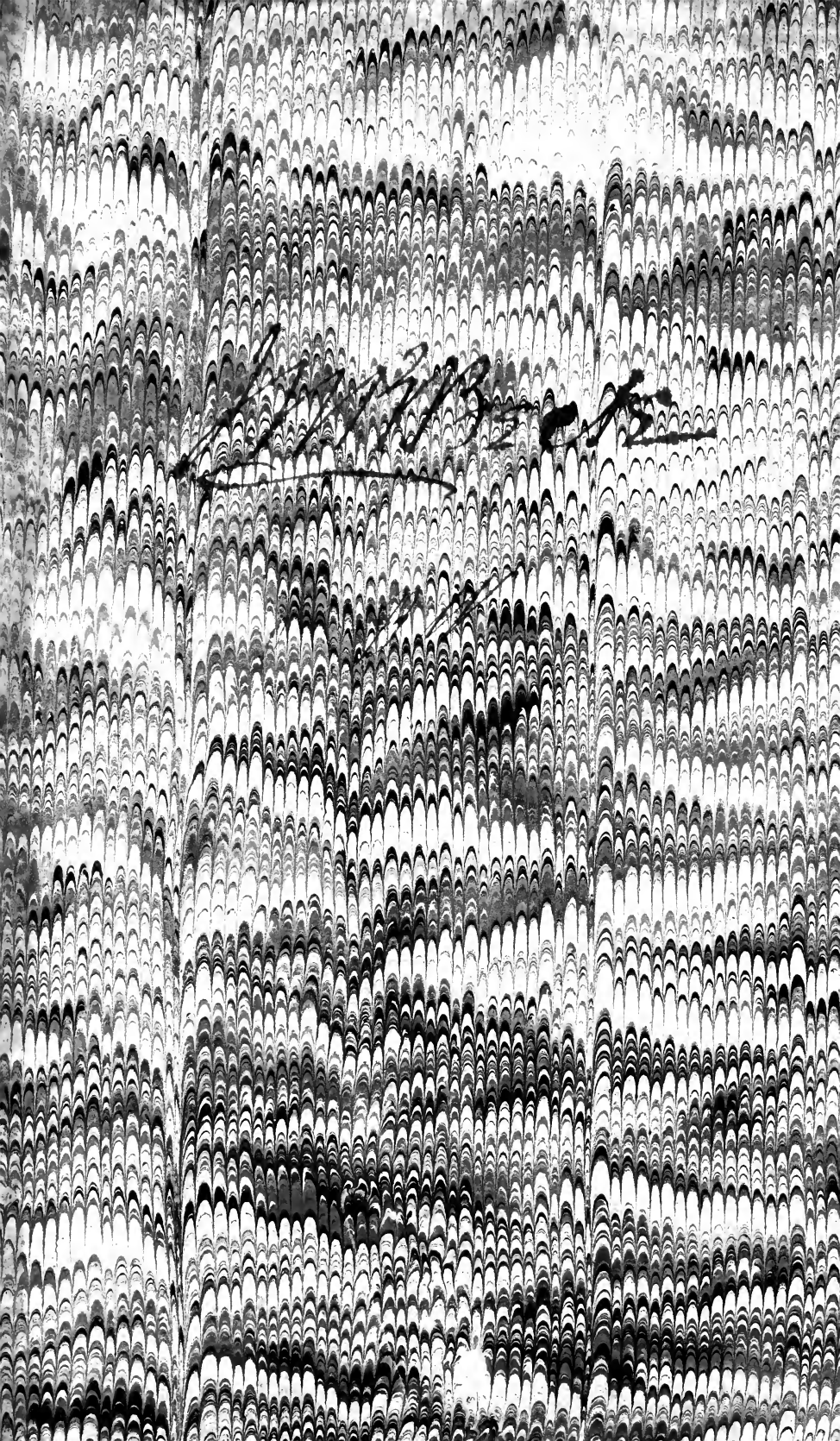
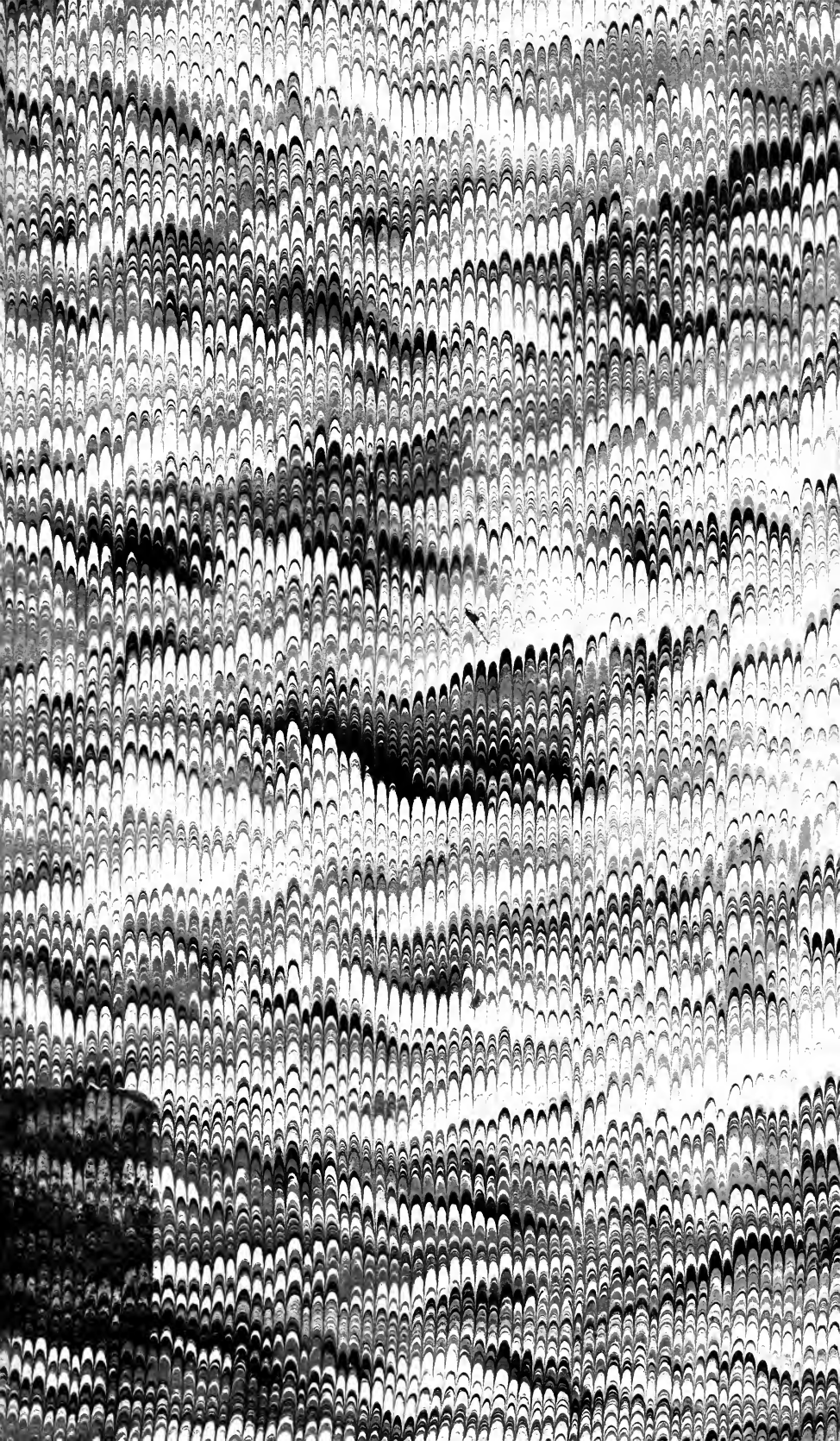


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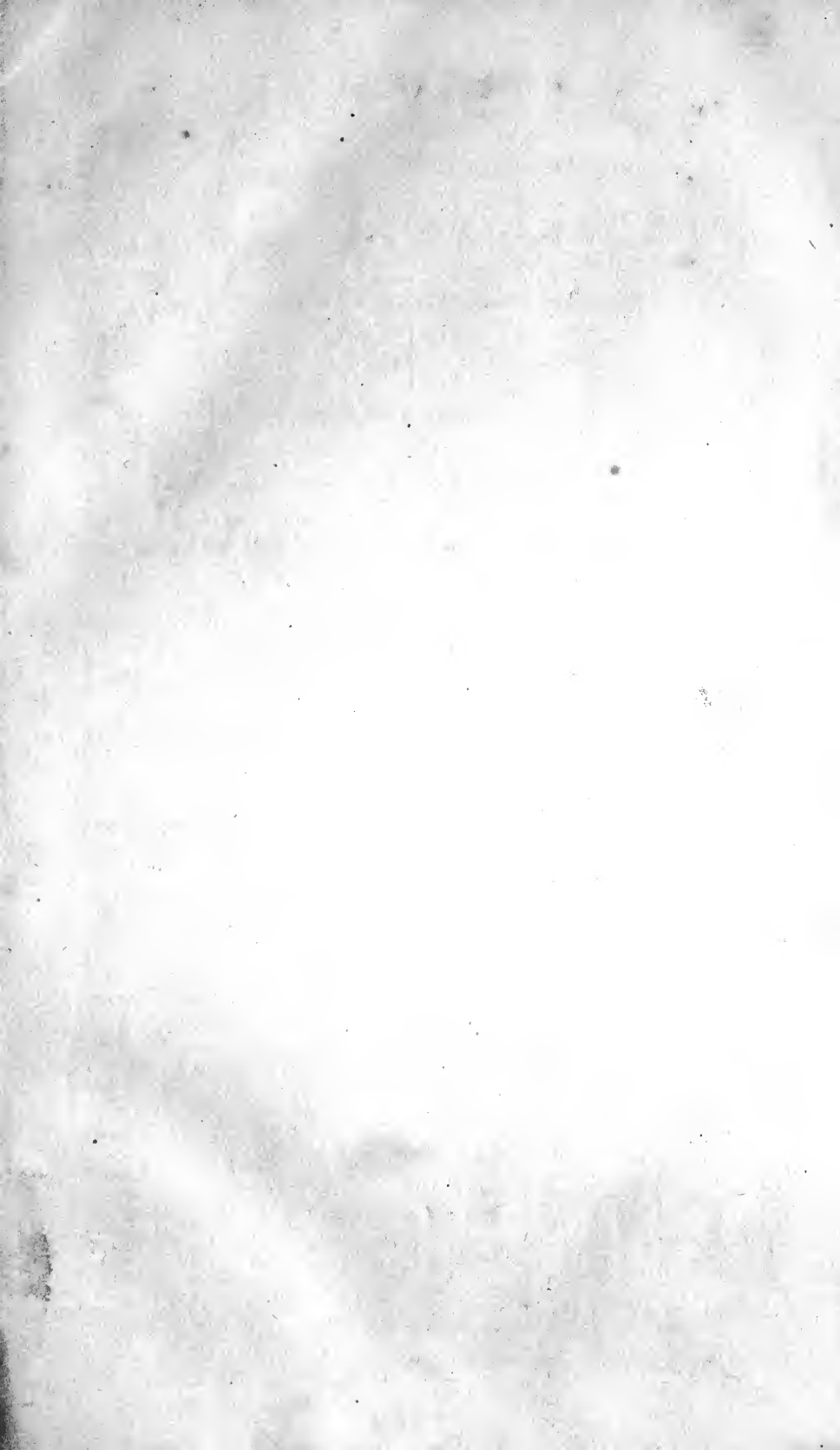


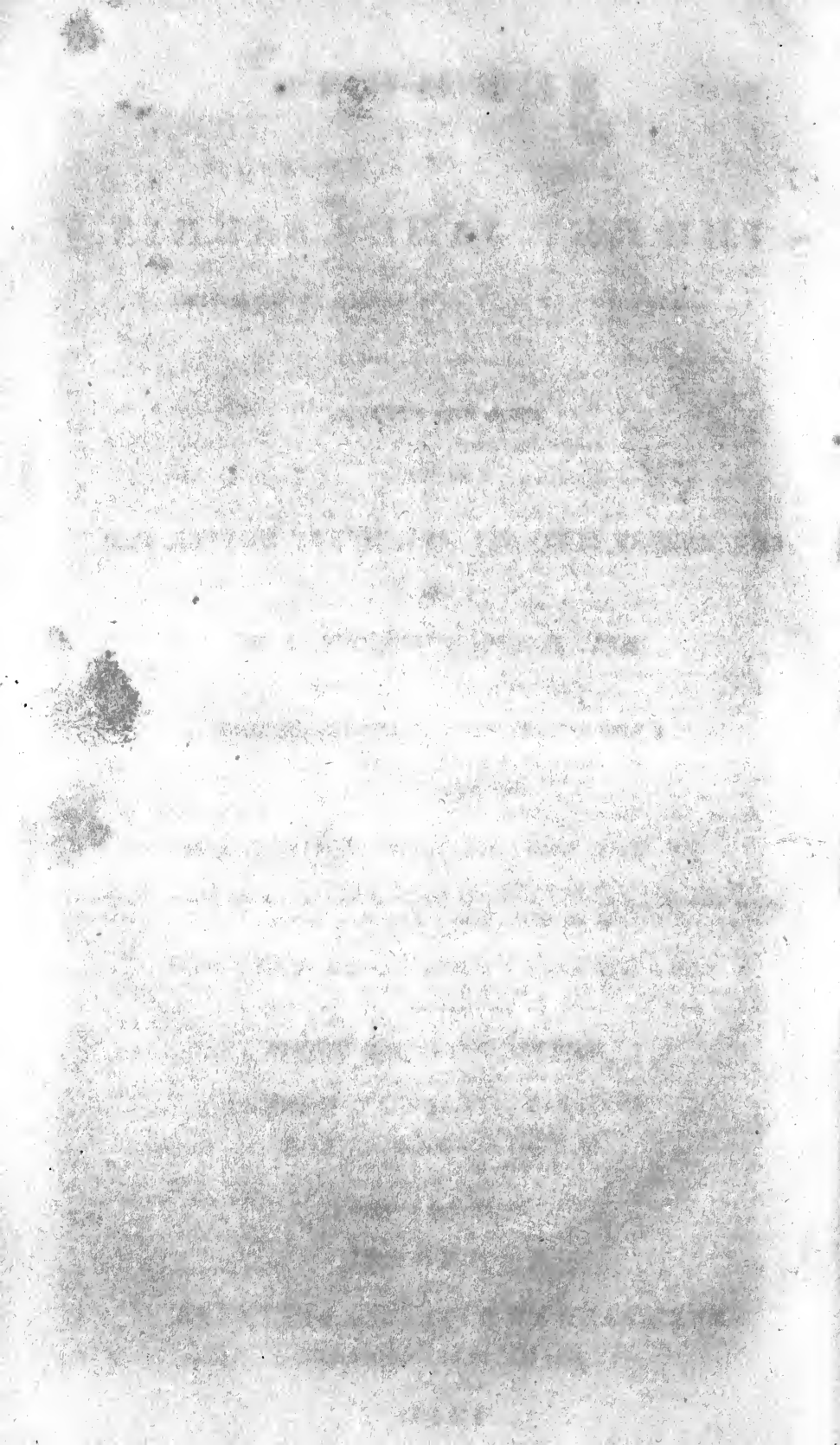


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J. W. Burder
S E R M O N S

OF

THE REV. JAMES SAURIN,

LATE PASTOR OF THE FRENCH CHURCH AT THE HAGUE.

