27. 29, &c. Let us not imagine all these prerogatives were confined to the temple of Jerusalem. They are in our churches. Always when we assemble in this place we conduct you to the tribunal of God, and say to you, in the language of eternal wisdom, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat: buy wine and milk without money and without price," Isa. lv. 1.

To-day, Christians, this house changes its appearance. It is no more a superb palace,

the seat of riches and abundance. It is an almshouse. It is, if I may be allowed to say so, a general hospital, in which are assembled all those poor, all those indigent widows and destitute orphans, all those famished old people, who were born in your provinces, or who, through the calamities of the times, have been driven to your coasts, and permitted to reside here. What a sight! To-day God takes the place of man, and man that of God. God asks, and man answers. God begs, and man bestows. God sets before us heaven, grace, and glory; and from his high abode, where he dwells among the praises of the blessed, he solicits your charity, and says to you, by our mouth, "Give alms of such things as you have."

What opportunity more proper can we have to preach charity to you? For several weeks these arches have resounded with the greatest benevolence that was ever heard of.\* Your preachers have fixed your attention on that great sacrifice by which men are reconciled to God, so that if we be so happy to day as to touch your hearts, there will be a harmony between love and charity, between the Creator and the creature. "The heavens will hear the earth, and the earth will hear the heavens," Hos. ii. 22. Heaven will say to the faithful soul, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world," John i. 29; and the faithful soul, properly affected with gratitude, will reply, "O God, my goodness extendeth not to thee, but to the saints that are in the earth," Ps. xvi. 23, and will pour upon the feet of Jesus Christ that ointment which cannot be put upon the head of Christ himself. My brethren assist our feeble efforts. And thou, O God, who art *love* itself, animate every part, every period, every expression of this discourse, so that all our hearers may become disciples of love! Amen.

"Give alms of such things as you have;" these are the words of our text, the gospel of this day. We will not detain you in comparing the words of our translation with those of the original, in order to justify our interpreters. Some expositors think the text is not an exhortation to charity, but it censures on the Pharisees for their notion of it. After the Pharisees had obtained great sums by rapine and extortion, they endeavoured to conceal, yea, to embellish their crimes by alms-deeds. According to these interpreters, Jesus Christ only intended to condemn these infamous practices, so that instead of reading the words, as we do, "give alms of such things as ye have," we ought to read them, Ye give alms of such things as ye have, and ye suppose all things are clean to you.

But this interpretation, which is in itself a striking truth, ought, however, to be rejected, as neither being agreeable to the scope of the place, nor the literal sense of the words, which are followed by a precept, nor to ancient versions, nor to the following words, "all things shall be clean to you," which carries in it the nature of a promise, and which must therefore be naturally joined to a precept.

Let us then retain the sense of our version,

and let us take the words for an order of our Master prescribing charity. He addressed this order to the Pharisees, and in them to all Christians. The Pharisees were a class of men, who loved showy virtues, and who thought by discharging small duties to make amends for the omission of great and important ones. Jesus Christ reproves them in this chapter; "Ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness." They tithed mint and rue, and all manner of herbs, but they neglected charity. On another occasion we have observed, that they resembled some modern Christians, who put on the air of piety, lift their eyes to heaven, besprinkle our churches with tears, utter their souls in perpetual sighs and complaints, and incessantly cry religion! religion! but who know charity only by the pain they feel when it is mentioned to them. "Ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness. But rather," than put on all these airs of piety, rather than affect an ignorant zeal, rather than practise exactness in trifles, "give alms of such things as you have." Charity is the centre where all virtues meet. "O man, what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" "Though I speak with the tongue of men and angels, though I give my body to be burned, though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains," and, we may add, "though I should receive the communion every day of my life, though I fast every week, though I burn with the zeal of a seraph, yet if I have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal!" Micah vi. 8: 1 Cor. xiii. 1, &c.

But these reflections are too vague, let us be more particular. We will divide this discourse into two parts. In the first, we will recommend alms-giving by making an eulogium on benevolence, which ought to be the principle of it. In the second part we will make some particular observations on alms-giving itself.

I. An eulogium on benevolence shall be our first part. We consider this virtue in several different views. 1. As it regards society. 2. As it respects religion. 3. As it influences death. 4. As it regards judgment. 5. As it respects heaven. And, lastly, as it regards God himself. Benevolence is the happiness of society, and the essence of religion. It triumphs over the horrors of death, and pleads for us before that terrible tribunal at which we must be judged. Benevolence is the bond of celestial intelligences, the brightest ray of their glory, and the chief article of their felicity. Benevolence is the image of God himself, and the expression of his essence. So that to practice the duty of charity, to give alms from this principle, is to be a worthy citizen, a good Christian, cheerful in death, absolved from guilt, and a member of the church triumphant. To give alms is to return to our centre, to resemble God, from whom our souls derived their existence. Let us examine each of these articles.

1. Benevolence constitutes the happiness of society; to give alms is to perform the duty of a good citizen. In order to comprehend this,

\* The Weeks of Lent.



it will be only necessary to examine the principle of action in him who refuses to assist the poor according to his ability, and the miseries to which society would be reduced were each member of it to act on the same principle. The principle of a man, who does not contribute to assist the poor according to his power, is, that he who possesses temporal benefits, ought to hold them only for himself, and that he ought never to impart them to others except when his own interest requires him to do so; and that when his own interest is unconnected with the condition of his neighbour, he ought not to be affected with his misfortunes. Now it is certain no principle can be more contrary to public good. What would become of society were all the members of it to reason in this manner? Should the statesman say, I will make use of my knowledge and experience, to arrive at the pinnacle of honour, and to conduct my family thither; but, when the interest of my country is unconnected with mine, I will abandon the helm, and give myself no concern to procure advantages for other people! What if a general should say, I will employ all my courage and strength, to surmount every obstacle in the way of my fortune; but should the enemy offer me advantages greater than I can procure for my country, I will turn my hand, and destroy the country which I now defend! What if the minister should say, I will endeavour only to save myself, or I will study only to display my talents; but when this end cannot be obtained, I will harden my heart against perplexed minds, distressed consciences, people dying in despair, and I will neglect every duty, which has only God and a miserable wretch for spectators!

Extend this principle of self-interest. Apply it to different conditions of life, and you will perceive it leads from absurdity to absurdity, and from crime to crime. You will see, that he who makes it the rule of his actions, violates all the laws which mankind made for one another, when they built cities and formed states. In such establishments men make tacit conditions, that they will succour one another, that they will reward some services by other services, and that when any are rendered incapable of serving others, or of maintaining themselves, they should not be left to perish, but that each should furnish such relief as he himself would wish to receive in the same case.

If a rich man, therefore, refuse to assist the poor, he violates this primitive law, and consequently saps the foundation of society. As good politicians, we ought to proceed rigorously against a miser, he should be lodged among animals of another species, and such pleasures as arise from a society of men should be refused to him because he refuses to contribute to them, and lives only for himself. For want of human laws, there is I know not what maledictions affixed to those who are destitute of charity. They are considered with horror. Their insensibility is a subject of public conversation. People give one another notice to be upon their guard with such men, and to use caution in dealing with people of principles so odious. For do not deceive yourselves; do not think to impose long on the public; do not imagine your turpitude can be long hid, "there is

nothing covered that shall not be revealed," Matt. x. 26. We know well enough how to distinguish a charitable man from a miser. A note of infamy is set upon the last, and people say to one another, See, observe that old man, who alone possesses a fortune sufficient for ten families, see how avariciously he accumulates money, and how cruelly he refuses to assist the poor with the least particle of what death is just going to take from him! See that proud ambitious woman, who displays her vanity with so much parade in the sight of the whole world, see how she makes the poor expiate the guilt of her pride, by feeding her vanity with what ought to buy them bread. Thus people talk. They do more, they reckon, they calculate, they talk the matter over at large in public company: one relates the history of the miser, and another makes quaint remarks, and all together form an odious portrait, which every man abhors.

2. Consider benevolence in regard to religion, and particularly in regard to the Christian religion, of which we affirm it was the essence. In what light soever you view Jesus Christ, the teacher of the gospel, you will find him displaying this virtue. Consider him as appointed to save you, observe his birth, his preaching, his actions, his preparation for death, his death itself; in all these different views he recommends charity to you.

Consider Jesus as appointed for salvation. What inclined God to form the design of saving the world? Was it any eminent quality in man? Were we not "children of wrath," execrable objects in the eyes of the Lord? Was it any service rendered to God? Alas! "we were enemies in our minds by wicked works," Col. i. 21. Was it any prospect of retribution? "But our goodness extendeth not unto him," Ps. xvi. 2. Is not all-sufficiency one of his attributes? What then inclined God to form a plan of redemption? Ask Jesus Christ. He will inform you, "God so loved the world that he gave his Son," John iii. 16. Ask the apostle Paul. He will tell you, "It was for his great love wherewith he loved us," Eph. ii. 4.

The birth of Jesus Christ preaches love to us; for why this flesh? why this blood? why this incarnation? In general it was for our salvation. My brethren, have you ever weighed these words of St. Paul? "As the children are partakers of flesh and blood,"—(the scripture contains elevated sentiments which can never be studied enough. Divines distinguish senses of Scripture into literal and mystical; we add a third, a sublime sense; and this passage is an example,)—"As the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same, that he might be a merciful and faithful high-priest. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted," Heb. ii. 14, &c. Observe these words, "he took part of flesh and blood that he might be merciful." What! could he not be merciful without flesh and blood? "In that he hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." How! Is not Jesus Christ, as Lord of the universe, able to deliver us from temptations? True, he is almighty. His compassion inclines him to succour us. Yet, it should seem, according to St. Paul, that something

was wanting to his omnipotence. It seems as if universal knowledge was not sufficient to inform him fully of the excess of our miseries. What was wanting was to know our ills by experimental feeling. This knowledge is incompatible with deity, deity is impassable; and it was to supply this, and to acquire this knowledge, that God made known to the world, the unheard-of mystery of "God manifest in the flesh," so that the Saviour might be inclined to relieve miseries which he himself had felt. "He also himself took part of flesh and blood, that he might be merciful. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted."