FROM THE FRENCH,

BY THE

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

AND

REV. JOSEPH SUTCLIFFE, A. M.

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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SERMON LII.

CHRISTIAN CASUISTRY.

PROVERBS iv. 26.

Powder the path of thy feet, and all thy ways shall be established.

THE sentence which we have now read, includes a subject of immense magnitude, more proper to fill a volume, than to be comprised in a single sermon; however, we propose to express the subject of it in this one discourse. When we shall have explained the subject, we will put it to proof; I mean, we will apply it to some religious articles, leaving to your piety the care of applying it to a great number, and of deriving from the general application this consequence, if we "ponder the paths of our feet, all our ways will be established."

I suppose, first, you affix just ideas to this metaphorical expression, "ponder the path of thy feet." It is one of those singular figures of speech, which agrees better with the genius of the sacred language than with that of ours. Remark this once for all. There is one among many objections made by the enemies of religion, which excels in its kind; I mean to say, it deserves to stand first in a list of the most extravagant sophisms: this is, that there is no reason for making a difference between the genius of the Hebrew language and the idiom of other languages. It would seem, by this objection, that a book not originally written in the idiom of the language of scepticism can not be divinely inspired. On this absurd principle, the Scripture could not be written in any language; for if a Greek had a right to object against inspiration on this account, an Arabian, and a Persian, and all other people have the same. Who does not perceive at once, that the inspired writers, delivering their messages at first to the Jews, "to whom were committed the oracles of God," Rom. iii. 2, spoke properly according to the idiom of their language? They ran no risk of being misunderstood by other nations, whom a desire of being saved should incline to study the language for the sake of the wisdom taught in it.

How extravagant soever this objection is, so extravagant that no infidel will openly avow it, yet it is adopted, and applied in a thousand instances. The book of Canticles is full of figures opposite to the genius of our western languages; it is therefore no part of the sacred canon. It would be easy to produce other examples. Let a modern purist, who affects neatness and accuracy of style, and gives lectures on punctuation, condemn this manner of speaking, "ponder the path of thy feet;" with all my heart. The inspired authors had no less reason to make use of it, nor interpreters to affirm, that it is an eastern expression, which signifies to take no step without first deliberately examining it. The metaphor of the text being thus reduced to truth, another doubt

arises concerning the subject, to which it is applied, and this requires a second elucidation. The term *step* is usually restrained in our language to actions of life, and never signifies a mode of thinking; but the Hebrew language gives this term a wider extent, and it includes all these ideas. One example shall suffice. "My steps had well nigh slipped," Ps. lxxiii. 2, that is to say, I was very near taking a false step; and what was this step? It was judging that the wicked were happier in the practice of licentiousness, than the righteous in obeying the laws of truth and virtue. Solomon, in the words of my text, particularly intends to regulate our actions; and in order to this he intends to regulate the principles of our minds, and the affections of our hearts. "Ponder the path of thy feet, and all thy ways shall be established," for so I render the words. Examine your steps deliberately before you take them, and you will take only wise steps; if you would judge rightly of objects, avoid hasty judging; before you fix your affection on an object, examine whether it be worthy of your esteem, and then you will love nothing but what is lovely. By thus following the ideas of the Wise Man, we will assort our reflections with the actions of your lives, and they will regard also, sometimes the emotions of your hearts, and the operations of your minds.

We must beg leave to add a third elucidation. The maxim in the text is not always practicable. I mean, there are some doctrines, and some cases of conscience, which we cannot fully examine without coming to a conclusion, that the arguments for, and the arguments against them, are of equal weight, and consequently, that we must conclude without a conclusion; weigh the one against the other, and the balance will incline neither way.

This difficulty, however, solves itself; for, after I have weighed, with all the exactness of which I am capable, two opposite propositions, and can find no reasons sufficient to determine my judgment, the part I ought to take is not to determine at all. Are you prejudiced in favour of an opinion, so ill suited to the limits which it has pleased God to set to our knowledge, that it is dangerous or criminal to suspend our judgments! Are your consciences so weak and scrupulous as to hesitate in some cases to say, I do not know, I have not determined that question? Poor men! do you know yourselves so little? Poor Christians! will you always form such false ideas of your legislator? And do you not know that none but such as live perpetually disputing in the schools make it a law to answer every thing? Do you not

know, that one principal cause of that fury, which erected scaffolds, and lighted fires in the church, that ought to breathe nothing but peace and love, was a rash decision of some questions which it was impossible for sensible men to determine? Are you not aware that one of the most odious ideas that can be formed of God, one the least compatible with the eminence of his perfections, is, that God requires of us knowledge beyond the faculties he has given us? I declare I cannot help blushing for Christians, and especially for Christians cultivated as you are, when I perceive it needful to repeat this principle, and even to use precaution, and to weigh the terms in which we propose it, lest we should offend them. To what then are we reduced, Great God, if we have the least reason to suspect that thou wilt require an account, not only of the talents which it has pleased thee to commit to us? To what am I reduced, if, having only received of thee, my Creator, a human intelligence, thou wilt require of me angelical attainments?—Whither am I driven, if, having received a body capable of moving only through a certain space in a given time, thou Lord, requirdest me to move with the velocity of aerial bodies? At this rate, when thou in the last great day shalt judge the world in righteousness, thou, Judge of the whole earth, wilt condemn me for not preaching the gospel in Persia, the same day and the same hour in which I was preaching it in this assembly! Far from us be such detestable opinions! Let us adhere to the sentiments of St. Paul, God shall judge the Gentile according to what he has committed to the Gentile; the Jew according to what he has committed to the Jew; the Christian according to what he has committed to the Christian. Thus Jesus Christ, “Unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more,” Luke xii. 48. Thus again Jesus Christ teaches us, that God will require an account of five talents of him to whom he gave five talents, of two talents of him to whom he gave two, and of one only of him to whom he gave but one. What did our Redeemer mean when he put into the mouth of the wicked servant this abominable pretext for neglecting to improve his Lord’s talent? “Lord, I knew thee that thou art a hard man,” or, as it may be better translated, a *barbarous man*, “reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed.” I return to my subject. When we have examined two contradictory doctrines, and can obtain no reasons sufficient to determine our judgment, our proper part is, to suspend our judgment of the subject, and not to determine it at all.

It will be said, that, if this be possible in regard to speculative points; it is not applicable to matters of practice. Why not? Such cases of conscience as are the most embarrassing are precisely those which ought to give us the least trouble. This proposition may appear a paradox, but I think I can explain and prove it. I compare cases of conscience with points of speculation; difficult cases of conscience with such speculative points as we just now mentioned. The most difficult points of speculation ought to give us the least concern; I mean,

we ought to be persuaded that ignorance on these subjects cannot be dangerous. The reason is plain: if God intended we should see these truths in their full depth and clearness, he would not have involved them in so much obscurity, or he would have given us greater abilities, and greater assistances, to enable us to form adequate and perfect ideas of them. In like manner, in regard to cases of conscience, attended with insurmountable difficulties, if our salvation depended on the side we take in regard to them, God would have revealed more clearly what side we ought to take. In such cases as these, intention supplies the place of knowledge, and probability that of demonstration.

So much for clearing the meaning of the Wise Man; now let us put his doctrine to proof. “Ponder the path of thy feet, and all thy ways shall be established.” Wouldst thou take only sure steps, at least as sure as is possible in a world where “in many things we offend all,” weigh all the actions you intend to perform first with the principle from which they proceed; then with the circumstances in which you are at the time; next with the manner in which you perform them; again with the bounds which restrain them; afterward with those degrees of virtue and knowledge at which you are arrived; and lastly, with the different judgments which you yourself form concerning them.

I. An action good in itself may become criminal, if it proceed from a bad principle.

II. An action good in itself may become criminal, if it be performed in certain circumstances.

III. An action good in itself may become criminal by the manner in which it is performed.

IV. An action good in itself may become criminal by being extended beyond its just limits.

V. An action good in itself, when performed by a man of a certain degree of knowledge and virtue, may become criminal, if it be performed by a man of inferior knowledge and virtue.

VI. In fine, an action good in itself now, may become criminal at another time.

These maxims ought to be explained and enforced; and here we are going, as I said at first, to apply the doctrine of the Wise Man to a few subjects, leaving to your piety the care of applying them to a great number, which will necessarily occur in the course of your lives.

I. We ought to ponder our steps in regard to the *principle* from which they proceed. An action good in itself may become criminal, if it proceed from a bad principle. The little attention we pay to this maxim is one principal cause of the false judgments we make of ourselves. Thus many, who allow themselves very expensive luxuries, say, they contribute to the increase of trade. To increase trade, and to employ artists, considered in themselves, are good works I grant; but is it a desire of doing these good works that animates you? Is it not your vanity? Is it not your luxury? Is it not your desire of sparkling and shining in the world?

Thus our brethren, who resist all the exhortations that have been addressed to them for many years, to engage them to follow Jesus Christ "without the camp," reply, that were they to obey these exhortations, all the seeds of truth now remaining in the land of their nativity would perish, and that the remnants of the reformation would be entirely extirpated. Diligently to preserve even remnants of the reformation, and seeds of truth, is certainly an action good in itself; but is this the motive which animates you when you resist all our exhortations? Is it not love of the present world? Is it not the same motive that animated *Demas*? Is it not because you have neither courage enough to sacrifice for Jesus Christ what he requires, nor zeal enough to profess your religion at the expense of your fortunes and dignities? Thus again they who are immersed in worldly care tell us, that were they to think much about dying, society could not subsist, arts would languish, sciences decay, and so on. I deny this principle. I affirm, society would be incomparably more flourishing were each member of it to think continually of death. In such a case each would consult his own ability, before he determined what employment he would follow, and then we should see none elected to public offices except such as were capable of discharging them; we should see the gospel preached only by such as have abilities for preaching; we should see armies commanded only by men of experience, and who possessed that superiority of genius which is necessary to command them. Then the magistrate, having always death and judgment before his eyes, would think only of the public good. Then the judge, having his eye fixed only on the Judge of all mankind, would regard the sacred trust committed to him, and would not consider his rank only as an opportunity of making his family, accumulating riches, and behaving with arrogance. Then the pastor, all taken up with the duties of that important ministry which God has committed to him, would exercise it only to comfort the afflicted, to visit the sick, to repress vice, to advance the kingdom of that Jesus whose minister he has the honour to be, and not officiously to intrude into families to direct them, to tyrannize over consciences, to make a parade of gifts, and to keep alive a spirit of party.

But, not to carry these reflections any further, you say, society could not subsist, sciences would languish, and arts decay, if men thought much about dying. Very well. I agree. But I ask, is this the motive which animates you when you turn away your eyes from this object? Is it fear lest the arts should decay, science languish, society disperse? Is it this fear which keeps you from thinking of death? Is it not rather because an idea of this "king of terrors" disconcerts the whole system of your conscience, stupified by a long habit of sin; because it urges you to restore that accursed acquisition, which is the fund that supports your pageantry and pride; because it requires you to renounce that criminal intrigue which makes the conversation of all companies, and gives just offence to all good men?

My brethren, would you always take right steps? Never take one without first examin-

ing the motive which engages you to take it. Let the glory of God be the great end of all our actions; "whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, let us do all to the glory of God," 1 Cor. x. 31. A motive so noble and so worthy of that holy calling with which God has honoured us, will sanctify all our steps, will give worth to our virtues, and will raise those into virtuous actions, which seem to have the least connexion with virtue. A bustling trade, a sprightly conversation, a well-matched union, a sober recreation, a domestic amusement, all become virtues in a man animated with the glory of God; on the contrary, virtue itself, the most ardent zeal for truth, the most generous charities, the most fervent prayers, knowledge the most profound, and sacrifices the least suspicious, become vices in a man not animated with this motive.

II. Let us ponder our steps in regard to the *circumstances* which accompany them. An action, good or innocent in itself, may become criminal in certain circumstances. This maxim is a clue to many cases of conscience, in which we choose to blind ourselves. We obstinately consider our actions in a certain abstracted light, never realized, and we do not attend to circumstances which change the nature of the action. We think we strike a casuist dumb, when we ask him, what is there criminal in the action you approve? Hear the morality of the inspired writers.

It is allowable to attach ourselves to a pious prince, and to push for port. Yet when Barzillai had arrived at a certain age, he thought it his duty to flee from court, and to quit his prince, and he said to David, who invited him to court, "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? 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," 2 Sam. xix. 35. 37.

It is allowable to erect houses proportional to our fortunes and rank. Yet the buildings of the Israelites drew upon them the most mortifying censures, and the most rigorous chastisements, after their return from captivity. This was, because, while their minds were all employed about their own edifices, they took no thought about rebuilding the temple. "Is it time for you," said the prophet Haggai, "Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste?" chap. i. 4.

It is allowable, sometimes, to join in good company, and to taste the pleasures of the table and society; yet Isaiah reproached the Jews of his time in the most cutting manner, for giving themselves up to these pleasures, at a time when recent crimes, and approaching calamities should have engaged them to acts of repentance. "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. 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 God of hosts," Isa. xxii. 12, &c.

It is allowable to eat any thing, without regard to the Levitical law. Yet St. Paul declares, "If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth," 1 Cor. viii. 13.

How many circumstances of this kind might I add? Let us retain what we have heard, and let us make these the basis of a few maxims.

The case of scandal is a circumstance which makes a lawful action criminal. I infer this from the example of St. Paul just now mentioned. What is scandal? Of many definitions I confine myself to one.