Jesus Christ in his doctrine has taught us benevolence, for to what but love does all his doctrine tend? What is the new commandment he gave us? "That we should love one another," John xiii. 24. What is "pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father?" Is it not "to visit the fatherless and the widows?" James i. 27. What one thing was lacking to the young man who had not committed adultery, had not killed, had not defrauded? Was it not "to sell his goods, and give to the poor?" Matt. xix. 21. The whole system of Christianity tends to charity; the doctrines to charity; the duties to charity; the promises to charity; the ordinances which assemble us in one house, as members of one family, where we eat at one table, as children of one father, all tend to establish the dominion of charity.

The actions of Jesus Christ preach charity to us, for all his life was employed in exercises of benevolence. What zeal for the salvation of his neighbours! Witness his powerful exhortations, his tender prayers, his earnest entreaties. What compassion for the miseries of others! Witness his emotions, when "he saw the multitudes fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd," Matt. ix. 36; witness the tears he shed at the grave of Lazarus, and over ungrateful Jerusalem. We have, in a few words, an abridgement of the most amiable life that ever was: "He went about doing good," Acts x. 38.

Jesus preached charity in his preparations for death. You know what troubles agitated his mind at the approach of this terrible period. You know what difference there is between his death and our death. As we draw near to death we approach a throne of grace; but Christ went to a tribunal of vengeance. We go to our father; he went to his judge. We are responsible for our own sins; but upon the head of this victim lay all the crimes of the people of God. Amidst so many formidable objects, what filled the mind of Jesus Christ? Love. "Now holy Father, I am no more in the world," said he, "but these are in the world, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are," John xvii. 11. As if he had said, Father take me for the victim of thy displeasure, let me feel all its strokes, give me the dregs of the cup of thine indignation to drink; provided my beloved disciples be saved, my joy will be full.

In fine, Jesus Christ taught us benevolence by his death; for "greater love than this hath

no man, that a man lay down his life for his friends," John xv. 13. There was neither a wound in his body, nor an incision in his hands or his feet, nor a drop of his blood that was shed, which did not publish benevolence. His love supported him against the fears of death, the terrors of divine justice, and the rage of hell. His love extended even to his executioners; and, less affected with his own pains than with the miseries to which their crimes exposed them, he fetched (it was one of his last sighs,) a sigh of love, and ready to expire, said, "Father forgive them, they know not what they do." Luke xxiii. 34.

Such is the gospel. Such is your religion. Now I ask, my brethren, can a man imagine himself a disciple of such a master, can he aspire at such noble promises, can he admit such truths: in one word, can he be a Christian and not be charitable? Have we not reason to affirm, that benevolence is the essence of Christianity, the centre to which the lines of all Christian virtues tend?

3. A third reflection, that is, that benevolence triumphs over the horrors of death, ought to have great weight with us. A meditation of death is one of the most powerful of all motives to guard us against temptations, agreeably to a fine saying of the son of Sirach, "Whatsoever thou takest in hand, remember the end, and thou shalt never do amiss," Eccles. vii. 38. This thought has a peculiar influence in regard to charity.

In effect, what is death? I consider it principally in two views, first as a general shipwreck, in which our fortunes, titles, and dignities are lost. "We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out," 1 Tim. vi. 7. Next, I consider it as the time of examination and judgment, for "it is appointed to all men once to die, and after that the judgment," Heb. ix. 27. The moment of death is a fatal period, in which are united the excesses of our youth, the distractions of our manhood, the avarice of our old age, our pride, our ambition, our impurity, our covetousness, our treacheries, our perjuries, our calumnies, our blasphemies, our lukewarmness, our profanations; all these crimes will form one black cloud, heavy, and hanging ready to burst on our heads.

These are two just views of death, and ideas of these make, if I may be allowed to say so, the two most formidable weapons of the "king of terrors," the most terrible of all terrible things. But the benevolent man is covered from these attacks.

The charitable man need not fear a deprivation of his fortune, for in this respect he does not die. He has prevented the ravages of death by disburdening himself of his riches. He has eradicated the love of the world. He has given to the poor what would otherwise have fed avarice. Yet, let me recollect myself, the charitable man does not impoverish himself by his benevolence. He has sent his fortune before him. These are Scriptural ideas. "He that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto the Lord, and that which he hath given will he pay him again. Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail, they may receive you into ever-

lasting habitations," Prov. xix. 17; Luke xvi. 9. At death the Christian beholds these friends opening their arms to receive him. I recollect here an epitaph said to be engraven on the tomb of Atolus of Rheims. *He exported his fortune before him into heaven, he is gone thither to enjoy it.* What a fine epitaph, my brethren! Happy he who, instead of such pompous titles as the vanity of the living puts on the tombs of the dead, under pretence of honouring the merit of the deceased, instead of such nauseous inscriptions as feed pride among bones, worms, and putrefactions, objects so proper to teach us humility, happy he who has a right to such an epitaph as that just now mentioned! *He exported his fortune before him into heaven by his charities, he is gone thither to enjoy it.* Happy he who, instead of splendid funeral processions, and a long train of hired attendants, who seem less disposed to lament death than to increase the numbers of the dead, happy he whose funeral is attended and lamented by the poor! Happy he whose funeral oration is spoken by the wretched in sobs and sighs and expressions like these, I was naked, and he clothed me, I was hungry, and he fed me, I lived a dying life, and he was the happy instrument of Providence to support me!

A charitable man need not fear death considered as a time of account. What says the Scriptures concerning charity in regard to our sins? "It covereth a multitude," 1 Pet. iv. 8. Daniel gives this counsel to a guilty king, "Break off thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor," chap. iv. 27. Not that our Scriptures authorize a sacrilegious commentary, such as some sinners make upon these passages. Under pretence that it is said, "charity covereth a multitude of sins," or that it *puts away our sins* (the sense of the first is disputed, and we will not now explain it,) under this pretence, I say, some Christians pretend to make a tacit compact with God. The import of this contract is, that the sinner should be allowed by God, for the sake of his alms-deeds, to persist in sin. An unjust man, who retains the property of others, will give a trifle to the poor, and, under pretence that "charity covereth a multitude of sins," will hold himself free from the law of restitution. A debauchee will give alms, and, under pretence that "charity covereth a multitude of sins," will think himself authorized to lead an unclean life. Great God! is this the idea we form of thy majesty? If these be the motives of our virtues, whence do our vices spring? Shall we pretend with presents to blind thine eyes, eyes of purity itself? Would we make thee, O God! an accomplice in our crimes? and have we forgot that prohibition so remarkable in thy law, "thou shalt not bring the hire of a whore, or the price of a dog, into the house of the Lord!" Deut. xxiii. 18. It is, however, very certain that charity disarms death, in regard to that account which we are about to give of the manner in which we have disposed our property, for charity is the least equivocal mark of our Christianity, and the least suspicious evidence of our faith.

I do not know whether in the perfect enjoyment of health, and the pleasures of life, you enter into these reflections; but when you think

yourselves ready to expire, you implore our assistance, and require us to comfort you. We seldom succeed much on these occasions. Miserable comforters are we all. Religion with all its evidences, grace with all its charms, the promises of the gospel with all their magnificence, are generally insufficient to administer consolation. Christians, you must certainly die; arm us then to-day against yourselves. Put into our hands to-day an argument against that fear of death which will shortly seize you. Give weight to our ministry, and by disarming death by your charities, put us into a condition to show you death disarmed at the end of your life.

4. Charity provides against the terrors with which an apprehension of the last judgment ought to inspire us. Jesus Christ has furnished us with this idea, for thus he speaks in the twenty-fifth chapter of St. Matthew, "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, he shall say unto them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me drink. Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me," ver. 32, &c.

There is another of the passages of which we just now spoke, and which ought to be understood in a sense altogether sublime. Jesus Christ personates the poor, and takes upon himself, if I may speak so, all their obligations. What is the reason of this conduct? If the poor be so dear to him, why does he leave them to suffer, and if he leave them to suffer, why does he say they are so dear to him? My brethren, this is intended to exercise our faith, and to purify our love. Should Christ come to us in pomp and glory, surrounded with devouring fire, with all the ensigns of his majesty, attended by seraphim, and by thousand thousands ministering unto him; should he come in this manner to ask of us a cup of water, a piece of bread, a little money, which of us would refuse to grant his request? But this mark of our love would be suspicious. It would proceed from emotions excited by the splendour of his majesty, rather than from genuine love. No wonder a king is respected in his court, and upon his throne; majesty dazzles, and ensigns of supreme dignity excite emotions in all the powers of our souls. But should this king survive some disgrace, should he be banished from his kingdom, and abandoned by his subjects, then his real friends would be discovered, and he would prepare them a thousand rewards. This is an image of Jesus Christ. In vain prostrating ourselves at the foot of his throne, we say to him a thousand times over, "Lord, thou knowest that we love thee." Perhaps this profession of esteem may proceed more from a love of the benefits, than of the benefactor who bestows them. Banished from his heavenly court in the persons of his members, forsaken by his subjects, covered with rags, and lodged in a hospital, he comes to try his real friends, solicits their compassion, presents his miseries to them, and tells them at the same time, that his condition will not

be always thus despicable, that he shall be soon re-established on his throne, and that he will then recompense their care with eternal felicity; this is the meaning of the words just now read, "I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat, I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink." Grand motive to charity! Immense weight with a soul the least animated with ingenuousness and fervour! I am not surprised, however, that motives so strong in themselves are frequently ineffectual with us. Always confined in a sphere of sensible objects, taken up with the present moment, contracted within the limits of our own small circle, we never look forward to futurity, never think of that great day in which God will judge the world in righteousness, and fix our eternal doom. But who is there, who is there, that in the presence of all mankind, in the presence of all the angels of heaven, in the presence of the whole universe, and in the presence of God himself, can bear this reproof from the mouth of the Son of God, "I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat, I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink."