A scandalous or offensive action is that which must naturally make a spectator of it commit a fault. By this touchstone examine some actions, which you think allowable, because you consider them in themselves, and you will soon perceive that you ought to abstain from them. By this rule, it is not a question only, when it is agitated as a case of conscience, Is gaming criminal or innocent? The question is not only, what gaming is to you, who can afford to play without injuring your family or fortune; the question is, whether you ought to engage another to play with you, who will ruin his. When a case of conscience is made of this question—Can I, without wounding my innocence, allow myself certain freedoms in conversation? The question is not only whether you can permit yourself to do so without defiling your innocence, but whether you can do so without wounding the innocence of your neighbour, who will infer from the liberties you take, that you have no regard to modesty, and who perhaps may avail himself of the license you give him.

Another circumstance, which makes a lawful action criminal, is taken from the passage of Isaiah just now mentioned. I fear suppressing a sense of present sins and of approaching calamities. I wish, when we have had the weakness to commit such sins as suspend the communion of a soul with its God, I wish we had the wisdom to lay aside for some time, not only criminal, but even lawful pleasures. I wish, instead of going into company, even the most regular, we had the wisdom to retire. I wish, instead of relishing then the most lawful recreations, we had the wisdom to mourn for our offending a God whose law ought to be extremely respected by us. To take the opposite course then, to allow one's self pleasure, innocent indeed in happier times, is to discover very little sense of that God whose commands we have just now violated; it is to discover that we have very little regard for our salvation, at a time when we have so many just causes of doubting whether our hope to be saved be well-grounded.

The afflicted state of the church is another circumstance, which may make an innocent action criminal: So I conclude, from the passage just now quoted from Haggai. Dissipations, amusements, festivals, ill become men, who ought to be "grieved for the afflictions of Joseph;" or, to speak more clearly, less still become miserable people whom the wrath of God pursues, and who, being themselves "as firebrands" hardly "plucked out of the burning," are yet exposed to the flames of tribulation, one in the person of his father, another

in those of his children, and all in a million of their brethren.

Age, again, is another circumstance converting an innocent to a criminal action. This I conclude from the example of Barzillai. Let a young man, just entering into trade, be all attention and diligence to make his fortune; he should be so: but that an old man, that a man on the brink of the grave, and who has already attained the age which God has marked for the life of man, that such a man should be all fire and flame for the success of his trade, just as he was the first day he entered on it; that he should, so to speak, direct his last sigh towards money and the increase of his trade, is the shame of human nature; it is a mark of reprobation, which ought to alarm all that bear it.

Let a young man in the heat of his blood, a youth yet a novice in the world, and who may promise himself, with some appearance of truth, to live a few years in the world, sometimes lay aside that gravity, which, however, so well becomes men whose eyes are fixed on the great objects of religion; let him, I say, I forgive him; but that an old man, whom long experience should have rendered wise, that he should be fond of pleasure, that he should make a serious affair of distinguishing himself by the elegance of his table, that he should go every day to carry his skeleton, wan and tottering, into company employed in the amusements of youth; this is the shame of human nature, this is a mark of reprobation, which ought to terrify all that bear it.

I. I. Would we have all our ways established? Let us examine the manners that accompany them. An action good in itself, yea, more, the most essential duties of religion become criminal, when they are not performed with proper dispositions. One of the most essential duties of religion is to assist the poor; yet this duty will become a crime, if it be performed with haughtiness, hardness, and constraint. It is not enough to assist the poor; the duty must be done with such circumspection, humanity, and joy, as the apostle speaks of, when he says, "God loveth a cheerful giver," 2 Cor. ix. 7. Another most essential duty of religion is to interest one's self in the happiness of our neighbour; and if he turn aside from the path of salvation, to bring him back again. "Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him;" thus God spoke by his servant Moses, Lev. xix. 17. "Exhort one another daily;" this is a precept of St. Paul, Heb. iii. 13. To this may be added the declaration of St. James: "If any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins," chap. v. 19, 20. But this duty would become a crime, were we to rebuke a neighbour with bitterness, were the reproof more satire than exhortation, were we to assume airs of haughtiness and discover that we intended less to censure the vices of others, than to display our own imaginary excellencies. It is not enough to rebuke a neighbour; it must be done with all those charitable concomitants, which are so proper to make the most bitter censures palatable; it must be done with that

modesty, or, may I say, with that bashfulness which proves that it is not a spirit of self-sufficiency that reproves our neighbour, but that it is because we interest ourselves in his happiness, and are jealous of his glory.

IV. Our fourth maxim is, that an action good in itself may become criminal by being extended beyond its proper limits. It was said of a fine genius of the last age, that he never quitted a beautiful thought till he had entirely disfigured it. The observation was perfectly just in regard to the author to whom it was applied; the impetuosity of his imagination made him overstrain the most sensible things he advanced, so that what was truth, when he began to propose it, became an error in his mouth by the extreme to which he carried it. In like manner, in regard to a certain order of Christians, virtue becomes vice in their practice, because they extend it beyond proper bounds. Their holiness ought always to be restrained, and after they have been exhorted to righteousness and wisdom, it is necessary to say to them with the Wise Man, "Be not righteous overmuch, neither make thyself over-wise," Eccles. vii. 17; an idea adopted by St. Paul, Rom. xii. 3.

"Be not righteous overmuch, neither make thyself over-wise" in regard to the mysteries of religion. As people sometimes lose their lives by diving, so sometimes people become unbelievers by believing too much. It is not uncommon to see Christians so eager to elucidate the difficulties of the book of Revelation, as not to perceive clearly the doctrine of evangelical morality.

"Be not righteous overmuch, neither make thyself over-wise" in regard to charity. The laws of equity march before those of charity; or rather, the laws of charity are founded on those of equity. To neglect to support a family and to satisfy creditors, under pretence of relieving the poor, is not charity, and giving alms; but it is rapine, robbery, and iniquity.

"Be not righteous overmuch, neither make thyself over-wise" in regard to closet devotion. So to give one's self up to the devotion of the closet, as to lose sight of what we owe to society; to be so delighted with praying to God as not to hear the petitions of the indigent; to devote so much time to meditation as to reserve none for an oppressed person who requires our assistance, for a widow who beseeches us to pity the cries of her hungry children; this is not piety, this is vision, this is enthusiasm, this is sophism of zeal, if I may express myself so.

"Be not righteous overmuch, neither make thyself over-wise" in regard to distrusting ourselves, and fearing the judgments of God. I know, the greatest saints have reason to tremble, when they consider themselves in some points of light. I know Jobs and Davids have exclaimed, "If I should justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me. If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" Job ix. 20; Ps. cxxx. 3. I know, one of the most powerful motives which the inspired writers have used, to animate the hearts of men with piety, is fear, according to this exclamation of Solomon, "Happy is the man that feareth alway," Prov. xxviii. 14; and according to this idea of St. Paul, "Knowing

the terror of the Lord, we persuade men," 2 Cor. v. 11. I know, the surest method to strengthen our virtue is to distrust ourselves, according to this expression. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall," 1 Cor. x. 12.

However, it is certain, some fears of God proceed rather from the irregularity of the imagination, than from a wise and well directed piety. Fear of the judgment of God is sometimes a passion, which has this in common with all other passions, it loves to employ itself about what favours, cherishes, and supports it; it is reluctant to approach what would diminish, defeat, and destroy it. Extremes of vice touch extremes of virtue, so that we have no sooner passed over the bounds of virtue, than we are entangled in the irregularities of vice.

V. We said in the fifth place, that each ought to ponder his path with regard to that degree of holiness at which the mercy of God has enabled him to arrive. An action good in itself when it is performed by a man arrived at a certain degree of holiness, becomes criminal, when it is done by him who has only an inferior degree. There never was an opinion more absurd and more dangerous than that of some mystics, known by the name of *Molinists*. They affirmed, that when the soul was lodged at I know not what distance from the body; that when it was in, I know not what state which they called *abandonment*, it partook no more of the irregularities of the body which it animated, so that the most impure actions of the body could not defile it, because it knew how to detach itself from the body.

What kind of extravagance can one imagine, of which poor mankind hath not given an example? Yet the apostle determines this point with so much precision, that one would think it was impossible to mistake it. "Unto the pure, all things are pure; but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure," Titus i. 15. I recollect the sense which a celebrated bishop in the isle of Cyprus gave these words in the first ages of the church. I speak of Spiridion. A traveller, exhausted with the fatigue of his journey, waited on him on a day which the church had set apart for fasting. Spiridion instantly ordered some refreshment for him, and invited him by his own example to eat. No, I must not eat, said the stranger, because I am a Christian. And because you are a Christian, replied the bishop to him, you may eat without scruple; agreeably to the decision of an apostle, "Unto the pure all things are pure." We cannot be ignorant of the shameful abuse which some have made of this maxim. We know some have extended it even to the most essential articles of positive law, which no one can violate without sin. We know particularly the insolence with which some place themselves in the list of those pure persons, of whom the apostle speaks, although their gross ignorance and novel divinity may justly place them in the opposite class. But the abuse of a maxim ought not to prevent the lawful use of it. There are some things which are criminal or lawful, according to the degree of knowledge and holiness of him who performs them. "Unto the pure all things are pure; but unto them that

are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure." Would you then know how far to carry your scruples in regard to some steps? Examine sincerely, and with rectitude, to what degree you are pure in this respect. I mean, examine sincerely and uprightly, whether you be so far advanced in Christianity, as not to endanger your faith and holiness by this step.

Do you inquire whether you may, without scruple, read a work intended to sap the foundation of Christianity? Examine yourself. A man arrived at a certain degree of knowledge is confirmed in the faith, even by the objections which are proposed to him to engage him to renounce his religion. "Unto the pure all things are pure." If you answer this description, read without scruple Lucretius, Spinoza, and all the other enemies of religion. The darkness with which they pretend to cover it, will only advance its splendour in your eyes. The blows which they gave it, will only serve to convince you that it is invulnerable. But if you be yet a child in understanding, as an apostle speaks, such books may be dangerous to you; poison without an antidote, will convey itself into your vitals, and destroy all the powers of your soul.

Would you know whether you may, without scruple, mix with the world? Examine yourself. "Unto the pure all things are pure." A man arrived at a certain degree of holiness, derives, from an intercourse with the world, only pity for the world. Examples of vice serve only to confirm him in virtue. If you answer this description, go into the world without scruple; but if your virtue be yet weak, if intercourse with the world disconcert the frame of your mind, if the pleasures of the world captivate your imagination, and leave impressions which you cannot efface; if, after you have passed a few hours in the world, you find it follows you, even when you wish to get rid of it, then what can you do so proper as to retreat from an enemy dangerous to virtue? "Unto the pure all things are pure; but unto them that are defiled, nothing is pure."

VI. In fine, if we wish our ways should be established, let us weigh them with the different judgments which we ourselves form concerning them. The meaning of the maxims, the substance of what we daily hear in the world, and which the writings of libertines have rendered famous, that youth is the season for pleasure, and that we should make the most of it; that fit opportunities should not be let slip, because they so seldom happen, and that not to avail ourselves of them, would discover ignorance of one's self; the substance of this sophism (shall I say of infirmity or impiety?) is not new. If some of you urge this now, so did the Jews in the time of Isaiah. This prophet was ordered to inform them, that they had sinned to the utmost bounds of the patience of God; that there remained only one method of preventing their total ruin, that was fasting, mourning, baldness, and girding with sackcloth; in a word, exercises of lively and genuine repentance. These profane people, from the very same principle on which the prophet grounded the necessity of their conversion, drew arguments to embolden them in

sin; they slew oxen, they killed sheep, they gave themselves up to unbridled intemperance, and they said, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die."

This is precisely the maxim of our libertines. Youth is the season for pleasure, and we should improve it; opportunities of enjoyment are rare; we should be enemies to ourselves not to avail ourselves of them. Would not one say, on hearing this language, that an old man, going out of the world, must needs regret that he did not give himself up to pleasure in his youth? Would not one suppose that the sick, in beds of infirmity and pain, must needs reproach themselves for not spending their health and strength in luxury and debauchery? Would not one imagine, that the despair of the damned through all eternity, will proceed from their recollecting that they checked their passions in this world?

On the contrary, what will poison the years of your old age, should you arrive at it; what will aggravate the pains, and envenom the disquietudes inseparable from old age, will be the abuse you made of your youth.

So in sickness, reproaches and remorse will rise out of a recollection of crimes committed when you was well, and will change your death-bed into an anticipated hell. Then, thou miserable wretch, who makest thy belly thy God, the remembrance of days and nights consumed in drunkenness, will aggravate every pain which thine intemperate life has brought upon thee. Then, thou miserable man, who incessantly renderest an idolatrous worship to thy gold, saying to it, in acts of supreme adoration, "Thou art my confidence," then will the rust of it be a witness against thee, and eat thy flesh, as it were with fire. Then, unhappy man, whose equipages, retinue, and palaces, are the fruits of oppression and injustice, then "the hire of the labourers which have reaped down thy fields, which is of thee kept back by fraud, will cry, and the cries of the reapers will enter into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth;" then "the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it." Then, miserable wretch, thou who makest "the members of Christ the members of a harlot;" then, that Drusilla, who now fascinates thine eyes, who seems to thee to unite in her person all manner of accomplishments; that Drusilla who makest thee forget what thou owest to the world and the church, to thy children, thy family, thy God, and thy soul, that Drusilla will appear to thee as the centre of all horrors; then she, who always appeared to thee as a goddess, will become as dreadful as a fury; then, like that abominable man, of whom the holy Scriptures speak, who carried his brutality so far as to offer violence to a sister, whose honour ought to have been to him as dear as his own life; then will "the hatred wherewith thou hatest her, be greater than the love wherewith thou hadst loved her," 2 Sam. xiii. 15.

The same in regard to the damned; what will give weight to the chains of darkness with which they will be loaded, what will augment the voracity of that worm which will devour them, and the activity of the flames which will consume them in a future state, will be the

reproaches of their own consciences for the headlong impetuosity of their passions in this world.

My brethren, the best direction we can follow for the establishment of our ways, is frequently to set the judgment which we shall one day form of them, against that which we now form. Let us often think of our death-bed. Let us often realize that terrible moment, which will close time, and open eternity. Let us often put this question to ourselves, What judgment shall I form of that kind of life which I now lead, when a burning fever consumes my blood, when unsuccessful remedies, when useless cares, when a pale physician, when a weeping family, when all around, shall announce to me the approach of death? what should I then think of those continual dissipations which consume the most of my time; what of those puerile amusements, which take up all my attention; what of these anxious fears, which fill all the capacity of my soul; what of these criminal pleasures, which infatuate me? what judgment shall I make of all these things, in that terrible day, when the powers of the heavens shall be shaken, when the foundations of the earth shall shake, when the earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, when the elements shall melt with fervent heat, when the great white throne shall appear, when the judge shall sit, and the books be opened, in which all my actions, words, and thoughts are registered?

If we follow these maxims, we shall see all objects with new eyes; we shall tremble at some ways which we now approve; we shall discover gulfs in the road, in which we walk at present without suspicion of danger.

I said at the beginning, my brethren, and I repeat it again, in finishing this exercise, the text we have been explaining includes a voluminous subject, more proper to make the matter of a large treatise than of a single sermon. The reflections, which we have been making, are only a slight sketch of the maxims with which the Wise Man intended to inspire us. All we have said will be entirely useless, unless you enlarge by frequent meditation the narrow bounds in which we have been obliged to include the subject.

“Ponder the path of thy feet, and all thy ways shall be established.” Who weighs, who calculates, who connects and separates, before he believes and judges, before he esteems and acts? The least probability persuades us; the least object, that sparkles in our eyes, dazzles us; the least appearance of pleasure excites, fascinates, and fixes us. We determine questions on which our eternal destiny depends, with a levity and precipitancy, which we should be ashamed of in cases of the least importance in temporal affairs. Accordingly, the manner in which we act, perfectly agrees with the inattention with which we determine the reason of acting. We generally spend life in a way very unbecoming intelligent beings, to whom God has given a power of reflecting; and more like creatures destitute of intelligence, and wholly incapable of reflection.

In order to obey the precept of the Wise Man, we should collect our thoughts every morning, and never begin a day without a

cool examination of the whole business of it. We should recollect ourselves every night, and never finish a day, without examining deliberately how we have employed it. Before we go out of our houses, each should ask himself, Whither am I going? In what company shall I be? What temptations will assault me? What opportunities of doing good offer to me? When we return to our houses, each should ask himself; Where have I been? What has my conversation in company been? Did I avail myself of every opportunity of doing good?

My brethren, how invincible soever our depravity may appear, how deeply rooted soever it may be, how powerful soever tyrannical habits may be over us, we should make rapid advances in the road of virtue, were we often to enter into ourselves; on the contrary, while we act, and determine, and give ourselves up without reflection and examination, it is impossible our conduct should answer our calling.

My brethren, shall I tell you all my heart? This meditation troubles me, it terrifies me, it confounds me. I have been forming the most ardent desires for the success of this discourse; and yet I can hardly entertain a hope that you will relish it. I have been exhorting you with all the power and ardour of which I am capable; and, if you will forgive me for saying so, with the zeal which I ought to have for your salvation; I have been exhorting you not to be discouraged at the number and the difficulties of the duties which the Wise Man prescribes to you; but, I am afraid, I know you too well to promise myself that you will acquit yourselves with that holy resolution and courage which the nature of the duties necessarily demands.

May God work in you, and in me, more than I can ask or think! God grant us intelligent minds, that we may act like intelligent souls! May that God, who has set before us life and death, heaven and hell, boundless felicity and endless misery, may he so direct our steps, that we may arrive at that happiness which is the object of our wishes, and which ought to be the object of our care! God grant us this grace! To Him be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON LIII.

THE NECESSITY OF PROGRESSIVE RELIGION.

1 CORINTHIANS, ix. 26, 27.

I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air. But 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.

MY BRETHREN,

THAT was a fine eulogium, which was made on one of the most famous generals of antiquity. It was said of him, that he thought there was “nothing done, while there remained any thing to do.” To embrace such a system of war and politics, was to open a wide field of painful labour: but Cesar aspired to be a hero, and

there was no way of obtaining his end, except that which he chose. Whoever arrives at worldly heroism, arrives at it in this way. By this marvellous secret, the Roman eagles flew to the utmost parts of Asia, rendered Gaul tributary, swelled the Rhine with German blood, subjugated Britain, pursued the shattered remains of Pompey's army into the deserts of Africa, and caused all the rivers that fell into the Adriatic sea, to roll along the sound of their victories. My brethren, success is not necessarily connected with heroism; the hero Cesar was a common misfortune, all his heroism public robbery, fatal to the public, and more so to Cesar himself. But, in order to be saved, it is necessary to succeed; and their is no other way of obtaining salvation, except that laid down by this great general, "thinking nothing done, while there is any thing to do." Behold, in the words of our text, behold a man, who perfectly knew the way to heaven, a man most sincerely aspiring to salvation. What does he to succeed? What we have said; he counted all he had done nothing, while there remained any thing more to do. After he had carried virtue to its highest pitch, after he had made the most rapid progress, and obtained the most splendid triumphs in the road of salvation, still he ran, still he fought, he undertook new mortifications, always fearing lest lukewarmness and indolence should frustrate his aim of obtaining the prize which had always been an object of his hope; "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air. But 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."

St. Paul lives no more. This valiant champion has already conquered. But you, you Christians, are yet alive; like him, the race is open before you, and to you now, as well as to him formerly, a voice from heaven cries, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne," Rev. iii. 21. Happy, if animated by his example, you share with him a prize, which loses nothing of its excellence, by the number of those who partake of it! Happy, if you be able one day to say with him, "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, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them that love his appearing," 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.

Let us first make a general remark on the expressions of the text; they are a manifest allusion to the games which were celebrated among the heathens. Fable, or history, tells us, that Pelops invented them, that Hercules and Atreus brought them to perfection, that Iphitus restored them; all which signify very little to us. What is certain is, that these games were celebrated with great pomp. They were so solemn among the Greeks, that they made use of them to mark memorable events and public eras, that of consuls at Rome, of archons at Athens, of priestesses at Argos. They passed from Greece to Italy, and were so much in vogue at Rome, that an ancient author said, two things were necessary to the

Roman people—bread and public shows. It is needless to repeat here what learned men have collected on this subject, we will remark only what may serve to elucidate our text, all the ideas of which are borrowed from these exercises.

1. In these games the most remarkable objects was the course. The ground, on which the games were celebrated, was marked out with great exactness. In some places lines were drawn, and the place of combat railed, and when he who ran went beyond the line, he ran to no purpose. It was dangerous to ramble, especially in some places, as in Greece, where the space was bounded on one side by the river Alpheus, and on the other by a sort of chevaux de frise, as at Rome; where before the construction of the circus, which was afterward built on purpose for spectacles of this sort, an area was chosen, on one side of which was a chevaux de frise, and on the other the Tiber, so that the combatant could not pass the bounds prescribed to him without exposing himself to the danger either of being wounded by the spikes, or drowned in the waves. This is the first emblem, which our apostle uses here; "I run," alluding to the course in general; "I do not run uncertainly," in allusion to such combatants as, by passing the boundaries, lost the fruit of their labour.

2. Among other games were those of wrestling and boxing. Address in these combats consisted in not aiming any blow which did not strike the adversary. He who had not this address, was said to "beat the air;" and hence came the proverb "to beat the air," to signify labouring in vain.* This is the second allusion of St. Paul, "I fight, not as one that beateth the air."

3. The combatants observed a particular regimen, to render themselves more active and vigorous. The time, the quantity, and the nature of their aliments were prescribed, and they punctually complied with the rules. They laid aside every thing likely to enervate them. "Would you obtain a prize in the Olympic games?" said a pagan philosopher, "a noble design! But consider the preparations and consequences. You must live by rule, you must eat when you are not hungry, you must abstain from agreeable foods, you must habituate yourself to suffer heat and cold; in one word, you must give yourself up entirely to a physician.†" By these means the combatants acquired such health and strength, that they could bend with the greatest ease such bows as horses could hardly bend; hence the "health of a champion" was a common proverb‡ to express a strong hale state. As this regimen was exact, it was painful and trying. It was necessary not only to surmount irregular desires, but all those excrecises must be positively practised which were essential to victorious combatants: it was not sufficient to observe them a little while, they must be wrought by long preparation into habits, without which the agility and vigour acquired by repeated labours would be lost; witness that famous champion, who, after he had often and gloriously succeeded,

* Eustat. in Homer. Iliad.

† Epiet. cap. 36. Voi. Plat. de legibus, lib. 8.

‡ Hor. Art. Poet. Julian de Laud. Const. Orat. i

was shamefully conquered, because he had neglected the regimen for six months, during which time a domestic affair had obliged him to reside at Athens.* This is the third allusion which our apostle makes in the text, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection."

Let us observe, by the way, that these expressions of our apostle have been abused to absurd though devotional purposes; and, to omit others, it was an abuse of these expressions which produced the extravagant sect of the Flagellants.† All Italy in the thirteenth century was seized with a panic, which ended in the birth of this sect. The next century, the Germans being afflicted with a plague, it filled all Germany, and the folly of Henry III. king of France, joined to that mean complaisance which induces courtiers to go into all the caprices of their masters, introduced it into that kingdom, and into that kingdom it went with so much fury, that Charles, cardinal of Lorraine, actually killed himself by adhering too closely to its maxims during a rigorous winter.‡

What a wide field opens here to our meditation, were it necessary to show the absurdity of such devotions!

We might show, that they owe their origin to Paganism. Plutarch says, that in the city of Lacedaemon, they were sometimes pursued even to death in honour of Diana.§ Herodotus speaks to the same purpose concerning the festival of the great goddess in Egypt.|| In like manner Philostratus speaks of the devotions performed in honour of the Scythian Diana.¶ Thus also Apuleius concerning the priests of the goddess of Syria,** and thus authors more credible, I mean the writers of the Book of Kings, concerning the priests of Baal.

We might show the weakness of the arguments on which such practices are founded; as fabulous miracles, and, among many others, a letter brought by an angel from heaven to Jerusalem, which declared, that the blessed virgin having implored pardon for the guilty, God had replied, that their pardon should be granted on condition they whipped themselves in this manner.††

We might produce the weighty reasons which many of the Roman communion, and among others Gerson and De Thou, urged against such practices, and the testimonies of our Scriptures, which expressly forbid them; but we will content ourselves with observing, that the words of our text have nothing that can serve even for a plausible pretence for these superstitions. We said St. Paul alluded to the regimen observed by combatants; combatants observed that kind of life, which was most proper to fit them for their profession; in like manner, St. Paul observed what fitted him for his. Were it possible to prove that mortifications and macerations were necessary to this purpose, we

should not then have a right to determine that the apostle had his eye on such services here. For our parts, we think, he intended all acts of repentance prescribed in Scripture, and exemplified by the saints; as silence, retirement, fasting, abstinence from criminal pleasures, and so on.

4. Further, there were persons who presided over the pagan games. They were called heralds. The name given them in the Greek language is precisely the same which in our language is rendered *preacher*. Their office was expressed by a word which signifies to *preach*. It consisted in proclaiming the game, directing the combatants, encouraging the weak, animating the valiant, exposing the prize to public view, and giving it to the victor. This is the fourth allusion of our apostle, "lest when I have preached to others." The original word which we have translated *preached*, is the very word which is used to describe the office of such as presided at the games; and St. Paul, by using this term, gives us a beautiful idea of the apostleship, and, in general of the gospel ministry. What is the office of a minister of the gospel? We publish the race, we describe the "good works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them;" we animate you by often saying, "run with patience the race that is set before you:" we lift up to public view the prize, and in the name of God we cry, "so run that you may obtain." Happy if you all attend to this voice, and if, while a few are eagerly and constantly running the race set before them, others do not run more eagerly across the space, like those unhappy people just now mentioned, who were wounded with iron spikes, or drowned in the waves.

5. In fine, The last remark we make on pagan games regards the different destiny of the combatants. The conquered derived no advantages from their pains; but the victors were covered with honours and advantages; they were distinguished in all public assemblies; they were called by the high sounding name of Olympian; they were crowned with great ceremony; statues were erected to their honour, and breaches were made in the walls of cities to admit them with the greater pomp. This is the fifth allusion which the apostle here makes to the games, "lest I should be a cast-away." A *cast-away*; the heathens applied this word to such combatants as entered the lists but did not obtain the prize.

Such were the games celebrated through all Greece, and in particular at the city of Philippi, where St. Paul wrote this epistle, and in that of Corinth to which it is addressed. The believer is a stranger on earth, he sees there a thousand delights of which he does not partake. The eyes of Paul at Philippi, more properly his ears (for St. Paul hardly attended public amusements,) were struck with the fame and magnificence of these games. The Corinthians were in the same condition. How hard is it to live in a country and to be excluded from the pleasures of the inhabitants! St. Paul strengthens the Corinthians and himself against these temptations; he rises from sensual to spiritual pleasures, and says, he has also an area, a race, a crown, a triumph. "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beat-

* Baudelot de Dairval. Hist. de Ptolomee Auletes, p. 61. c. 9.

† Hospinian. Hist. Monach. Boileau. Hist. des Flagellans.

‡ De Thou, Hist. liv. 59.

§ Plutarch Vit. Lycurg.

|| Eutrop. liv. ii. ch. 41.

¶ De Vit. Apollon. lib. vi. c. 20.

** L'Ane d'Or, liv. viii.

†† Bosius Anal. under the year 1349.

eth the air. But 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."

We have explained the terms and allusions of the apostle. His meaning is sufficiently clear. "I keep under my body," and so on, does not mean, as some interpreters have it, I halt between hope of salvation, and fear of destruction; an interpretation directly opposite to that assurance which St. Paul expresses in many parts of his epistles, and particularly in this famous passage which we have elsewhere explained, "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," Rom. viii. 38, 39. But "I keep under my body;" and the rest means, whatever progress I have made in a career of virtue, all my past efforts would be useless, should I spend the rest of my life in idleness and indifference, and I could not expect, even by the assistance of grace, to arrive at glory.

Let us now justify this disposition of our apostle, and let us prove this general truth, that there is no point fixed, at which a Christian may stop; that each portion of life has its task; that to what degree soever we have carried our sanctification, unless we carry it further, go on and persevere, we should act contrary to the spirit and temper of the gospel. This is the principal design of this discourse.

1. Let us first examine the example of St. Paul. St. Paul did not think that if he lived hereafter in indolence without endeavouring to make new advances, he had any right to expect the benefits of the gospel: no Christian, therefore, living in indolence, and making no new advances, ought to flatter himself that he is entitled to the blessings of the gospel. In order to perceive this consequence, form a just notion of the virtue of our apostle, and consider Paul as a zealot, Paul as a proselyte, Paul as an apostle, and Paul as a martyr, and you will allow he was a great character, a Christian of the highest order; and that if, with all his eminent virtues, he thought himself obliged to acquire yet more eminent virtue, every Christian ought to form the same idea of his own duty.