5. Let us consider charity in regard to heaven itself. We say benevolence is a celestial virtue, and we propose this fifth reflection to you, in order to enforce the necessity, and to display the excellence of charity. Understand, my brethren, all the other virtues which the gospel prescribes to us are characterized by a mortification, which obliges us to enter into our nothingness, and reminds us of our turpitude and misery. They are not absolute positive excellencies; they are remedies for our ills. For example, faith supposes our ignorance; hope supposes our poverty; patience implies afflictions; repentance supposes sin. All public worship, prayer, humiliation, fasting, sacraments, all imply that we are gross and carnal. All this will have no place in heaven. In heaven there will be no faith, no hope, no prayer, no patience. In heaven there will be neither humiliation, nor fasting, nor sacraments.—Charity, rising out of love, is superior to all other exercises, it has an excellence proper to itself: love will follow us to heaven, and heaven is the abode of love. There God, who is love, establishes his empire; there perfect love reigns; there is seen the ineffable love which the Father has for his son; there is found that incomprehensible union which unites the three Divine Persons who are the object of our worship; there Jesus Christ, our mystical head, unites himself with his members; there is displayed the love of God to glorified saints, with whom he shares his felicity and glory; there the love of glorified saints to God is made manifest; there are seen those tender ties which unite the inhabitants of heaven to each other, hearts aiming at the same end, burning with the same fire, enlivened with the same zeal, and joining in one voice to celebrate the author of their existence; there, then, benevolence is a heavenly virtue; it constitutes the felicity of the place. Love is the most perfect of all pleasures. The more the Deity approaches his saints by an effusion of this love, and the more he communicates the delights of it to them, the more the saints approach God by a return of love; and the nearer they draw

to the source of happiness, the happier they render themselves and one another by such communications.

Let us not lightly pass over this reflection. It is good to be here. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear," Matt. xi. 15. He that has the most refined sense, the quickest invention, the most noble imagination, let him conceive a society united by the purest principles, and cemented by the firmest virtue. This is paradise, this is love. This is charity; charity that gives no alms, because none in heaven are indigent, but charity which goes so far as to give all, to give up happiness, to give self, to sacrifice self for other objects of love; witness the presents which came from heaven; witness the description of this holy place; witness God, who gave us his Son, his only Son, the tenderest object of his love; witness the Son, who gave himself; witness the blessed angels, who encamp round about us to protect and defend us; witness the triumphs of glorified saints, who rejoice over one sinner that repents, as if more interested in his happiness than in their own; witness the crowns which the saints cast before the throne of the Lamb, resigning, as it were, in his favour their felicity and glory; witness these expressions of love, which we shall one day understand by an experimental enjoyment of them, "his banner over me is love. Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me. Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm; for love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave; the coals thereof are coals of fire, which have a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it," Cant. ii. 4, and vi. 5.

After having elevated our meditation to heaven, we return to you, my brethren. We blush at what we are doing to-day. We are ashamed to preach, complain, and exhort. Why? are we endeavouring to engage you to sacrifice your fortunes, to renounce your lives, to become accursed for your brethren? Are we trying to induce you to perform some heroic and uncommon act of love? No. Alas! Alas! We are obliged to exhort, and complain, and preach, to obtain of you a little bit of bread, a few tattered clothes, a little small share of what you give with great profusion to the world. Good God! What Christians are you? Is this the church? Are you the household of faith? Are we preaching to citizens of heaven? Are we knocking at the doors of hearts that believe a life eternal? But how will you enter into that abode with such unfeeling souls? Would you go to interrupt the communion of saints? Would you go to disorder heaven, and to disconcert angels? And do you not perceive, that if you do not put on bowels of mercies, you banish yourselves from an abode in which all breathe charity and love?

In fine, we consider charity in regard to God himself. Love is the essence of Deity. God is love. So an apostle has defined it. Here reflections rise from every part to establish our principle. Nature, Providence, society, the church, heaven, earth, elements, all preach to us the love of God; all preach to us the excellence of charity, which makes us resemble God, in the most lovely of his attributes.

would give us pleasure to enlarge on each of these articles, were it not necessary, after having made some general reflections on benevolence, which is the principle of alms-giving, to make some particular reflections on alms-deeds themselves.

II. My brethren, were it only necessary in this discourse to give you high ideas of benevolence, and to convince you in general of the necessity of giving alms, we would here put a period to our sermon. But can we be ignorant of what passes on these occasions? Each satisfies himself with a vague approbation of such truths. Each is convinced that we ought to be charitable, and the poor should be relieved; but each is content with himself, and, examining less what he gives, than whether he gives, persuades himself that he does enough, and that nobody ought to complain of him. It is then necessary, before we finish this discourse, to enter into some detail, and to prescribe some rules, by which we may pretty well know what each is obliged to give in alms. We will not determine with exact precision on this article. We are fully convinced, that, were we to conduct you from principle to principle, to an exact demonstration of what the gospel requires of you in this case, we should speak of things which would make you suspect that we took pains to advance unheard of maxims, and to preach paradoxes.

We will then content ourselves with proposing five considerations to you; or, to speak more plainly, we will produce five calculations, to which we beg your attention, and, after we have spoken of them, we will leave every man's conscience at liberty to draw consequences. The first calculation is that of the charities which God prescribed to the Jews under the law. The second is that of the charities of the primitive Christian church. The third is that of our superfluous expenses. The fourth is that of the number of our poor. The last is that of the funds appropriated to their support.

I. The first calculation is that of the alms which God prescribed to the Jews, and in this we include all that they were indispensably obliged to furnish for religion. This calculation may well make Christians blush, as it convinces us of this melancholy truth, that though our religion excels all religions in the world, yet its excellence lies in the gospel, and not in the lives of those who profess it.

1. The Jews were obliged to abstain from all the fruits that grew on new planted trees the first three years. These first fruits were accounted uncircumcision. It was a crime for the planters to appropriate them, Lev. xix. 23.

2. The fruits of the fourth year were devoted to the Lord. They were called "holy, to praise the Lord withal." Either they were sent to Jerusalem, or being valued they were redeemed by a sum equivalent paid to the priest; so that these people did not begin to receive the profits of their fruit trees till the fifth year.

3. The Jews were obliged every year to offer to God the "first of all the fruits of the earth," Deut. xxvi. 2. When the head of a family walked in his garden, and perceived which tree first bore fruit, he distinguished it

by tying on a thread, that he might know it when the fruits were ripe. At that time each father of a family put that fruit into a basket. At length all the heads of families, who had gathered such fruit in one town, were assembled, and deputies were chosen by them to carry them to Jerusalem. These offerings were put upon an ox crowned with flowers, and the commissioners of the convoy went in pomp to Jerusalem, singing these words of the hundred and twenty-second psalm, "I was glad, when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord." When they arrived at the city, they sung these words, "Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem." At length they went to the temple, each carrying his offering on his shoulders, the king himself not excepted, again singing, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors. Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors," Ps. xxiv. 7.

4. The Jews were obliged to leave the corn on their lands ends for the use of the poor; and, in order to avoid the frauds which might be practised in this case, it was determined to leave the sixtieth part of the land as a just proportion for the poor, Lev. xix. 9.

5. The ears of corn, which fell from the hand in harvest time, were devoted to the same purpose; and if you consult Josephus,\* he will tell you, that the Jews held themselves obliged by this command of God, not only to leave the poor such ears of corn as fell by chance, but to let fall some freely, and on purpose for them to glean.

6. The Jews were obliged to give the fortieth part of their produce to the priests, at least it is thus the Sanhedrim explained the law written in the eighteenth chapter of Deuteronomy.

7. They were obliged to pay a tenth to maintain the Levites, Num. xvii. 16.

8. The produce of the earth every seventh year belonged to the poor, at least the owner had no more right than people who had no property, Lev. xxv. 23. This command is express, and the Jews have such an idea of this precept, that they pretend the captivity in Babylon was a punishment for the violation of it. To this belong these words, "The land shall enjoy her sabbaths as long as it lieth desolate, and ye be in your enemy's land; even then shall the land rest, and enjoy her sabbaths," chap. xxxvi. 34.

9. All debts contracted among this people were released at the end of every seven years; so that a debtor, who could not discharge his debt within seven years, was at the end of that time released from all obligations to discharge it, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 21; Deut. xv. 2.

To all these expenses add extraordinaries for sacrifices, oblations, journeys to Jerusalem, half shekels to the sanctuary, and so on, and you will find, that God imposed upon his people a tribute amounting to nearly half their income.† What is worthy of consideration is, that the modern Jews, as you may convince yourselves by conversing with them, not being able liter-

\* Antiq. Jud. cap. 8. lib. iv.

† Episcopius Inst. Theol. lib. iii. esp. 5.

ally to discharge a great number of precepts, which originally related to their ancestors, are far from being lax in relieving their poor; so that if there are as many Jews in a place as form what they call a congregation (and ten they say are sufficient) they appoint treasurers to collect charities for the poor. Lest avarice, prevailing over principle, should prevent the discharge of this duty, they have judges who examine their ability, and who tax them at about a tenth of their income, so that one of the greatest offences which we give them, and which prejudices them against Christianity, is the little charity Christians have for the poor. A scandal, by the way, and to your confusion let it be spoken, which would undoubtedly increase, if they were better acquainted with you, and if they saw that affected dissipation, which prevents many of you from seeing the hands held out to receive alms for the poor at the doors of our churches.