Consider Paul as a *zealot*. Perhaps you may be surprised at our passing an encomium on this part of his life. Certainly we shall not undertake to make an apology for that cruel and barbarous zeal which made use of fire and blood, and which put racks for arguments, and gibbets for demonstrations. But the purest life has its blots; and the most generous heart its frailties. In that fatal necessity of imperfection which is imposed on all mankind, there are some defiled streams, so to speak, which flow from pure springs; some people, and the apostle was one, who sin from an excess of virtue. What idea then must we form of this man, and what shall we say of his virtues, since his vices were effects of such an excellent cause? This odious part of his life, which he wished to bury in oblivion, that barbarity and madness, that industry to inflame the synagogue, and to stir up all the world, all this, strictly speaking, and properly explained, was worthy of praise. He

maintained error. Why? Because he thought it was truth, and respected it accordingly. He persecuted, because he loved; he was mad, because he was zealous; zeal, as I said just now, misguided, but zeal, however; a criminal indiscretion indeed, but an indiscretion, which in a moral abstraction, may be considered as a virtue.

Consider Paul as a *proselyte*. A man educated in opinions opposite to Christianity, infatuated with popular errors, prejudiced with ideas of a temporal Messiah, accustomed to consider Jesus Christ as an impostor, and his religion as a plot concerted by knaves, this man changes his ideas, and his whole system of religion, and worships the crucified Jesus, who was "to the Jew a stumbling block, and to the Greek foolishness," 1 Cor. i. 23. The first lesson from heaven persuades him, the first knock at the door of his heart opens it, his conversion is affected in a moment. "I went not up to Jerusalem," said he; "I conferred not with flesh and blood," Gal. i. 16, 17. What a fund of virtue instantly had this man in his heart! Of all characters in life there are few so respectable as that of a real proselyte. A man who changes his religion on pure principles, has a greatness of soul above common men. I venture to advance this general maxim, that a man who changes his religion, must be consummate either in virtue or vice. If he be insincere, he is a wretch; if he be not a wretch, he is a hero. He is a hero if his virtue be sincere, if he makes generous efforts to correct errors imbibed in his earliest youth, if he can see without trembling that path of tribulation which is generally opened to such as forsake their religion, and if he can bear all the suppositions which are generally made against them who renounce the profession of their ancestors; if, I say, he can do all this, he is a hero. On the contrary, none but a wretch can embark in such an undertaking, if he be destitute of the dispositions necessary to success. When such a man forsakes his former profession of religion, there is reason to suppose that human motives have done what love of truth could not do; and that he embraces his new religion, not because it appears to him more worthy of his attention and respect, but because it is more suitable to his interest. Now to embrace a religion for worldly interest is almost the highest pitch of wickedness. Our maxim admits of very few exceptions, and most proselytes are either men of eminent virtue or abandoned wretches; and as we are happy to acknowledge there are several of the first kind in this age, so with sorrow we are obliged to allow, that there are a great number of the latter. Let St. Paul be judged by the utmost rigour of this maxim. He was a hero in Christianity. The principle that engaged him to embrace the gospel, diffused itself through all his life, and every one of his actions verified the sincerity of his conversion.

St. Paul was born for great things; he it was whom God chose for an *apostle* to the Gentiles. He did not stop in the porch of the Lord's house, he quickly passed into the holy place; he was only a very short time a catechumen in the school of Christ; he soon became a master, a minister, an apostle; and in all these

eminent offices he carried virtue to a higher pitch than it had ever been carried before him, and perhaps beyond what it will ever be practised after him. In effect, what qualities ought a minister of the gospel to possess which St. Paul did not possess in the highest degree? Is it assiduity? "Ye remember, brethren," said he, "our labour and travel, for labouring night and day we preached unto you the gospel of God," 1 Thess. ii. 9. Is it gentleness? "We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children. You know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, that ye would walk worthy of God," chap. ii. 7. 11, 12. Is it prudence? "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 gain them that are without law. I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some," 2 Cor. ix. 20. 22. Is it charity? "I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren," Rom. ix. 3. "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you," 2 Cor. xii. 15. Is it courage? He resisted St. Peter, and "withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed," Gal. ii. 11. "He reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to be come, before Felix and Drusilla," Acts xxiv. 25. Is it disinterestedness in regard to the world? "We sought not glory of men, neither of you, nor yet of others. We speak the gospel not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts," 1 Thess. ii. 6. 4. Is it zeal? "His spirit was stirred in him at Athens, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry," Acts xvii. 16. Then, like the prophet of old, he became "very jealous for the Lord of hosts," 1 Kings xix. 10. Is it to support the honour of his ministry? "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ," 1 Cor. iv. 1. "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us," 2 Cor. v. 20. "It were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void," 1 Cor. ix. 15. Jesus Christ was the model, by which St. Paul formed himself; "be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ," chap. xi. 1. When students turn their attention to the Christian ministry, models of such as have distinguished themselves in this office are proposed to their imitation. The imagination of one, the judgment of another, the gravity of a third, and the learning of a fourth are set before them, and from good originals very often we receive bad copies. St. Paul chose his pattern. His master, his model, his original, his all, was Jesus Christ; and he copied every stroke of his original, "be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ."

But, though it is always commendable to discharge this holy office well, yet it is particularly so in some circumstances; and our apostle was in such, for he officiated when the whole world was enraged against Christians. Consider him then on the stage of *martyrdom*. What would now be our glory was then his disgrace; assiduity, gentleness, zeal, and all the other virtues just now mentioned, drew upon him the most envenomed jealousy, accusations the most atrocious, and persecutions the most cruel. It was in this light, God set the

ministry before him at first, "I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name sake," Acts ix. 16. Show him how great things he must suffer for my name sake! What a motive to engage a man to undertake an office! Now-a-days, in order to give a great idea of a church, it is said, it has such and such advantages, so much in cash, so much in small tithes, and so much in great tithes. St. Paul saw the ministry only as a path full of thorns and briars, and he experienced, through all the course of his life, the truth of that idea which was given him of his office. Hear the catalogue of his sufferings. "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck; a night and a day have I been in the deep. In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness," 2 Cor. xi. 24—27. Good God! What a salary for a minister; hunger, thirst, fastings, nakedness, peril, persecution, death! In our case, we can die but once, and virtue considers the proximity of the crown of righteousness, which being suspended immediately over the head of the martyr, supports him under the pains of martyrdom; but the ministry of St. Paul was a perpetual martyrdom; his life was a continual death. "I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death. For we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men," 1 Cor. iv. 9.

Here we finish the eulogium of our apostle, and, by uniting the parts of this slight sketch, we obtain a just portrait of the man. Do you know a greater than St. Paul? Can you conceive virtue in a more eminent degree? Behold a man fired with zeal, making what he thought the cause of God his own cause, God's enemies his enemies, the interest of God the interest of himself. Behold a man, who turns his attention to truth, and, the moment he discovers it, embraces, and openly avows it. Behold a man who, not content to be an ordinary Christian, and to save himself alone, aspiring at the glory of carrying through the whole world for public advantage, that light which had illuminated himself. Behold a man preaching, writing; what am I saying? Behold a man suffering, dying, and sealing with his own blood the truths he taught. An ardent zealot, a sincere convert, an accomplished minister, a bleeding martyr, learned in his errors, and, if I may be allowed to speak so, regular in his mistakes, and virtuous even in his crimes. Show me in the modern or primitive church a greater character than St. Paul. Let any man produce a Christian who had more reason to be satisfied with himself, and who had more right to pretend that he had discharged all his duties. Yet this very man, this Paul, "forgot those things which were behind!" This very Paul was "pressing forward!" This is the man who feared he should "be a cast-away!" And you, "smoking flax," you "bruised reed," you, who have hardly taken root in the Christian

soil, you, who have hardly a spark of love to God, do you think your piety sufficient! Are you the man to leave off endeavouring to make new advances!

Perhaps you may say, the text is not to be taken literally, it is the language of humility, and resembles what St. Paul says in another place, I am the "chief of sinners;" agreeably to his own direction, that each Christian "should esteem another better than himself," and which he calls, very justly, "lowliness of mind." No such thing, my brethren, you will be convinced of the contrary by the following reflections.

2. We ground the necessity of progressive religion on the great *end* of Christianity. Form, if it be possible, a just notion of Christianity. I say if it be possible; for we have an unaccountable reluctance to understand our own religion. We have all a strange propensity to disguise the character of a true Christian, and to keep ourselves ignorant of it. We have the holy Scriptures, and in them the gospel plan of redemption before our eyes every day; and every day we throw over them a variety of prejudices, which suppress the truth, and prevent us from seeing its beauty. One forms of Christianity an idea of indolence and relaxation, and, under pretence that the gospel speaks of mercy and grace, persuades himself that he may give a loose to all his natural evil dispositions. Another imagines the gospel a body of discipline, the principal design of which was to regulate society; so that provided we be pretty good parents, tolerable magistrates, and as good subjects as other people, we ought all to be content with ourselves. A third thinks, to be a Christian is to defend with constant heat certain points which he elevates into capital doctrines, essential to holiness here, and to salvation hereafter. A fourth, more unjust than all the rest, supposes the first duty of a Christian is to be sure of his own salvation. Each wanders after his own fancy.

It should seem, however, that the more we consult the gospel, the more fully shall we be convinced, that its design is to engage us to aspire at perfection, to transform man, to render him as perfect as he was when he came out of the hands of his Creator, "to renew him after the image of him that created him," to make him approach the nature of glorified saints, and, to say all in one word, to transform him into the divine nature. This is Christianity. This it is to be a Christian; and consequently a Christian is a man called to be "perfect as his Father which is in heaven is perfect;" to be one with God, as Jesus Christ is one with God.

This definition of a Christian and of Christianity, is justified by all we see in the gospel. For why does it every where propose perfection for our end, heaven to our hope, God for our model? Why does it teach us to consider the good things of the world as evils, and the evils of the world as benefits, human virtues as vices, and what men call vice as virtue? Why all this? All beside the matter, unless the gospel proposes to renew man, to transform him, and to make him approach the perfect Being.

From these principles we conclude this.— Since the gospel requires us to endeavour to

"be perfect as our Father which is in heaven is perfect," we ought never to cease endeavouring till we are "as perfect as our Father which is in heaven is perfect." Since the gospel requires us to labour to become, by a transformation of our being, *one* with God, as Jesus Christ is one with God, we ought never to give over our endeavours till we do become one with God. Moreover, as we shall never in this life carry our virtue to so high a degree as to be perfect as our Father is perfect, holy as God is holy, one with God as Jesus Christ is one with God, it follows to a demonstration, that in no period of our life will our duty be finished; consequently, we must make continual progress, if we would answer our engagements; and consequently there is no point fixed in the career of virtue, in which it would be allowable to stop; and consequently, St. Paul ought to be understood literally, when he says of himself, "I count not myself to have apprehended; I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beatech the air. But 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," Phil. iii. 13; and consequently, of all the excuses, of all the pretexts, of all the sophisms, which were ever invented to palliate that slowness with which we walk in the way of virtue, there are none more frivolous than these—we are not saints, we cannot be perfect, we cannot put off human nature; for it is because you are *not* saints, it is because you are *not* perfect, it is because you cannot *put off* human nature, it is on this account, that you ought to make a continual progress in Christian virtue, that the sincerity, and, so to speak, the obstinacy of your efforts may make up for imperfections.

3. Our third class of proofs is taken from the fatal *consequences* of a cessation of our efforts, a suspension of our religious endeavours. Were it literally true that we could arrive at that state of perfection which the gospel requires of us; could we actually finish the morality of religion it would still follow, that we must make new efforts during our residence in this world; and that without these our past labours would be useless. A man employed in a mechanical art prepares his materials, sets about his work, and carries it on to a certain degree. He suspends his labour for a while; his work does not advance, indeed, but our artist has at least this advantage over us, when he returns to his labour, he finds his work in the same forwardness in which he left it. Heavenly exercises are not of this kind. Past labour is often lost for want of perseverance; and, it is a certain maxim in religion, that not to proceed is to draw back.

Vice is closely connected with human propensities. Virtue, on the contrary, is directly opposite. As soon as you cease to endeavour to retain what opposes your propensities, nature takes its course. You carry within you, so to speak, a worker of iniquity, who constantly labours at the fatal work of your depravity. This workman is the old man. He every day gets forward, every day confirms you in sin, every day strengthens your attachment to sensible objects, every day ties you with

fresh bands to earthly things. If you do not oppose labour against labour, reflection against reflection, motive against motive, progress against progress, you will be defeated.

In these observations we find an answer to an objection, constantly repeated when we condemn that perpetual dissipation, that excessive gaming, and those reiterated amusements which consume the greatest part of your lives. You perpetually complain, that we overstrain matters, that we aggravate things, that the yoke of Christ is *easy*, and his burden is *light*, and that we make the one uneasy, and the other heavy. You constantly allege, that religion is not intended to put man on the rack, but to conduct him to reason: that the gospel is not contrary to a thousand pleasures which society offers us, and that, after all, the things we condemn are indifferent. I grant, religion does not condemn pleasures. I grant more, the pleasures you refer to are indifferent in their nature, that they have no bad influence, no treachery, no calumny in your conversation; no fraud, no swearing, no sordid interest in your gaming, no lax maxims, no profaneness, no immodesty in your amusements; I grant all this: Yet, after all, it is a fact, that, as the new man suspends his work, the old man advances his. It is always true, for example, that when a sermon has made some impressions on your hearts, when the lukewarm are aroused, when the impenitent are terrified, those other objects efface these impressions; and, though they may not lead you into the commission of fresh crimes, yet they make you relapse into that first state of depravity from which you seemed to be emerging.

4. A fourth source of proofs in favour of the necessity of progress is, *the advances themselves* which are made in the path of holiness. The science of salvation in this respect resembles human sciences. In human sciences we see a very singular phenomenon. A man of great and real learning is humble, he always speaks with caution, he pronounces always with circumspection, he determines a point trembling, and his answers to difficult questions are not infrequently confessions of his ignorance. On the contrary, a pedant assumes the state of a superior genius; he knows every thing, and undertakes to elucidate and determine every thing. Both these men are in earnest, both are sincere. The learned man speaks very sincerely: for, as he has made great advances in literature, he knows the extent of it; he knows that nature has difficulties; Providence has depths, religion has mysteries: such a man becomes humble as he becomes able, and the more he acquires, the more he feels the need of acquiring. On the contrary, a pedant does not even know what learning is, he stops on the beach, sees a little way, takes that little for the whole, and easily persuades himself that he knows all.

Thus in the science of salvation, a man of little religion, who has only a languishing regard for God, and a few superficial ideas of virtue, soon flatters himself that he has done all his duty, employed all his love, and carried fervour to its highest degree. A man of lively and vigorous religion does not stop on the shore, he goes aboard a fast sailer, weighs an-

chor, and sets sail on that ocean of truth which religion sets before him, and he soon finds immense spaces before him; or to speak without a figure, he finds his own virtues so few in number, so limited in degree, so obstructed in their course, and so mixed in their exercise, that he easily comes into a well-grounded judgment, that all he has attained is nothing to what lies before him. As he meditates on his sins, he finds them so great, so numerous, so odious, so dangerous, that he cannot comprehend how it is that his heart does, not break, and his eyes become fountains of tears. As he meditates on the nature of this world, he finds it so vain in its occupations, so puerile in its pleasures, so void in its amusements, its friendships so deceitful, and its duration so short, that he cannot comprehend what should detain him in the world. As he meditates on the felicity of heaven, he finds it so substantial and pure, so splendid and satisfactory, that he cannot conceive what should detain him, and prevent his losing sight of the world and ascending to heaven. As he meditates on the Creator, he finds him so wise, so just, so good, so lovely, that he cannot imagine why his heart does not always burn with flames of love to him.

Such is the effect of perseverance in a path of virtue! Accordingly we find the greatest saints the most eminent for humility. Abraham durst not "take upon him to speak unto the Lord, because he was only dust and ashes," Gen. xviii. 27. Job, "though he were righteous, yet would not answer, but made supplication to his judge," chap. ix. 15.

David "could not stand, if the Lord, should mark iniquities," Ps. cxxx. 3. St. Paul did not think he had *attained*, Phil. iii. 12. To say all in one word, celestial intelligences, who were never embodied, the seraphim placed immediately opposite the throne of God, with two wings, ready to fly at the command of the Creator, have also four wings to cover their feet and faces, to express, that their zeal, how fervent and flaming soever, cannot equal what that God merits, whom they incessantly admire and adore.

5. Our fifth class of proofs is taken from the excellence of the *ministry*. St. Paul was not an ordinary Christian: he was the minister of the gospel, and the greatness of his character was to him a ground of humility and diffidence.

Although the duties of ministers, and the duties of hearers, are essentially the same; though there are not two ways to heaven, one for the pastor, and another for the flock, yet, it is certain, ministers have more motives to holiness than other men.

What would the people say, if the minister of the pulpit, and the minister of society, were two men? If the minister of the pulpit declaimed against the vanities of the world, and the minister of society were worldly? If the minister of the pulpit were a man, grave, severe, fervent as a seraph: and the minister of society were a man loose, and full of worldly vices? Certainly people would say we sported with their credulity; and many a mouth would thunder in our ears this cutting reproach, "Thou which teachest another, teachest thou

not thyself? Thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?" Rom. ii. 21.

Besides, a minister has two works to do in regard to salvation, his own soul to save, and the souls of his people to save. Each of these becomes a reason for his own sanctification. "For their sakes I sanctify myself," said the Saviour of the world, "that they also might be sanctified," John xvii. 19. Interpreters understand by this *sanctification*, that separation which Jesus Christ made of himself for the salvation of his church; but may we not understand the word *sanctify* in the first part of the proposition, as we understand the same word in the second? "For their sakes I sanctify myself," is as much as to say, I obey thee, not only because, being a creature, I owe thee an inviolable fidelity, but because, being the master and teacher of thy church, I ought to influence it by my own example.

Further, a minister of the gospel has extraordinary assistance, he is always with God, virtue is constantly before his eyes, and though almost all other employments in society have connected with them particular temptations to vice, the profession of a merchant to self-interest, that of a soldier to cruelty, that of a magistrate to pride, yet the ministry is itself an inducement to virtue. Such being the importance of our engagements, and the eminence of our character, who can flatter himself with having discharged all his duties? Who can venture to lift up his eyes to heaven? Who is not annihilated under a sense of his imperfections and frailties? "O Lord, enter not into judgment with thy servant," Ps. cxliii. 2.

Finally, The necessity of progressive sanctification appears by the *end* which God proposed in placing us in this world. We are often troubled to conceive why God lodged man, a creature so noble, in a theatre of vanity and uncertainty. What is our life of thirty, forty, or fourscore years, to the immense duration of eternity? How can we reconcile the part we act here, with the wisdom of him who placed us here; and, if I may speak so, the littleness of the world with the grandeur of its inhabitants? What destination do you assign to man? What end do you attribute to his Creator? Why did he place him in this world? Was it to make him happy? But what! can he be made happy among objects so very disproportionate to his faculties? Are not his fortune and reputation, his health and his life, a prey to all human vicissitudes? Was it to make him miserable? But how can this agree with the divine perfections; with that goodness, liberality and beneficence, which are essential to God? Was it to enable him to cultivate arts and sciences? But what relation is there between an occupation so mean and a creature so noble? Besides, would life then have been so short? Alas, we hardly make any progress in arts and sciences, before they become useless to us! Before we have well passed out of infancy and novitiate, death puts a period to our projects, and takes away from us all the fruits of learning and labour. Before we have well learned languages, death condemns us to eternal silence. Before we well know the world, we

are obliged to quit it; and we die when we are just learning to live. If the famous Theophrastus, at the age of one hundred and seven years, regretted life, because he just then began to live wisely, what lamentations must other men make? What then was the design of God in placing us here? Was it that we should form and refine society? But how can a society composed of creatures transient and imperfect, be considered as a real and substantial body of bliss? If it has some solidity and reality, when considered abstractly, yet what is it in itself? What is it to you? What is it to me? What is it to any individual member? Does not one law reduce all to dust?

My brethren, there is only one way out of this labyrinth. One single answer is sufficient for all these questions. This world is a place of exercise, this life is a time of trial, which is given us that we may choose either eternal happiness or endless misery.

To this belong all the different ideas, which the Holy Spirit gives us of life. Sometimes it is a state of traffic, in which eternal reward is given for a "cup of cold water only." Sometimes it is a state of tribulation, in which "light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Sometimes it is a passage way, in which we are to behave as "strangers and pilgrims." Sometimes it is an economy of visitation, in which "richness of goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, are opened to us." Sometimes it is a "race," in which "all run, but one receiveth the prize." Sometimes it is a *fight*, in which we cannot hope to conquer, unless we fight with courage and constancy.

To this subject belongs the Scriptural estimation of life. Sometimes it speaks of life as mean and contemptible; and at other times, on the contrary, as great and invaluable. Sometimes it heaps expression upon expression, image upon image, emblem upon emblem, to make us consider it with contempt. It is "a shadow, a vanity, a flower, a grass, a vapour, a dream, a tale, a vain show, nothing" before God. And yet this "vain shadow," this "flower," this "vapour," this "dream," this "tale," this "show," this "nothing," the Scriptures teach us to consider as a time for us to "redeem," as an "acceptable time," as a "day of salvation," as a time after which there will be "time no longer." Why this different estimation? If you consider life in regard to itself, and with a view to the connexions we form, the pleasures we relish, the temporal occupations we follow: if you consider it in regard to sceptres and thrones, crowns and establishments the most pompous and solid, you cannot underrate life. On the contrary, if you consider it in regard to the great design of the Creator, in regard to the relation it has to eternity, in regard to that idea which we have given you of it, you cannot value it too highly. This world then is a place of exercise, life is a time of trial, given us that we might choose eternal happiness or endless misery.

This principle being allowed, our doctrine is supported by a new class of arguments; for be it granted that you remember nothing in your past life contrary to your profession of Chris-

tianity; be it that you resemble St. Paul in all his excellencies after conversion, and in none of the crimes which he committed before that happy period; the only conclusion which you have a right to draw is, that you have performed a part of your task, but not that there remains nothing more for you to do. You are nearer the end than they who have not run so fast in the race as you have, but you have not yet obtained the prize. You have discharged the duties of youth, and the duties of manhood, now the duties of old age remain to be discharged. You have discharged all the duties of health, now the duties of sickness and dying remain to be discharged. This world is a place of exercise; while you are in it your exercise is not finished; life is a time of trial; as long as you live your trial remains.

Let us conclude. Were we to act rationally, we should always fix our minds on these truths; we should never end a day without putting this question to ourselves. What progress have I made in virtue? Have I this day approached the end of my creation? And as the time of my abode here diminishes, do I advance in proportion to the time that remains? We should require of ourselves an exact account of every day, every hour, every instant of our duration; but this is not the gospel of most Christians. What we have been proposing, seem to most hearers mere maxims of the preacher, more proper to adorn a public discourse, than to compose a system of religion.

Why are not ecclesiastical bodies as rigid and severe against heresies of practice, as they are against heresies of speculation? Certainly there are heresies in morality, as well as in theology. Councils and synods reduce the doctrines of faith to certain propositional points, and thunder anathemas against all who refuse to subscribe them. They say, Cursed be he who does not believe the divinity of Christ: cursed be he who does not believe hypostatical union, and the mystery of the cross; cursed be he who denies the inward operations of grace, and the irresistible efficacy of the Holy Spirit. I wish they would make a few canons against moral heresies! How many are there of this kind among our people? Among our people we may put many who are in another class. Let me make canons. In the first I would put heresy too common, that is, that the calling of a Christian consists less in the practice of virtue, than in abstaining from gross vices; and I would say, if any man think that he sufficiently answers the obligations of Christianity, by not being avaricious, oppressive, and intemperate, if he do not allow that he ought to be zealous, fervent, and detached from the world, let him be accursed. In a second canon, I would put another heresy, equally general, and equally dangerous, and which regards the delay of conversion; and I would say, If any one imagine that, after a life spent in sin, a few regrets, proceeding more from a fear of death and hell, than from a principle of love to God, are sufficient to open the gates of heaven, let him be accursed. In a third canon I would put . . . fill up the list yourselves, my brethren, and let us return to our subject. To confine one's self to a certain circle of virtues, to stop at a fixed point, to be satisfied with a given

degree of piety, is an error; it is a heresy, which deserves as many anathemas, and ecclesiastical thunders, as all the others which have been unanimously denounced by all Christians.

My brethren, let us rectify our ideas, in order to rectify our conduct. "Let us run with patience the race set before us," let us go on till we can say with St. Paul, "I have finished my course." Be not terrified at this idea of progressive religion. Some great efforts must have been made by all holy men in this place to arrive at that degree of virtue which they have obtained; and the hardest part of the work is done; henceforward what remains is easy. The way to heaven is narrow at the entrance, but it widens as we go on. The yoke of Christ is heavy at first, but it weighs little when it has been long worn.

After all there is a way of softening all the pains to which we are exposed, by continuing our efforts. St. Paul practised this art with great success; it consists in fixing the eye on the end of the race. At the end of the race, he saw two objects:—The first the prize. How easy to brave the enemies of salvation, when the eye is full of the prospect of it! How tolerable appear the pains of the present state, when the "sufferings of the present time are compared with, and weighed against, the glory that follows." Next, St. Paul saw Jesus Christ at the end of the race, another object which animated him. He was animated by the example of Christ, to finish his course with joy; he was animated by the assistances which supported him; he was animated by the promise of Christ telling him, "He that overcometh shall sit down in my throne;" he was animated by the mercy, which he knew, how weak soever his efforts might be, would be approved at the tribunal of Jesus Christ, provided they were sincere; for Jesus himself conquered for him, and himself acquired that prize for the apostle at which he aspired; in a word, he was animated by his love; Jesus Christ is at the end of the race, and Paul loved Jesus Christ, and longed to be with him. I said, he saw two objects, the prize of victory, and Jesus Christ; but these make only one object. St. Paul's prize is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is Paul's paradise. According to him, Christ is the most desirable part of celestial felicity: "Whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord; we are willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord," 2 Cor. v. 6. 8. "I desire to depart, and to be with Christ," Phil. i. 23, "I press toward the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus," chap. iii. 14. This thought, that every step he took brought him nearer to Jesus Christ, this thought rendered him insensible to all the fatigue of the race, and enabled him to redouble his efforts to arrive at the end.

O flames of divine love! Shall we never know you except by the examples of the primitive Christians! O flames of divine love, which we have so often described, shall we never feel you in our own souls? Fire us, inflame us with your ardour, and make us understand that all things are easy to the man who sincerely loves God! God grant us this grace! To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON LIV.

THE MORAL MARTYR.

PSALM CXIX. 46.

*I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings,
and will not be ashamed.*

MY BRETHREN,

IT is not only under the reign of a tyrant, that religion involves its disciples in persecution, it is in times of the greatest tranquillity, and even when virtue seems to sit on a throne. A Christian is often subject to punishments different from wheels, and racks. People united to him by the same profession of religion, having received the same baptism, and called with him to aspire at the same glory, not unfrequently press him to deny Jesus Christ, and prepare punishments for him, if he have courage to confess him. Religion is proposed to us in two different points of view, a point of speculation, and a point of practice. Accordingly, there are two sorts of martyrdom; a martyrdom for doctrine, and a martyrdom for morality. It is for the last that the prophet prepares us in the words of the text, and to the same end I dedicate the sermon which I am going to address to you to-day. I come into the place that affords a happy asylum for confessors and martyrs, to utter in your hearing these words of Jesus Christ, "Whosoever 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," Mark viii. 38.

In order to animate you with a proper zeal for morality, and to engage you, if necessary, to become martyrs for it, we will treat of the subject in five different views.

I. We will show you the authors, or, as they may be justly denominated, the executioners, who punish men with martyrdom for morality.

II. The magnanimity of such as expose themselves to it.

III. The horrors that accompany it.

IV. The obligation which engages men to submit to it.

V. The glory that crowns it.

We will explain these five ideas contained in the words of the psalmist, "I will speak of thy testimonies before kings, and will not be ashamed;" and we will proportion these articles, not to that extent to which they naturally go, but to the bounds prescribed to these exercises.

I. The authors, or as we just now called them, the executioners, who inflict this punishment, are to be considered. The text calls them kings; "I will speak of thy testimonies before kings." What king does the psalmist mean? Saul to whom piety was become odious? or any particular heathen prince, to whom the persecution of Saul sometimes drove our prophet for refuge? The name of the God of the Hebrews was blasphemed among these barbarians; his worship was called superstition

by them; and it would have been difficult to profess to fear him and avoid contempt.

It is not easy to determine the persons intended by the psalmist, nor is it necessary to confine the words to either of the senses given; they may be taken in a more extensive sense. The word *king* in the eastern languages, as well as in those of the western world, is not confined to kings properly so called; it is sometimes given to superiors of any rank. Ask not the reason of this, every language has its own genius, and custom is a tyrant who seldom consults reason before he issues orders; and who generally knows no law but self-will and caprice. If you insist on a direct answer to your inquiry concerning the reason of the general use of the term, I reply, the same passion for despotism which animates kings on the throne, usually inspire such individuals as are a little elevated above people around them; they consider themselves as sovereigns, and pretend to regal homage. Authority over inferiors begins this imaginary royalty, and vanity finishes it. Moreover, such as are called *petty gentry*, in the world, are generally more proud and absolute than real kings; the last frequently propose nothing but to exercise dominion, but the first aim both to exercise dominion and to make a parade of the exercise, lest their imaginary grandeur should pass unnoticed.