This is the first calculation we have to propose to you. Having proposed it to your examination we will determine nothing. One reflection, however, must not be omitted, that is, that the gospel is an economy infinitely more noble, and more excellent than the law. The gospel, by abolishing the Levitical ceremonies, has enforced the morality of judaism much more effectually, and particularly what regards charity. Jesus Christ has fixed nothing on this article. He has contented himself by enjoining us in general "to love our neighbour as ourselves," not being willing to set any other bounds to our love for him than those which we set to our love for ourselves. If then under an economy so gross, if under an economy in which differences were made between Jews and Gentiles, nation and nation, people and people (which always restrains charity,) God required his people to give, to say the least, a third part of their income, what, what are the obligations of Christians! I repeat it again, were I to pursue these reflections, I should certainly be taxed with advancing unheard-of maxims, and preaching paradoxes.

II. The second calculation we have to propose to you is, that of the charities of the *Primitive Christians*. The great master had so fully imparted his own charitable disposition to his disciples, that, according to St. Luke, "all that believed had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need," chap. ii. 44, and Acts ii. 44, 45. In the time of Tertullian, Christian charity was proverbial, and it was said of them, "See how they love one another;"\* insonuch that the heathens, surprised to see a union so affectionate; ascribed it to supernatural causes. They said, Christians had some unknown characters imprinted on their bodies, and these characters had the virtues of inspiring them with love for one another.† Lucian, that satirical writer, who died in the reign of Marcus Aurelius, in a discourse on the death of the philosopher Peregrinus, who burnt himself at the Olympic games, Lucian, I say, by attempting to satirize Christians passed a high encomium on them. "It is incredible," says he, "what pains and

diligence they use by all means to succour one another. Their legislator made them believe that they are all brethren, and since they have renounced our religion, and worshipped their crucified leader, they live according to his laws, and all their riches are common."\* We have also an undoubted testimony of Julian the Apostate on this article. He was one of the greatest persecutors of the primitive Christians, and he was a better politician in the art of persecution than either his predecessors or successors. Julian did not attack religion with open violence; he knew, what we have seen with our own eyes, that is, that violence inflames zeal, and that the blood of martyrs is the seed of the church. He attacked religion in another manner, and, as the charity of the primitive Christians rendered Christianity venerable, this tyrant attempted to clothe paganism with Christian charity. Thus he wrote to a pagan priest. "Let us consider," says he, "that nothing has so much contributed to the progress of the superstition of Christians as their charity to strangers. I think we ought to discharge this obligation ourselves. Establish hospitals in every place; for it would be a shame for us to abandon our poor, while the Jews have none, and while the impious Galileans (thus he calls Christians) provide not only for their own poor, but also for ours."

If you wish for observations more particular concerning primitive Christian charity, we answer,

1. The primitive Christians expended large sums in propagating the *faith*, and in preaching the gospel. They thought that the principal care of a Christian, after "bringing into captivity *his own* thoughts to the obedience of Christ," was to convert others. Ecclesiastical history gives us many examples, and particularly that of St. Chrysostom, mentioned by Theodoret. "He assembled monks full of zeal, and sent them to preach the gospel in Phœnicia; and, having understood that there were people dispersed along the banks of the Danube who thirsted for the waters of grace, he sought out men of ardent zeal, whom he sent to labour like apostles in the propagation of the faith."‡ I blush to mention this example, because it recalls that reproach which we just now mentioned, that is, that we have no zeal for the salvation of infidels, and that the fleets which we send to the new world, are much more animated with a desire of accumulating wealth, than of conveying the gospel to the natives.

2. The primitive Christians paid a wonderful attention to the *sick*. They kept people on purpose for this pious office. In the city of Alexandria alone, the number was so great, that Theodosius was obliged to diminish it, and to fix it at five hundred; and when it was afterwards represented to him that the number was unequal to the task, he increased it to six hundred, as a law in the Theodosian code informs us.‡ I cannot help repeating on this occasion a beautiful passage of Eusebius. Speaking of a plague which ravaged Egypt, after he had described it, he adds, "Many of our brethren, neglecting their own health,

\* Tertul. Apol. xxxix.

† Minutius Felix.

\* Lucian, tom. 2. de la mort du fil. Peregrine.

‡ Theod. Hist. Eccles. v. 29, 30. &c.

‡ Code Theod. lib. xvi. 2.

through an excess of charity, have brought upon themselves the misfortunes and maladies of others. After they had held in their arms the dying saints, after they had closed their mouths, their eyes, after they had embraced, kissed, washed, and adorned them with their best habits, and carried them on their shoulders to the grave, they have been glad themselves to receive the same kind of office from others who have imitated their zeal and charity.\*

3. The primitive Christians were very charitable in redeeming *captives*. Witness St. Ambrose, who was inclined to sell the sacred utensils for that purpose. Witness S. Cyprian, who in a letter to the bishops of Numidia concerning some Christians taken captive by barbarians, implores their charity for the deliverance of these miserable people, and contributed towards it more than a thousand pounds. Witness a history related by Socrates. The Romans had taken seven thousand persons prisoners, many of whom perished with hunger in their captivity. A Christian bishop named Acacius assembled his church, and addressed them in this sensible and pious language: "God needeth not," said he, "neither dishes nor cups, as he neither eats nor drinks; I think it right, therefore, to make a sale of a great part of the church's plate, and to apply the money to the support and redemption of captives." Socrates adds, that he caused the holy utensils to be melted down, and paid the soldiers for the ransom of the prisoners, maintained them all winter, and sent them home in the spring with money to pay the expenses of their journey.†

In fine, the charity of the primitive Christians appears, by the pious *foundations* which they made by the innumerable hospitals which they supported, and above all, by the immense, and almost incredible, number of poor which they maintained. Observe these words of St. Chrysostom, "Consider," says he, "among many poor, widows, and orphans, this church distributes the charity of one rich man; the number in the catalogue is three thousand, not to mention extraordinary assistances given to prisoners, people sick in hospitals, strangers, leprous persons, servants of the church, and many other persons, whose necessities oblige them to apply every day, and who receive both food and clothing."‡ What renders this the more remarkable is, that the primitive Christians placed their glory in their charities. We have a famous example in the conduct of the church of Rome in regard to the emperor Decius. This tyrant demanded their treasure; a deacon answered for the whole church, and required one day to comply with the order of the emperor. When the term was expired, he assembled all the blind, and the lame, and the sick, that were supported by the church, and pointing to them, told the tyrant, "these are the riches of the church, these its revenue and treasure."§ I have col-

lected these examples to convince you, my brethren, that we have degenerated from the virtue of our ancestors, and that the lives of the primitive Christians, at least in this article, were a lively comment on the doctrine of their master.

III. A third calculation, which we conjure you to examine as Christians ought, is that of your *superfluous expenses*. We do not call those expenses superfluous which are necessary to your maintenance, nor those which contribute to the convenience and pleasure of life, nor those which support your rank; we do not touch this part of your fortune; we agree, that before you think of your brethren, your countrymen, the *household of faith*, you should set apart (sad necessity, my brethren, which engages us to preach to you a morality so lax, and to ask so little, lest we should obtain nothing) we agree, I say, that before you think of the poor you should set apart as much as is necessary for your maintenance to a certain degree; for your ornaments to a certain degree! for your amusement and appearances to a certain degree; all this we give up, and agree, that this part shall be sacred, and that it shall be accounted a crime to touch the least particle of it. But reckon, I beseech you, what sums are consumed beyond all this. Cast your eyes about this church. Endeavour to calculate the immense sums that have been spent in luxury since you laid aside that wise simplicity which your ancestors exemplified; I say since that time, for before, this article could not have appeared in a Christian sermon. Let us reckon what is now spent in extravagant entertainments, excessive gaming, immodest dresses, elegant furniture, and constant public amusements, all become now necessary by habit. Such a calculation would convince us, that what is given to the poor is nothing in comparison with what is spent in luxury; and yet I will venture to affirm, that in times like the present, we are bound to give a great deal more than our superfluities in charity. The poor we recommend to you are, for the most part, so venerable; they have impoverished themselves for such a noble cause, that we ought to retrench even our necessary expenses to support them. At least this superfluity, such a superfluity as we have described, a superfluity given to vice, can we refuse to give it to the Lord? If we dedicate it to the poor, we offer to God altogether our criminal pleasures, and the money they cost, our passions, and our charities; and by so doing we discharge two religious duties, and present a double sacrifice.

IV. The last calculation we make (a sad calculation indeed, but, however, necessary) is that of the number of our *poor*; and to abridge the matter, we join to this an account of the *funds* which we have to support them. It is necessary to enter into this detail, for some people pay no attention to these things; indeed, they know in general that there are poor, but satisfied with their own abundance, they give themselves little concern to know how many such persons there are.

Turn your eyes a moment from your own prosperity, and fix them on these objects. All the world know that an infinite number of

\* Euseb. Hist. Eccles. lib. vii. cap. 22.

† Ambros. Offic. lib. ii. cap. 28. S. Cyprian Let. IX. Edit. Oxon. 62. Socrat. Hist. Eccles. lib. vii. cap. 21.

‡ Chrysost. Homil. lxxvi. in St. Matt. Edit. Front. Duc. lxxvii.

§ Ambros. Offic. lib. ii. cap. 28.

poor people are supported in this country by charity; all the world know that the afflictions with which it has pleased God to visit our churches, have filled these provinces with an innumerable multitude of distressed objects, who have no other resource than the charity of our magistrates. This charity will always be a reason for our gratitude. It enlivens not only those who partake of it, but all the rest of the exiles who behold with the tenderest sensibility the benefits conferred on their brethren. But we be to you, if the charity of the state be made a pretext for your hard-heartedness, and if public beneficence be made an obstacle to private alms-deeds! Understand, then, that beside the poor we have mentioned, there is a great number who have no share in the bounty of the states. This church has several members of this sort. Beside an infinity of occasions which present themselves every day, beside a thousand extraordinary cases unprovided for, beside a number of indigent persons occasionally relieved, the church supports many hundreds of families, in which are many infants, many sick, many aged, and many dying; they who have been supported through life, must be buried after their death at the charge of the church. All these wants must be regularly supplied every week, whether there be money in hand or not. When your charities fail, our officers assist the poor with their purse, as at all times they assist them with their pains. Is the payment of the weekly sums deferred? Alas! if it be deferred one single day, the poor have no bread that day: the dying expire without succour: the dead lie unburied, and putrefy, and infect those who assisted them while alive.

Whatever pains are taken, whatever exactness is observed, how great soever your charities be, the poor's fund in this church cannot supply all their wants.—What am I saying, the funds of the church? We have none. We have no other supplies than what are derived from our charity given at the door of the church, from legacies left by a few pious persons, and from collections. All these are expended, and more than expended. Our officers are in arrears, and have no other hopes than what are founded on your donations to-day, or Wednesday next, to the collection, of which I give you this public notice.

You will ask me, without doubt, How then do all these poor subsist? For it is very certain they do subsist, and nobody perishes with hunger. How do they subsist? Can you want to be informed? Why, they suffer—they weep—they groan—from want of food they fall sick—sickness increases their wants—their wants increase their sickness—they fall victims to death—a death so much the more cruel by how much the more slow it is;—and this death—this death cries to heaven for vengeance against you who shut up your bowels of compassion from them.

My brethren with what eyes do you see these things? What effects do these sad objects produce upon you? Can you behold the miseries of your brethren without compassion? Can you without any emotion of pity hear Jesus Christ begging his bread of you? And all these blows that we have given at the door

of your hearts, shall they serve only to discover the hardness of them, and to aggravate your guilt?

We frequently complain, that our sermons are useless; that our exhortations are unprofitable; that our ministry produces neither wisdom in your minds, nor virtue in your hearts, nor any alteration in your lives. You in your turn complain: you say we declaim; you affirm we exaggerate; and, as the reasonableness or futility of our complaints depends on a discussion into which it is impossible for us to enter, the question remains undetermined.

My brethren, you have it in your power to-day, and next Wednesday, to make your apology. You may give a certain proof that you are not insensible to the care which God takes for your salvation. You may do us the favour to confound our reproofs, and to silence reproof for the future. Behold, our wants are before you. Behold, our hands are held out to receive your charity.

Do not lessen your gift on account of what you have hitherto done: do not complain of our importunity; do not say the miseries of the poor are perpetual, and their wants have no end; but rather let your former charities be considered as motives to future charities. Become models to yourselves. Follow your own example. Recollect, that what makes the glory of this state and this church, what Jesus will commend at the last day, what will comfort you on your death-bed, will not be the rich beaufets that shine in your houses, the superb equipages that attend you, the exquisite dishes that nourish you, not even the signal exploits and numberless victories which astonish the universe, and fill the world with your names, but the pious foundations you have made, the families you have supported, the exiles you have received—these, these will be your felicity and glory.

You say the miseries of the poor are perpetual, and their wants endless; and this disheartens you. Alas! Is not this, on the contrary, what ought to inflame your charity? What! should your charity diminish as wants increase? What! because your brethren are not weary of carrying the cross of Christ, are you wearied of encouraging them to do so?

You say the miseries of the poor are perpetual, and their wants have no end. I understand you; this reproach touches us in a tender part. But have we less reason to complain, because we are always miserable? Yet, perhaps, we may not always be in a condition so melancholy. Perhaps God "will have mercy upon his afflicted." Perhaps the flaming sword, which has pursued us for more than twenty years, will "return into its scabbard, rest and be still." Perhaps we may some day cease to be a wretched people, wandering about the world, exciting the displeasure of some, and tiring the charity of others. Perhaps God, in order to recompense the charity which you have testified by receiving us, will grant you the glory of re-establishing us; and, as you have lodged the captive ark, will empower you to conduct it back to Shiloh with songs of victory and praise. Perhaps, if we all concur to-day in the same design; if we all unite in



one bond of charity; if, animated with such a noble zeal, we address our prayers to him, after we have offered him our alms; perhaps we may build again the walls of our Jerusalem, and redeem our captive brethren from prisons, and galleys, and slavery. Perhaps, if God has determined that Egypt, which enslaves them, should be for ever the theatre of his vengeance and curse, he may bring out the remainder of his Israel with a "mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with jewels of silver and jewels of gold, with flocks and herds, not a hoof being left behind," according to the expression of Moses, Exod. x. 11.

After all, let us remember what was said at the beginning of this discourse, that if God requires alms of you, it is owing to his goodness towards you. Yes, I would engrave this truth upon your minds, and fix this sentiment in your hearts. I would make you fully understand, that God has no need of you to support his poor, and that he has a thousand ways at hand to support them without you. I would fain convince you, that if he leaves poor people among you, it is for the reason we have already mentioned; it is from a sublime principle, for which I have no name. In dispensing his other favours, he makes you sink with joy under the weight of his magnificence and mercy; to-day he offers to owe you something. He would become your debtor. He makes himself poor, that you may be enriched by enriching him. He would have you address that prayer which a prophet formerly addressed to him, "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heaven or the earth is thine. Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all, and in thine hand is power and might, and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name. But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee. For we are strangers before thee and sojourners, as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding," 1 Chron. xxix. 11, &c.

May these forcible reasons, and these noble motives convey light into the darkest minds, and soften the most obdurate hearts; and may each apply them to himself in particular! It happens, not unfrequently, that on these occasions each trust to the public, and, imagining that the charity of an individual will be nothing to the total sum, for this reason omits to give. No, my brethren, there is no person here who does not make one; there is no person here who ought not to consider himself the public, and, if I may venture to say so, representing in some sort the whole congregation. Every person here ought to consider his own contribution as deciding the abundance or the insignificance of our collection. Let each therefore tax himself. Let no one continue in arrears. Let a noble emulation be seen amongst us. Let the man in power give a part of the salary of his office. Let military men give a part of their

pay. Let the merchant give a part of the profits of his trade. Let the mechanic give a part of the labour of his hands. Let the minister consecrate a part of what his ministry produces. Let the young man give a part of his pleasures. Let the lady bestow a part of her ornaments. Let the dissipated give the poor that "box of ointment," which was intended, for profane uses. Let the native of these provinces give a part of his patrimony: and let the refugee give a part of what he has saved from the fury of the ocean when his vessel was dashed to pieces, and with a part of these remnants let him kindle a fire to offer sacrifices to that God who saved him from perishing by shipwreck.

My brethren, I know not what emotions of joy penetrate and transport me. I know not what emotions of my heart promise me, that this discourse will be attended with more success than all we have ever addressed to you. Ye stewards of our charity, ask boldly. Come into our houses "ye blessed of the Lord," and receive alms of a people who will contribute with joy, yea, even with gratitude and thanks.

But, my brethren, we are not yet content with you. Should you exceed all our expectations; should you give all your fortune; should you leave no poor hereafter among you, all this would not satisfy me. I speak not only for the interest of the poor, but for your own interest; we wish you to give your charities with the same view. In giving your alms, give your minds, give your hearts. Commit to Jesus Christ not only a little portion of your property, but your bodies, your souls, your salvation, that so you may be able to say in the agonies of death, "I know whom I have trusted, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day," 2 Tim. i. 12. God grant us this grace. To him be honour and glory for ever.

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## SERMON LI.

### CHRISTIAN HEROISM.

PROVERBS xiv. 32.

*He that ruleth his spirit, is better than he that taketh a city.*

WERE we to judge of these words by the first impressions they make on the mind, we should place them among such hyperbolic propositions as the imagination forms to colour and exceed truth. The mind on some occasions is so struck as to magnify the object in contemplation. The more susceptible people are of lively impressions, the more subject they are to declamation and hyperbole. We find these maxims sometimes necessary in explaining the sacred authors. Were we to adhere scrupulously to their words, we should often mistake their meaning, and extend their thoughts beyond due bounds. The people of the east seldom express themselves with precision. A cloud intercepting a few rays of light is the "sun darkened." A meteor in the air, is, "the powers of the heavens shaken." Jonah

in the belly of the fish, is a man "down at the bottom of the mountains." Thunder is the "voice of Jehovah, powerful and full of majesty, dividing flames of fire, breaking cedars of Lebanon, making Sirion skip, and stripping forests bare." A swarm of insects is, "a nation set in battle-array, marching every one on his ways, not breaking their ranks, besieging a city, having the teeth of a lion, and the cheek teeth of a great lion," Joel i. 6; and ii. 7. 9.

If we be ever authorized to solve a difficult text by examining the licence of hyperbolic style; if ever it be necessary to reduce hyperbole to precision, is it not so now in explaining the text before us, "He that ruleth his spirit, is better than he that taketh a city?" What justness can there be in comparing a man, who by reflection corrects his passions, with a hero who, in virtue of concerted plans, great fatigues, spending days and nights on horseback, surmounting difficulties, enduring heats and colds, braving a variety of dangers, at last arrives, by marching through a shower of shot, darkening the air, to cut through a squadron, to scale a wall, and to hoist his flag in a conquered city.