I understand, then, by the vague term *kings*, all who have any pre-eminence over the lowest orders of men; and these are they who exercise tyranny, and inflict the martyrdom for which the prophet in the text prepares us. In order to comprehend this more fully, contrast two conditions in the life of David. Remark first the state of mediocrity, or rather happy obscurity, in which this holy man was born. Educated by a father, not rich, but pious, he was religious from his childhood. As he led a country life, he met with none of those snares among his cattle which the great world sets for our innocence. He gave full scope without constraint to his love for God, and could affirm, without hazarding any thing, that God was supremely lovely. What a contrast! This shepherd was suddenly called to quit his sheep and his fields, and to live with courtiers in the palace of a prince. What a society for a man accustomed to regulate his conversation by the laws of truth, and his conduct by those of virtue! What a place was this for him to propose those just and beautiful principles which the Holy Spirit teaches in the Scriptures, and which are many of them to be found in the writings of the psalmist! "I have seen the wicked in power, and spreading himself like a green bay-tree; yet he has passed away, and lo, he was not; I sought him, and he could not be found. Surely men of high degree are a lie, to be laid in a balance they are altogether lighter than vanity. I said, ye are gods, and all of you are the children of the Most High; but ye shall die like men. Put not your trust in a prince, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth, in that very day his thoughts perish. He that ruleth his spirit, is better than he that taketh a city. My son, the son of my womb, the son of my vows, give not thy strength unto women, nor thy ways to that which destroyeth kings. It is not for

kings, O Lemuel, to drink wine, nor for princes strong drink, lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted." How would these maxims be received at some of your courts? They were not very pleasing at that of Saul; David was, therefore, censured by him and his courtiers for proposing them. Hear how he expressed himself in this psalm. "O Lord! remove from me reproach and contempt. Princes did sit and speak against me, because thy servant did meditate in thy statutes. The proud have had me greatly in derision; yet have I not declined from thy law," *Ps. cxix. 22, 23. 51.*

II. Let us pass to the second article, and consider the *magnanimity* of such as expose themselves to this martyrdom. This is naturally included in the former remark, concerning the executioners who inflict the punishment. My brethren it is impossible to speak of the testimonies of God before the tyrants in question, without being accused either of a spirit of rebellion, aversion to social pleasures, or rusticity and pedantry; three dispositions which the great seldom forgive.

The martyr for morality is sometimes taxed with a spirit of *rebellion*. Perhaps you might have thought I spoke extravagantly, when I affirmed, that most men consider themselves as kings in regard to their inferiors. I venture, however, to affirm a greater paradox still; that is, they consider themselves as gods, and demand such homage to be paid to their fancied divinity as is due to none but to the true God. I grant great men do not all assume the place of God with equal arrogance. There are not many Pharaohs who adopt this brutal language, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?" *Exod. v. 2.* There are but few Sennacheribs, who are so extravagant as to say to the people of God, "Beware lest Hezekiah persuade you, saying, The Lord will deliver us. Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath and Arphad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim?" *Isa. xxxvi. 18, 19.*

But, though the great men of the world do not always assume the place of God with so much brutal insolence, yet they do assume it. Though they do not say to their inferiors in so many words, *Obey us rather than God*, yet do they not say it in effect? Is it possible to oppose their fancy with impunity? Is it safe to establish the rights of God in their presence? What success had Elijah at the court of Ahab? Micaiah at that of Jehosaphat? John the Baptist at that of Herod?

We need not go back to remote times. What success have we had among you, when we have undertaken to allege the rights of God in some circumstances? For example, when we have endeavoured to convince you, that to aspire at the office of a judge, without talents essential to the discharge of it, is to incur the guilt of all the unjust sentences that may be pronounced; that to stupify the understanding by debauchery, to drown reason in intemperance, to dissipate the spirits by sensual pleasures, when going to determine questions which regard the lives and fortunes of mankind, is to rob men of their property, and to plunge

a dagger into their bosoms; that to be so absorbed in forming public treatises, and in the prosperity of the states, as to lose sight of the interests of religion, is equal to placing hope in the present life, and renouncing all expectation of a life to come; that to render one's self inaccessible to the solicitations of widows and orphans, while we fill offices created for their service, is to usurp honours for the sake of emoluments; that to suffer the publication of scandalous books, and the practice of public debauchery, under pretence of toleration and liberty, is to arm God against a state, though states subsist only by his protection. Let us not repeat forgotten grievances, let us not, by multiplying these objects, run the hazard of increasing the number of arguments which justify our proposition. "To speak of the testimonies of God before kings," is to expose one's self to a charge of rebellion, and to such punishments as ought to be reserved for real incendiaries and rebels.

2. As the great men of the world would have us respect their rank, so they are equally jealous of their *pleasures*; and most men forming maxims of pleasure more or less lax, according as their rank is more or less eminent, licentiousness grows along with credit and fortune. A man who made a scruple of being absent from an exercise of religion, when he could hardly provide bread for the day, has not even attended the Lord's supper since he became master of a thousand a year. A man whose conscience would not suffer him to frequent some companies, when he walked abroad, is become a subscriber to public gaming houses now he keeps a carriage. A man who would have blushed at immodest language in private life, keeps, without scruple, a prostitute, now he is become a public man. Lift your eyes a little higher, lift them above metaphorical kings, and look at kings properly so called. Adultery, incest, and other abominations, more fit for beasts than men? what am I saying? abominations to which *beasts* never abandon themselves, and of which *men* only are capable, are not these abominations considered as sports in the palaces of some princes? This is what I said, licentiousness increases with credit and fortune. The maxims which men form concerning pleasures, are more or less loose according as their rank is more or less eminent. In general, that detachment from the world which religion proposes to produce in our hearts, that spirit of repentance with which it aims to inspire us, those images of death which it perpetually sets before us, those plans of felicity disengaged from matter, to which it invites us; all these ideas are tasteless to the great; we cannot propose them amidst their intoxicating pleasures without being considered as enemies of pleasure, as scourges to society.

3. When we speak of the *testimonies of God* before the great, we are taxed with rusticity and pedantry. There is, among men, a misnamed science, without which we cannot appear great in the world; it is called *politeness*, or *good-breeding*. This science consists in adopting, at least in feigning to adopt, all the passions and prejudices of the great, in taking such forms as they like, in regulating ideas of right and wrong by their caprice, in condemn-

ing what they condemn, and in approving what they approve. In one word, politeness, in the style of the great, is that suppleness which keeps a man always prepared to change his system of morality and religion according to their fancies. Not to have this disposition, to have invariable ideas, and invariable objects of pursuit, to be inconvertible in religion, to have the laws of God always before our eyes, or, as the Scripture speaks, to "walk before him," is in the style of people of the world, to have no breeding, to be a bad courtier, to be possessed with that kind of folly which renders it proper for us, though not to be confined with lunatics, yet to be banished from the company of people of birth and quality, as they call themselves, and to be stationed in closets and cells.

III. Thus we have seen both the executioners who punish morality with martyrdom, and the magnanimity which exposes a man to the punishment: and these are sufficient to expose our third article, the *horrors*, that accompany it. I have no ideas sufficiently great of the bulk of my auditors, to engage me to be very exact in expounding this third article. I fear, were I to enlarge on this part of my subject, I should raise insurmountable obstacles to the end which I should propose in opening the subject. Forgive an opinion so inglorious to your piety, but too well adjusted to the imperfections of it. We dare not form such a plan for you as Jesus Christ formed for St. Paul, when speaking of this new proselyte to Ananias, he told him, "I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake," Acts ix. 16. Martyrdom for doctrines, I grant, seems at first more shocking than martyrdom for morality; but, taken altogether, it is perhaps less insupportable. To die for religion is not always the worst thing in the calling of a Christian. Virtue wakes up into vigour in these circumstances, and renders itself invincible by its efforts. Even worldly honours sometimes come to embolden. That kind of heroism which is attributed to a man making such a splendid sacrifice, supports under exquisite torments.

There is another kind of suffering, longer and more fatiguing, and therefore more difficult. It is a profession, a detail, a trade of suffering, if I may express myself so. To see one's self called to live among men whom we are always obliged to contradict upon subjects for which they discover the greatest sensibility; to be excluded from all their pleasures; never to be admitted into their company, except when they are under afflictions and restraints; to hear one's looks and habits turned into ridicule, as they said of the prophet Elisha, "He is a hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins," 2 Kings i. 8. What a punishment! Men who have withstood all the terrors of racks and dungeons, have yielded to the violence of this kind of persecution and martyrdom. We will not be insensible of the frailty of our auditors, and therefore, we will omit a discussion of the acute and horrid pains of this kind of martyrdom.

IV. We are to treat, fourthly, of the obligation of speaking of the *testimonies of God before kings*. We ground this on the nature of

this duty. You have heard, that it consists in urging the rights of God before great men; and, though it be at the hazard of all the comforts and pleasures of life, in professing to respect the moral part of religion. We do not mean an unseasonable and indiscreet manner of doing so. The duty of confessing Jesus Christ before tyrants, in regard to his doctrines, has its bounds; and so has that of confessing his morality. There was more enthusiasm than true zeal in such ancient confessors as voluntarily presented themselves before persecutors, and intrigued for the glory of martyrdom. So, in regard to the present subject, in our opinion, it is not requisite we should intrude into the company of the great to reprove them, when we have reason to believe our rebukes would be injurious to ourselves, and contribute nothing to the glory of religion. All the actions of a Christian should be directed by prudence. We only expect you should never blush for the precepts of your great Lawgiver, never contribute, by mean adulation, or profound silence, to the violation of them; in short, that you would openly profess to fear God always when your profession is likely to convince a sinner, or to convert a saint.

This duty carries its own evidence along with it. Let us here compare the doctrines of religion with the precepts of it. The precepts of religion are as essential as the doctrines; and religion will as certainly sink if the morality be subverted, as if the theology be undermined. Moreover, doctrines are absolutely useless without morality, and the doctrines of religion are only proposed to us as grounds of the duties of it. The first doctrine of religion, the foundation of all the rest, is, that there is only one God; but why does God require us to admit the doctrine of his unity? It is that we may not divide supreme love, the character of supreme adoration, between the Supreme Being and creatures; for on this subject it is said, "thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart." Now, were I to deny this second proposition, we ought not to divide between God and any creature that love which is the essence of supreme adoration, should I be a less odious apostate than if I denied the first? One of the most essential points of our divinity is, that there is a future state. But why does God require us to believe a future state? It is that we should regard the present life as the least considerable period of our duration. If then I deny this practical proposition, the present life is the least considerable part of our duration, am I an apostate less odious than if I deny this proposition of speculation, there is a future state? We say the same of all other doctrines.

If it be the duty of a Christian to confess the doctrines of religion, and if a simple genuflexion, and the offering of one grain of incense, be acts of denial of these truths of speculation, I ask, are not one act of adulation, one smile of approbation, one gesture of acquiescence, also acts of denial in regard to practical truths? Most certainly. In times of persecution it was necessary to lift up the standard of Jesus Christ, to confess him before Herod and Pilate, and before all who took these persecutors of the church for their examples. In like manner,

while the church enjoys the most profound peace, if innocence be oppressed, if we see modesty attacked, if we hear the sophisms of sin, we must learn to say, each in his proper sphere, I am a Christian, I hate calumny, I abhor oppression, I detest profaneness and licentiousness, and so on.

The further you carry this comparison of martyrdom for doctrines with martyrdom for duties, the more fully will you perceive, that the same reasons which establish the necessity of the first, confirm that of the last, and that apostates from morality are no less odious than those from divinity. Let us for a moment examine what makes the first martyrdom necessary, I mean that for doctrines. Some reasons regard the *believers* themselves. Our attachment to the religion of Jesus Christ may be doubtful to ourselves, before we suffer for it. Martyrdom is a trial of this attachment. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you," 1 Pet. iv. 12. Some regard the *spectators*, in whose presence God calls his children to suffer for religion. Christians have made more disciples to the true religion, by suffering persecution, than tyrants have taken from it by persecuting. This is a second view of martyrdom. A martyr may say, with his divine Master, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me," John xii. 32. Some of these reasons regard the honour of *religion*, for which God calls us to suffer. What can be more glorious for it than that peace, and joy, and firmness, with which it inspires its martyrs? How ravishing is this religion, when it supports its disciples under the most cruel persecutions! How truly great does it appear, when it indemnifies them for the loss of fortune, rank, and life; when it makes them see, through a shower of stones, the object of their hope, and impels them to exclaim with St. Stephen, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God!" Acts vii. 56. This is a third view of martyrdom, and it would be as easy to increase the list as it is to make the application. Let us apply to martyrdom for duties, what we have said concerning martyrdom for doctrines, and we shall be obliged to conclude, that the same reasons establish the necessity of both.

Let us not pass lightly over this article. If there be a martyrdom of morality, how many apostles have we among us? How often have we denied our holy religion? How often, when it has been jeeringly said to us, "Thou also wast with Jesus," have we sneakingly replied, "I know not what thou sayest?"

V. We come to our last article, the *crown* of moral martyrdom. Here a new order of objects present themselves to our meditation. Pardon me, if I cannot help deploring the loss or the suspension of that voice with which for three and twenty years I have announced the testimonies of God, so as to be clearly heard at the remotest parts of this numerous auditory. However, I will try to present to you at least a few of the truths which I dare not undertake to speak of in their utmost extent.

The martyrdom of morality! A man who can say to God, as our prophet said, "I will

speak of thy testimonies before kings, and will not be ashamed," finds a rich reward, first in the ideas which a sound reason gives him of shame and glory; secondly, in the testimony of his own conscience; thirdly, in the approbation of good people; and lastly, in the prerogatives of martyrdom. These, if I may so express myself, are four jewels of his crown.

1. *Notions of shame and glory* are not arbitrary, they are founded on the essence of those things to which they are related; on these relations they depend, and not on the caprice of different understandings. My first relation is that which I have to God, it is the relation of a creature to his Creator. The duty of this relation is that of the most profound submission. My glory is to discharge this duty, and it is my shame to violate it. My second relation is that which I have to men, a relation between beings formed in the same image, subject to the same God, and exposed to the same miseries. The duty of this relation is that of treating men as I wish they would treat me; or, to use the words of Jesus Christ, "of doing to them whatsoever I would they should do to me," Matt. vii. 12. It is my glory to discharge this duty, and my shame to violate it; and so of the rest. These ideas are not arbitrary, they are founded in the nature of things. No mortal, no potentate has a right to change them. If, then, the great regard me with disdain, when I answer to my relations, and discharge the duties of them, I will not be ashamed. The contempt which this conduct brings upon me, falls back upon my despiser, because shame is a necessary consequence of violating these duties, and because glory is a necessary consequence of practising them.