But however just this commentary may appear, you will make no use of it here, unless you place Christianity in the exercise of easy virtues, and after the example of most men accommodate religion to your passions, instead of reforming your passions by religion. Endeavour to form principles, resist fashion and custom, eradicate prejudice, undertake the conquest of yourself, carry fire and sword into the most sensible part of your soul, enter the lists with your darling sin, "mortify your members which are upon earth," rise above flesh and blood, nature and self-love, and, to say all in one word, endeavour to "rule your spirit;" and you will find that Solomon has rigorously observed the laws of precision, that he has spoken the language of logic, and not of oratory, and that there is not a shadow of hyperbole or exaggeration in this proposition, "He that ruleth his spirit, is better than he that taketh a city."

But to what period shall we refer the explanation of the text? We will make meditation supply the place of experience; and we will establish a truth which the greatest part of you have not experienced, and which perhaps you never will experience. This is the design of this discourse. Our subject is true heroism, the real hero.

I enter into the matter. The word *heroism* is borrowed of the heathens. They called those men heroes, whom a remainder of modesty and religion prevented their putting into the number of their gods, but who, for the glory of their exploits, were too great to be enrolled among mere men. Let us purify this idea: the man of whom Solomon speaks, "he who ruleth his spirit," ought not to be confounded with the rest of mankind; he is a man transformed by grace; one who, to use the language of Scripture, is a partaker of the divine nature." We are going to speak of this man, and we will first describe him, and next set forth his magnanimity, or, to keep to the text, we will first explain what it is to "rule the spirit," and

secondly, we will prove, that "he that ruleth his spirit is better than he that taketh a city." If we proceed farther, it will only be to add a few reflections, tending to convince you, that you are called to heroism; that there is no middle way in religion; that you must of necessity either bear the shame and infamy of being mean and dastardly souls, or be crowned with the glory of heroes.

I. Let us first explain the words of the text, "to rule the spirit." Few words are more equivocal in the sacred language than this which our interpreters have rendered *spirit*. It is put in different places for the thoughts of the *mind*, the passions of the *heart*, the emotions of *sense*, phantoms of *imagination*, and illusions of *concupiscence*. We will not trouble you with grammatical dissertations. In our idiom, "to rule the spirit" (and this is precisely the idea of Solomon,) "to rule the spirit," is never to suffer one's self to be prejudiced by false ideas always to see things in their true point of view; to regulate our hatred and our love, our desires and our inactivity, exactly according to the knowledge we have obtained after mature deliberation, that objects are worthy of our esteem, or deserve our aversion, that they are worth obtaining, or proper to be neglected.

But as this manner of speaking "to rule the spirit," supposes exercise, pains, labours, and resistance, we ought not to confine ourselves to the general idea which we have given. We consider man in three points of light: in regard to his natural dispositions; in regard to the objects that surround him; and in regard to the habits which he has contracted.

1. Consider the *natural dispositions* of man: Man, as soon as he is in the world, finds himself a slave of his heart, instead of being master of it. I mean, that instead of a natural facility to admit only what is true, and to love only what is amiable, he feels I know not what interior power, which indisposes him to truth and virtue, and conciliates him to vice and falsehood.

I am not going to agitate the famous question of free-will, nor to enter the list with those, who are noted in the church for the heresy of denying the doctrine of human depravity; nor will I repeat all the arguments good and bad, which are alleged against it. If there be a subject in which we ought to have no implicit faith, either in those who deny or in those who affirm; if there be a subject, in the discussion of which they who embrace the side of error advance truth, and they who embrace the side of truth advance falsehoods, this is certainly the subject. But we will not litigate this doctrine. We will allege here only one proof of our natural depravity, that shall be taken from experience, and, for evidence of this fatal truth, we refer each of you to his own feelings.

Is virtue to be practised? Who does not feel, as soon as he is capable of observing, an inward power of resistance? By *virtue* here, I understand a universal disposition of an intelligent soul to devote itself to order, and to regulate its conduct as order requires. Order demands, that when I suffer, I should submit myself to the mighty hand of God, which af-

licts me. When I am in prosperity, order requires me to acknowledge the bounty of my benefactor. If I possess talents superior to those of my neighbour, order requires me to use them for the glory of him, from whom I received them. If I am obliged to acknowledge that my neighbour has a richer endowment than I, order requires me to acquiesce with submission, and to acknowledge with humility this difference of endowment; should I revolt with insolence, or dispute through jealousy or self-love, I should act disorderly.

What I affirm of virtue, that it is a general disposition, that I affirm also in regard to an indisposition to sin. To avoid vice is to desist alike from every thing contrary to order, from slander and anger, from indolence and voluptuousness, and so on.

He who forms such ideas of the obligations of men, will have too many reasons to acknowledge, by his own inward feelings and experience, that we bring into the world with us propensities hostile and fatal to such obligations. Some of these are in the body; others in the mind.

Some are in the *body*. Who is there that finds in his senses that suppleness and readiness of compliance with a volition, which is itself directed by laws of order? Who does not feel his constitution rebel against virtue? I am not speaking now of such men as brutally give themselves up to their senses, who consult no other laws than the revolutions of their own minds, and who, having abandoned for many years the government of their souls to the humours of their bodies, have lost all dominion over their senses. I speak of such as have the most sincere desire to hear and obey the laws of order. How often does a tender and charitable soul find in a body subject to violence and anger obstacles against the exercise of its charity and tenderness? How often does a soul, penetrated with respect for the laws of purity, find in a body rebellious against this virtue terrible obstacles, to which it is in a manner constrained to yield?

Disorder is not only in the body; the *soul* is in the same condition. Consult yourselves in regard to such virtues and vices as are, so to speak, altogether spiritual, and have no relation, or a very distant one, to matter, and you will find you brought into the world an indisposition to some of these virtues, and an inclination to the opposite vices. For example, avarice is one of these spiritual vices, having only a very distant relation to matter. I do not mean that avarice does not incline us towards sensible objects, I only say, that it is a passion less seated in the material than in the spiritual part of man; it rises rather out of reflections of the mind, than out of motions of the body. Yet how many people are born sordid; people always inclined to amass money, and to whom the bare thought of giving, or parting with any thing, gives pain; people who prove, by the very manner in which they exercise the laws of generosity, that they are naturally inclined to violate them; people who never give except by constraint, who tear away, as it were, what they bestow on the necessities of the poor; and who never cut off those dear parts of themselves, without taking the most

affectionate leave of them? Envy and jealousy are dispositions of the kind which we call spiritual. They have their seat in the soul. There are many persons who acknowledge the injustice and baseness of these vices, and who hate them, and who nevertheless are not sufficient masters of themselves to prevent the dominion of them, at least to prevent a repetition of them, and not to find sometimes their own misery in the prosperity of other persons.

As we feel in our constitution obstacles to virtue, and propensities to vice, so we perceive also inclinations to error, and obstacles to truth. These things are closely connected; for if we find within us natural obstacles to virtue, we find for that very reason natural obstacles to truth; and if we be born with propensities to vice, we are born on that very account prone to error. Strictly speaking, all ideas of vice may be referred to one, that is to error. Every vice, every irregular passion, openly or tacitly implies a falsehood. Every vice, every irregular passion includes this error, that a man who gratifies his passion, is happier than he who restrains and moderates it. Now every man judging in this manner, whether he do so openly or covertly, takes the side of error. If we be then naturally inclined to some vices we are naturally inclined to some errors, I mean, to admit that false principle on which the irregular passion establishes the vice it would commit, the desire of gratification. An impassionate man is not free to discern truth from falsehood, at least, he cannot without extreme constraint discern the one from the other. He is inclined to fix his mind on what favours his passion, changes its nature, and disguises vice in the habit of virtue; and, to say all in one word, he is impelled to fix his mind on whatever makes truth appear false, and falsehood true.

I conclude, the disposition of mind of which Solomon speaks, and which he describes by *ruling the spirit*, supposes labour, constraint, and exercise. A man who would acquire this noble disposition of mind, a man who would *rule his spirit*, must in some sort recreate himself; he finds himself at once, if I may be allowed to say so, at war with nature; his body must be formed anew; his humours and his spirits must be turned into another channel; violence must be done to all the powers of his soul.

2. Having considered man in regard to his natural dispositions, observe him secondly in regard to *surrounding objects*. Here you will obtain a second exposition of Solomon's words, "He that ruleth his spirit;" you will have a second class of evidences of that exercise, labour, and constraint, which true heroism supposes. Society is composed of many enemies, who seem to be taking pains to increase those difficulties which our natural dispositions oppose against truth and virtue.

Examine the members of this society among whom we are appointed to live, consult their ideas, hear their conversation, weigh their reasonings, and you will find almost every where false judgments, errors, mistakes, and prejudices; prejudices of birth, taken from our parents, the nurses who suckled us, the people who made the habits in which we were wrapped

in our cradles; prejudices of education, taken from the masters to whom the care of our earlier days was committed, from some false ideas which they had imbibed in their youth, and from other illusions which they had created themselves; prejudices of country, taken from the genius of the people among whom we have lived, and, so to speak, from the very air we have breathed; prejudices of religion, taken from our catechists, from the divines we have consulted, from the pastors by whom we have been directed, from the sect we have embraced; prejudices of friendship, taken from the connexion we have had, and the company we have kept; prejudices of trade and profession, taken from the mechanical arts we have followed, or the abstract sciences we have studied; prejudices of fortune, taken from the condition of life in which we have been, either among the noble or the poor. This is only a small part of the canals by which error is conveyed to us. What efforts must a man make, what pains must he take with himself to preserve himself from contagion, to hold his soul perpetually in equilibrium, to keep all the gates of error shut, and incessantly to maintain, amidst so many prejudices, that freedom of judgment which weighs argument against objection, objection against argument, which deliberately examines all that can be advanced in favour of a proposition, and all that can be said against it; which considers an object in every point of view, and which makes us determine only as we are constrained by the irresistible authority, and by the soft violence of truth, demonstration, and evidence?

As the men who surround us fascinate us by their errors, so they decoy us into vice by their example. In all places, and in all ages, virtue had fewer partisans than vice; in all ages and in all places, the friends of virtue were so few in comparison of the partisans of vice, that the saints complain, that the earth was not inhabited by men of the first kind, and that the whole world was occupied by the latter, "the godly man ceaseth; the faithful fail from among the children of men, the Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no not one," Ps. xii. 1, and xiv. 2, 3. An exaggeration of the prophet, I grant, but an exaggeration for which the universality of human depravity has given too much occasion. Cast your eyes attentively on society, you will be, as our prophet was, astonished at the great number of the partisans of vice: you will be troubled, as he was, to distinguish in the crowd any friends of virtue; and you will find yourself inclined to say, as he said, "there is none that doeth good, no not one."

But how difficult is it to resist example, and to rule the spirit among such a number of tyrants, who aim only to enslave it! In order to resist example, we must incessantly oppose those natural inclinations which urge us to imitation. To resist example, we must not suffer ourselves to be dazzled either with the number or the splendour of such as have placed vice on a throne. To resist example, we must brave persecution, and all the inconveniences to

which worldly people never fail to expose them who refuse to follow them down the precipice. To resist example, we must love virtue for virtue's sake. To resist example, we must transport ourselves into another world, imagine ourselves among those holy societies who surround the throne of a holy God, who make his excellences the continual matter of their adoration and homage, and who fly at the first signal of his hand, the first breath of his mouth. What a work, what a difficult work for you, poor mortal, whose eyes are always turned towards the earth, and whom your own involuntary and insurmountable weight incessantly carries downward!

3. Finally, We must acknowledge what labour, pains, and resistance, the disposition of which Solomon speaks requires, if we consider man in regard to the *habits* which he has contracted. As soon as we enter into the world, we find ourselves impelled by our natural propensities, stunned with the din of our passions, and, as I just now said, seduced by the errors, and carried away by the examples of our companions. Seldom in the first years of life, do we surmount that natural bias, and that power of example, which impel us to falsehood and sin. Most men have done more acts of vice than of virtue; consequently, in the course of a certain number of years, we contribute by our way of living to join to the depravity of nature that which comes from exercise and habit. A man who would *rule his spirit*, is then required to eradicate the habits which have taken possession of him. What a task!

What a task, when we endeavour to prevent the return of ideas which, for many years, our minds have revolved! What a task, to defend one's self from a passion which knows all the avenues of the mind, and how to facilitate access by means of the body! What a task, to turn away from the flattering images, and seducing solicitations of concupiscence long accustomed to gratification! What a task, when we are obliged to make the greatest efforts in the weakest part of life, and to subdue an enemy, whom we have been always used to consider as unconquerable; and whom we never durst attack, when he had no other arms than what we chose to give him, and enjoyed no other advantages than such as we thought proper to allow! Such labour, such pains and constraint must he experience who acquires the art of *ruling his spirit*! Now then, as we have explained this disposition of mind, let us assign the place which is due to him who has it. Having given an idea of real heroism, we must display the grandeur of it, and prove the proposition in my text, "he that ruleth his spirit, is better than he that taketh a city."

II. For this purpose, it is not necessary to observe, that, by "him that taketh a city," Solomon does not mean a man who, from principles of virtue, to defend his country and religion, hazards his life and liberty in a just war; in this view, he that taketh a city, and he that ruleth his spirit, is one and the same man. Solomon intends conquerors, who live, if I may express myself so, upon victories and conquests; he intends heroes, such as the world considers them.

Neither is it necessary precisely to fix the bounds of this general expression, *is better*, "He

that ruleth his spirit, is better than he that taketh a city." The sense is easily understood; in general, it signifies that "he that ruleth his spirit," discovers more fortitude, more magnanimity, and more courage; that he has more just ideas of glory, and is more worthy of esteem and praise, than they who are called in the world conquerors and heroes.

We will prove this proposition, by comparing the hero of the world with the Christian hero: and we will confine the comparison to four articles; first, the motives which animate them; secondly, the exploits they perform; thirdly, the enemies they attack; and lastly, the rewards they obtain. "He that taketh a city," is animated with motives mean and worldly, which degrade an intelligent soul, even while they seem to elevate it to a pinnacle of grandeur and glory; but "he that ruleth his spirit," is animated by motives grand, noble, and sublime, every way suited to the excellence of our nature. "He that ruleth his spirit," is capable of all the exploits of *him* that taketh a city; but "he that taketh a city," is not capable of the exploits of "him that ruleth his spirit." "He that taketh a city," attacks an exterior enemy, to whom he has no attachment; but "he that ruleth his spirit," attacks an enemy who is dear to him, and has the greatness of soul to turn his arms against himself. In fine, "he that taketh a city," is crowned only by idiots, who have no just notions of grandeur and heroism; but "he that ruleth his spirit," will be crowned with the hands of the only just appraiser and dispenser of glory. These are four titles of superiority which the Christian hero has over the false hero, four sources of proofs to establish the proposition in our text, "he that ruleth his spirit, is better than he that taketh a city."

1. Let us consider the *motives* which animate a conqueror "that taketh a city," and the motives which animate a man that obtains "rule over his spirit;" the motives of the true hero, with the motives of the false hero. What are the motives of a false hero? What spirit animates him, when he undertakes to conquer a city? This is one of the questions which sinful passions have most obscured. Truth is disguised in epistles dedicatory, and in profane eulogiums, yea, sometimes in religious discourses. The majesty of a victorious general, the glory of a conqueror, the pompous titles of victor, arbiter of peace, arbiter of war, have so dazzled us, and in some sort so perverted the powers of our soul, that we cannot form just notions of this subject. Hear pure nature, formerly speaking by the mouth of a nation, who were the more wise for not being civilized by the injustice of our laws and customs. I speak of the ancient Scythians. The most famous taker of cities came to their cabins and caverns. He had already subdued his fellow-citizens and neighbours. Already Thebes and Athens, Thrace and Thessaly, had submitted to his arms. Already, Greece being too small a sphere of action for him, he had penetrated even into Persia, passed the famous Phrygian river, where he slew six hundred thousand men, reduced Caria and Judea, made war with Darius, and conquered him, performed exploits more than human, and, in spite of nature, besieged and took Tyre, the most famous siege

recorded in ancient history, subjugated the Mardi and Bactrians; attained the mountains Caucasus and Oxus, and, in a word, conquered more countries, and enslaved more people, than we can describe, or even mention within the limits allotted to this exercise. This man arrives in Scythia. The Scythians sent deputies to him, who thus addressed him: "Had the gods given you a body proportioned to your ambition, the whole universe would have been too little for you: with one hand you will have touched the east, and with the other the west, and, not content with this, you would have followed the sun, and have seen where he hides himself. Whatever you are, you are aspiring at what you can never obtain. From Europe, you run into Asia, and from Asia back you run again into Europe; and, having enslaved all mankind, you attack rivers, and forests, and wild beasts. What have you to do with us? We have never set foot in your country. May not a people living in a desert be allowed to be ignorant of who you are, and whence you come? You boast of having exterminated robbers, and you yourself are the greatest robber in the world. You have pillaged and plundered all nations, and now you come to rob us of our cattle. It is in vain to fill your hands for you are always in search of fresh prey. Of what use are your boundless riches, except to irritate your eternal thirst? You are the first man who ever experienced such extreme want in the midst of such abundance. All you have serves only to make you desire with more fury what you have not. If you be a god, do good to mankind; but if you be only an insignificant mortal, think of what you are, and remember that it is a great folly to occupy things which make us forget ourselves."\* These are the motives which animate the heroes of the world; these are the sentiments which are disguised under the fine names of glory, valour, greatness of soul, heroism. An insatiable avidity of riches, an invincible pride, a boundless ambition, a total forgetfulness of what is, what ought to be, and what must be hereafter.

The motives of him who endeavours to render himself master of his own heart, are love of order, desire of freedom from the slavery of the passions, a noble firmness of soul, which admits only what appears true, and loves only what appears lovely, after sober and serious discussion. In this first view, then, the advantage is wholly in favour of "him that ruleth his spirit. He that ruleth his spirit, is better than he that taketh a city."

2. Compare, in the second place, the "exploits of him that ruleth his spirit," with the exploits of "him that taketh a city." He who is capable of "ruling his spirit," is capable of all that is great and noble in "him that taketh a city;" but "he that taketh a city," is not capable of all that is great and magnanimous in "him that ruleth his spirit." I will explain myself.

What is there great and magnanimous in a hero that takes a city? Patience to endure fatigue, to surmount difficulties, to suffer contradiction; intrepidity in the most frightful dangers; presence of mind in the most violent and painful exercises; unshaken firmness in sight of

\* Quintus Curtius, lib. vii cap. 8.

a near and terrible dissolution. These are dispositions of mind, I grant, which seem to elevate man above humanity; but a Christian hero is capable of all this, I speak sincerely, and without a figure. A man, who has obtained a religious freedom of mind, who always preserves this liberty, who always weighs good and evil, who believes only what is true, and does only what is right; who has always his eye upon his duty, or, as the psalmist expresses it, who "sets the Lord always before him," such a man is capable, literally capable, of all you admire in a worldly hero. No difficulty discourages him, no contradiction disconcerts him, no fatigue stops him, no dangers affright him, no pain but he can bear, no appearance of death shocks him into paleness, and fear, and flight. Our women and children, our confessors and martyrs, have literally performed greater exploits of fortitude, patience, courage, and constancy, in convents, prisons, and dungeons, at stakes and on scaffolds, than Alexanders and Cesars in all their lives. And where is the hero of this world, who has performed so many actions of courage and magnanimity in sieges and battles, as our confessors have for thirty years on board the galley? The former were supported by the presence of thousands of witnesses; the latter had no spectators but God and their own consciences. The Christian hero is capable then of all that is great in the hero of the world. But the worldly hero is incapable of performing such exploits as the Christian hero performs; and he knows perfectly that his heroism does not conduct him so far in the path of glory. Try the strength of a worldly hero. Set him to contend with a passion. You will soon find this man, invincible before, subdued into slavery and shame. He who was firm and fearless in sight of fire and flame, at the sound of warlike instruments, becomes feeble, mean, and enervated by a seducing and enchanting object. Samson defeats the Philistines; but Delilah subdues Samson. Samson carries away the gates of Gaza; but Samson sinks under the weight of his own sensuality. Hercules seeks highway robbers to combat, and monsters to subdue; but he cannot resist impurity. We find him on monuments of antiquity carrying an infant on his shoulders, an emblem of voluptuousness, stooping under that unworthy burden, and letting his club fall from his hand. There is therefore no declamation, no hyperbole in our proposition; the Christian hero is capable of performing all the great actions performed by the hero of the world; but the hero of the world is incapable of performing such noble actions as the Christian hero performs; and in this respect, "he that ruleth his spirit, is better than he that taketh a city."

3. Compare "him that taketh a city with him that ruleth his spirit," in regard to the *enemies* whom they attack, and you will find in the latter a third title of superiority over the former. "He that taketh a city," attacks an exterior enemy, who is a stranger, and often odious to him. The ambition that fills his soul leaves no room for compassion and pity; and, provided he can but obtain his end, no matter to him though the way be strewn with the dying and the dead; to obtain that, he travels over mountains of heads, and arms, and car-

riages. The tumultuous passions which tyrannize over him, stifle the voice of nature, and deafen him to the cries of a thousand miserable wretches sacrificed to his fame.

The enemy whom the Christian combats is his own heart; for he is required to turn his arms against himself. He must suspend all sentiments of self-love; he must become his own executioner, and, to use the ideas and expressions of Jesus Christ, he must actually "deny himself."

Jesus Christ well knew mankind. He did not preach like some preaching novices, who, in order to incline their hearers to subdue their passions propose the work to them as free from difficulty. Jesus Christ did not disguise the difficulties which the man must undergo who puts on the spirit of Christianity; and I do not know whether we meet with any expression in the writings of pagan poets or philosophers more natural, and at the same time more emphatical than this; "If any man will come after me let him deny himself," Matt. xvi. 24.

Not that this is literally practicable, not that man can put off himself, not that religion requires us to sacrifice to it what makes the essence and happiness of our nature; on the contrary, strictly speaking, it is sin which makes us put off or deny what is great and noble in our essence; it is sin which requires us to sacrifice our true happiness to it. If Jesus Christ expresses himself in this manner, it is because when man is possessed with a passion, it is incorporated, as it were, with himself; it seems to him essential to his felicity; every thing troubles and every thing puts him on the rack when he cannot gratify it; without gratifying his passion, his food has no taste, flowers no smell, pleasures no point, the sun is dark, society disagreeable, life itself has no charms. To attack a reigning passion is "to deny self;" and "here is the patience of the saints;" this is the enemy whom the Christian attacks; this is the war which he wages. How tremulous and weak is the hand when it touches a sword to be plunged into one's own bosom! Love of order, truth and virtue, support a Christian hero in this almost desperate undertaking.

4. In fine, compare *him that rules his spirit with him that takes a city*, in regard to the *acclamations* with which they are accompanied, and the *crowns* prepared for them. Who are the authors of those acclamations with which the air resounds the praise of worldly heroes? They are courtiers, poets, panegyrist. But what! are people of this order the only persons who entertain just notions of glory? and if they be, are they generous enough to speak out? How can a soul wholly devoted to the will and caprice of a conqueror; how can a venal creature, who makes a market of eulogiums and praises, which he sells to the highest bidder, how can a brutal soldiery determine what is worthy of praise or blame? Is it for such people to distribute prizes of glory, and to assign heroes their rank? To be exalted by people of this sort is a shame; to be crowned by their hands an infamy.

Elevate, elevate thy meditation, Christian soul, rise into the majesty of the Great Supreme. Think of that sublime intelligence, who unites in his essence every thing noble and

sublime. Contemplate God, surrounded with angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim. Hear the concerts which happy spirits perform to his glory. Hear them, penetrated, ravished, charmed with the divine beauties, crying night and day, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory. Blessing and glory, wisdom and thanksgiving, honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name?" This Being so perfect, this Being so worthily praised, this Being so worthy of everlasting praise, this is he who will pronounce upon true glory; this is he who will compose the eulogium of all who aspire at it; this is he who will one day praise in the face of heaven and earth all those who shall have made the noble conquests which we have been describing.

Imagination sinks under the weight of this subject, and this object is too bright for eyes like ours; but the nature of things does not depend on our faculty of seeing them. As God calls us to combats more than human, so he sees fit to support us by a prospect of more than human rewards. Yes, it is the Supreme Being, it is he, who will one day distribute the praises which are due to such as have triumphed over themselves. What a spectacle! what a prospect! Yes, Christian champion, after thou hast resisted flesh and blood, after thou hast been treated as a fool by mankind, after thou hast run the race of tribulation, after thou hast made thy life one perpetual martyrdom, thou shalt be called forth in the presence of men and angels; the Master of the world shall separate thee from the crowd; there he will address to thee this language, "Well done, good and faithful servant;" there he will accomplish the promise which he this day makes to all who fight under his standard, "he that overcometh shall sit down in my throne." Ah! glory of worldly heroes, profane encomiums, fastidious inscriptions, proud trophies, brilliant, but corruptible diadems! what are you in comparison with the acclamations which await the Christian hero, and the crowns which God the rewarder prepares for him?

And you, mean and timid souls, who perhaps admire these triumphs, but who have not the ambition to strive to obtain them; you soft and indolent spirits, who, without reluctance, give up all pretensions to the immortal crowns which God prepares for heroism, provided he requires no account of your indolence and effeminacy, and suffers you, like brute beasts, to follow the first instincts of your nature; undeceive yourselves. I said, at the beginning, you are all called to heroism; there is no mid-way in religion; you must be covered with shame and infamy, along with the base and timid, or crowned with glory, in company with heroes. The duty of an intelligent soul is to adhere to truth, and to follow virtue; we bring into the world with us obstacles to both; our duty is to surmount them; without this we betray our trust; we do not answer the end of our creation; we are guilty, and we shall be punished for not endeavouring to obtain the great end for which we were created.

Let this be the great principle of our divinity and morality. Let us invariably retain it. Let us not lose ourselves in discussions and researches into the origin of evil, and into the permission of the entrance of sin into the world. Let us not bury ourselves alive in speculations and labyrinths; let us not plunge into abysses, from which no pains can disengage us. Let us fear an ocean full of rocks, and let an idea of the shipwrecks, which so many rash people have made, stop us on the shore. Let us consider these questions, less with a view to discover the perfections of the Creator, in the thick darkness under which he has thought proper to conceal them, than in that of learning the obligations of a creature. I do not mean to decry those great geniuses who have treated of this profound subject. Their works do honour to the human mind. They are eternal monuments to the glory of a reason, which knows how to collect its force, and to fix itself on a single object; but it is always certain, that we cannot arrive at clear truth on this subject, except by means of thousands of distinctions and abstractions, which most of us cannot make. The subject is so delicate and refined, that most eyes are incapable of seeing it and it is placed on an eminence so steep and inaccessible, that few geniuses can attain it.

Let us religiously abide by our principle. The duty of an intelligent soul is to adhere to truth, and to practise virtue. We are born with a disinclination to both. Our duty is to get rid of this; and, without doing so, we neglect the obligation of an intelligent soul; we do not answer the end for which we were intended; we are guilty, and we shall be punished for not having answered the end of our creation.

Let us consider ourselves as soldiers placed round a besieged city, and having such or such an enemy to fight, such or such a post to force. You, you are naturally subject to violence and anger. It is sad to find, in one's own constitution, an opposition to virtues so lovely as those of submission, charity, sweetness, and patience. Groan under this evil; but do not despair; when you are judged, less attention will be paid to your natural indisposition to these virtues, than to the efforts which you made to get rid of it. To this point direct all your attention, all your strength, and all your courage. Say to yourself, this is the post which my general intended I should force; this is the enemy I am to fight with. And be you fully convinced, that one of the principal views which God has in preserving your life, is, that you should render yourself master of this passion. You, you are naturally disposed to be proud. The moment you leave your mind to its natural bias, it turns to such objects as seem the most fit to give you high ideas of yourself, to your penetration, your memory, your imagination, and even to exterior advantages, which vanity generally incorporates with the person who enjoys them. It is melancholy to find within yourself any seeds of an inclination, which so ill agree with creatures vile and miserable as men. Lament this misfortune, but do not despair; to this side turn all your attention and all your courage and strength. Say to yourself, this is the post which my general

would have me force; this is the enemy whom he has appointed me to oppose. And be fully convinced, that one of the principal views of God in continuing you in this world is, that you may resist this passion, and make yourself master of it.

Let us all together, my brethren, endeavour to rule our own spirits. Let us not be dismayed at the greatness of the work, because

“greater is he that is in us than he that is in the world.” Grace comes to the aid of nature. Prayer acquires strength by exercise. The passions, after having been tyrants, become slaves in their turn. The danger and pain of battle vanish, when the eye gets sight of conquest. How inconceivably beautiful is victory then? God grant we may obtain it. To him be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

END OF VOLUME I.





















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