2. The martyrdom of morality is rewarded by the testimony of *conscience*, and by the ineffable joys with which the heart is overwhelmed. While the tribunals of the great condemn the Christian, an inward judge absolves him; and the decrees of the former are reversed by the latter. "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience. I suffer; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know on whom I have believed," 2 Cor. i. 12; 2 Tim. i. 12.

3. The moral martyr is rewarded by the approbation of *good people*. Indeed, suffrages will never be unanimous. There will always be in the world two opposite systems, one of virtue, another of sin. The partisans of a system of sin will always condemn the friends of virtue as the friends of virtue will always condemn the partisans of sin. You cannot be considered in the same light by two such different classes of judges. What the first account infamous, the last call glory; and the last will cover you with glory for what the first call your shame. If you be obliged to choose one of the two parties to judge you, can you possibly hesitate a moment on which to fix your choice? The prophet indemnified himself by an intercourse with the people of God, for the injury done him by the great. "I am," said he, "a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts," Ps. cxix. 33. Suffer me to sanctify here the profane praise which Lucan gave Pompey;* "The gods are

* *Victrex Causa Deis Placuit; sed Victa Catoni.*

for Cesar, but Cato is for Pompey."— Yes, the approbation of Cato is preferable to that of the gods! I mean those imaginary gods, who frequently usurp the rights of the true God.

In fine, the martyr for morality is rewarded by the *prerogatives* of martyrdom. It would be inconvenient, in the close of a sermon, to discuss a question that would require a whole discourse; I mean that concerning degrees of glory, but that, if there be degrees of glory, the highest will be bestowed on martyrs, will admit of no dispute. This, I think, may be proved from many passages of Scripture. St. John seems to have taken pains to establish this doctrine in the Revelation: "He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessel of a potter shall they be broken into shivers," chap. ii. 26, 27. This regards martyrs, and this seems to promise them pre-eminence. "Behold I come quickly; hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out; and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God," chap. iii. 11, 12. This regards martyrs, and this seems to promise them pre-eminence. "What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God," chap. vii. 13—15. This regards martyrs, and this also seems to promise them pre-eminence.

Christians, perhaps your minds are offended at the gospel of this day. Perhaps you are terrified at the career which we have been opening to you. Perhaps you are inwardly murmuring at this double martyrdom. Ah! rather behold "the great cloud of witnesses" with which you are compassed about, and congratulate yourselves that you fight under the same standard, and aspire at the same crown. Above all, "look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of faith, who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself;" and who, as the same apostle Paul speaks, not only "endured the cross," but also "despised the shame." Hark! he speaks to you from the goal, and in this animating language addresses you, "If any man hear my voice, I will come in to him. 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. 20, 21. Happy you, if you be accessible to such noble motives! Happy we, if we be able to say to God, in that solemn day in which he will render to every one according to his works, "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! Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O Lord!" God grant us this grace. Amen.

SERMON LV.

THE FATAL CONSEQUENCES OF A BAD EDUCATION.

1 SAMUEL iii. 12, 13.

In that day, I will perform against Eli, all things which I have spoken concerning his house; when I begin, I will also make an end. For I have told him, that I will judge his house for ever, for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile and he restrained them not.

THESE words are part of a discourse which God addressed to young Samuel in a vision, the whole history of which is well known to us all. We intend to fix our chief attention on the misery of a parent, who neglects the education of his children: but before we consider the subject in this point of view, we will make three remarks tending to elucidate the history. The crimes of the sons of Eli, the indulgence of the unhappy father, and the punishment of that indulgence, demand our attention.

Observe the *crimes of the sons of Eli*. They supported their debaucheries by the victims which the people brought to the tabernacle to be offered in sacrifice. The law assigned them the shoulders and the breasts of all the beasts sacrificed for peace-offerings: but, not content with these, they seized the portions which God had appointed to such as brought the offerings, and which he had commanded them to eat in his presence, to signify their communion with him. They drew these portions with flesh-hooks out of the caldrons, in which they were boiling. Sometimes they took them raw, that they might have an opportunity of preparing them to their taste; and thus by serving themselves before God, they discovered a contempt for those just and charitable ends which God had in view, when he ordained that his ministers should live on a part of the sacrifices.— God, by providing a table for the priests in his own house, intended to make it appear, that they had the honour of being his domestics, and, so to speak, that they lived on his revenue. This was a benevolent design. God also, by appointing the priests to eat after they had sacrificed, intended to make them understand that he was their sovereign, and the principal object of all the ceremonies performed in his palace. These were just views.

The excesses of the table generally prepare the way for debauchery; and the sons of Eli having admitted the first, had fallen into the last, so that they abused "the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation," chap. ii. 22; and to such a degree had they carried these enormities that the people, who had been used to frequent the holy place only for the purpose of rendering homage to Almighty God, were drawn thither by the abominable desire of gratifying the inclinations of his unworthy ministers. Such were the crimes of the sons of Eli.

Let us observe next the *indulgence of the parent*. He did not wholly neglect to correct his

sons, for the reproofs he gave them are recorded in the second chapter. "Why do ye such things?" said he to them, "for I hear of your evil dealings by all this people. Do not so my sons, for it is no good report that I hear." To perform a duty of such importance with so much indifference, was equal to an encouragement of the sin. Eli made use of petitions and exhortations, when he ought to have applied sharp reproofs, and alarming threatenings. He censured and rebuked, when he ought to have anathematized and thundered: accordingly, after the Holy Spirit had related the reproofs which Eli, in the words just now cited, addressed to his sons, he tells us in the text, by a seeming contradiction, but in words full of truth and good sense, that Eli "restrained them not."

Observe thirdly what terrible punishments this criminal indulgence drew down upon the guilty father, the profligate sons, and even the whole people under their direction. A prophet had before denounced these judgments against Eli, in order to engage him to prevent the repetition of the crimes, and the infliction of the punishments. "Wherefore honourest thou thy sons above me?" said the man of God. "I said, indeed, that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever: but behold the days come that I will cut off thine arm, and the arm of thy father's house, that there shall not be an old man in thine house. And thou shalt see an enemy in my habitation, in all the wealth which God shall give Israel. And the man of thine, whom I shall not cut off from mine altar, shall be to consume thine eyes, and to grieve thine heart. And this shall be a sign unto thee, thy two sons, Hophni and Phinehas in one day shall both of them die," chap. ii. 29, &c.

These threatenings were accomplished in all their rigour. The *arm* is in Scripture an emblem of strength, and when the prophet threatened Eli, that the Lord would cut off his *arm*, and the arm of his father's house, he meant to foretell that the family of this priest should fall into decay. Hophni and Phinehas perished in battle when the Philistines conquered the Israelites. Ahitub and Ichabod, the sons of Phinehas, lived only a few years after the death of their father. If we believe a tradition of the Jews, this threatening was accomplished many ages after it was uttered. We are told in the Talmud, that there was at Jerusalem a family, in which no one outlived the eighteenth year of his age; and that a famous Rabbi found by inquiring into the origin of that family, that it descended from Eli. A rival, Zadok, was made high priest instead of Abiathar, a descendant of Eli. We are able to prove by very exact registers that the high priesthood continued in the family of Zadok not only from the building of the temple to the destruction of it, that is to say for the space of four hundred years, but even to the time of Antiochus Epiphanes. The rest of the misfortunes of Eli, the victory obtained by the Philistines, the taking of the ark, the confusion which brought on the labour and the death of the wife of Phinehas, who expired, "saying, name the child Ichabod, for the glory is departed from Israel," chap. iv. 19, &c. the

violent death of Eli; all these events are fully known.

I hasten to the chief design of this discourse. The extreme rigour which God used towards Eli, and the terrible judgments with which he punished the indulgence of this unhappy parent, seemed to offend some who have not attended to the great guilt of a parent, who neglects to devote his children to God by a holy education. I am going to endeavour to remove this offence, and, in order to do so, I shall not confine myself to my text, but shall treat of the subject at large, and show you, as our time will allow, first, the crimes and miseries of a parent, who neglects the education of his family; and secondly, the means of preventing them. We will direct our reflections so that they may instruct not only heads of families, but all our hearers, and so that what we shall say on the education of children, by calling to mind the faults committed in our own, may enable us to correct them.

To neglect the education of our children is to be *ungrateful to God*, whose wonderful power created and preserved them. With what marvellous care does a kind Providence watch over the formation of our infants, and adjust all the different parts of their bodies?

With what marvellous care does a kind Providence provide for their first wants: for at first they are like those idols, of which the prophet speaks, "they have eyes and see not, they have ears and hear not, they have feet and cannot walk." Frail, infirm, and incapable of providing for their wants, they find a sufficient supply in those feelings of humanity and tenderness with which nature inspires all human kind. Who can help admiring that, at a time when infants have nothing that can please, God enables them to move the compassion of their parents, and to call them to their succour by a language more eloquent and more pathetic than the best studied discourses?

With what marvellous care does a kind Providence preserve them amidst a multitude of accidents which seem to conspire together to snatch them away in their tenderest infancy, and in all their succeeding years. Who but a Being almighty and all-merciful could preserve a machine so brittle, at a time when the least shock would be sufficient to destroy it.

With what astonishing care does a kind Providence provide for those wants, which old age incapacitates us to supply? Who can shut his eyes against all these wonders without sinking into the deepest stupidity, and without exposing himself to the greatest misery?

To neglect the education of our children is to *refuse to retrench that depravity* which we communicated to them. Suppose the Scriptures had not spoken expressly on the subject of original depravity, yet it would argue great stupidity to question it. As soon as infants discover any signs of reason, they discover signs of depravity, and their malice appears as their ideas unfold themselves. Sin in them is a fire at first concealed, next emitting a few sparks, and at last bursting into a great blaze, unless it be prevented in time. Whence do they derive so great an infection? Can we doubt it, my brethren? They derive it from us, and by communicating our nature we communicate our

depravity. It is impossible, being our children, that they should not be depraved, as we are; for, to use the language of scripture, their "fathers are Amorites and their mothers are Hittites," Ezek. xvi. 13. Here I wish I could give you some notion of this mortifying mystery; I wish I could remove the difficulties which prevent your seeing it; I wish I could show you what a union there is between the brain of an infant and that of its mother, in order to convince you that sin passes from the parent to the child.

What! can we in cool blood behold our children in an abyss, into which we have plunged them; can we be sensible that we have done this evil, and not endeavour to relieve them? Not being able to make them innocent, shall we not endeavour to render them penitent? Ah! victims of my depravity, unhappy heirs of the crimes of your parents, innocent creatures, born only to suffer, I think I ought to reproach myself for all the pains you feel, all the tears you shed, and all the sighs you utter. Methinks, every time you cry, you reprove me for my insensibility and injustice. At least, it is right, that, as I acknowledge myself the cause of the evil, I should employ myself in repairing it, and endeavour to renew your nature by endeavouring to renew my own.

This reflection leads us to a third point. To neglect the education of our children is to be wanting in that *tenderness*, which is so much their due. What can we do for them? What inheritance can we transmit to them? Titles? They are often nothing but empty sounds without meaning and reality. Riches? They often "make themselves wings and fly away," Prov. xxiii. 5. Honours? They are often mixed with disagreeable circumstances, which poison all the pleasure. It is a religious education, piety, and the fear of God, that makes the fairest inheritance, the noblest succession, that we can leave our families.

If any worldly care may lawfully occupy the mind of a dying parent, when in his last moments the soul seems to be called to detach itself from every worldly concern, and to think of nothing but eternity, it is that which has our children for its object. A Christian in such circumstances finds his heart divided between the family, which he is leaving in the world, and the holy relations, which he is going to meet in heaven. He feels himself pressed by turns between a desire to die, which is most advantageous for him, and a wish to live, which seems most beneficial to his family. He says, "I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better; nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you," Phil. i. 23, 24. We are terrified at that crowd of dangers, in which we leave these dear parts of ourselves. The perils seem to magnify as we retire from the sight of them. One while we fear for their health, another while we tremble for their salvation. My brethren, can you think of any thing more proper to prevent or to pacify such emotions, than the practice of that duty which we are now pressing as absolutely necessary? A good father on his death-bed puts on the same dispositions to his children as Jesus Christ adorned himself with in regard to his disciples immediately before the

consummation of that great sacrifice, which he was about to offer to the justice of his Father. The soul of our divine Saviour was affected with the dangers to which his dear disciples were going to be exposed. Against these gloomy thoughts he opposed two noble reflections. First, he remembered the care which he had taken of them, and the great principles which he had formed in their minds: and secondly, he observed that "shadow of the Almighty, under which he had taught them to abide," Ps. xci. 1. "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name, and none of them is lost but the son of perdition. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world," John xvii. 6, 12, 16. This is the first reflection. "Now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil. Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth. Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am," ver. 11, 15, 17. This is the second reflection.

These two reflections are impenetrable shields, and a parent should never separate them. Would you be in a condition to oppose the second of these shields against such attacks as the gloomy thoughts just now mentioned will make upon your hearts on that day in which you quit the world and leave your children in it? endeavour now to arm yourself with the first. Would you have them "abide under the shadow of the Almighty?" Inculcate his fear and his love in their hearts. Would you be able to say as Jesus Christ did, "Holy Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me, that they may behold my glory; keep them through thy name?" Put yourself now into a condition to enable you then to say to God as Christ did, "I have given them to thy word, they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."

To neglect the education of our children is to let loose madmen against the *state*, instead of furnishing it with good rulers or good subjects. That child intended for the church, what will he become, if he be not animated with such a spirit as ought to enliven a minister of religion? He will turn out a trader in sacred things, and prove himself a spy in our families, a fomentor of faction in the state, who, under pretence of glorifying God, will set the world on fire. That other child intended for the bar, what will he become, unless as much pains be taken to engage him to love justice as to make him know it, or to make him not disguise it as well as understand it? He will prove himself an incendiary, who will sow seeds of division in families, render law suits eternal, and reduce to indigence and beggary even those clients, whose causes he shall have art enough to gain. And that child, whom you have rashly determined to push into the highest offices of state without forming in him such dispositions as are necessary in eminent posts, what will he become? A foolish or a partial judge, who will

pronounce on the fortunes and lives of his fellow citizens just as chance or caprice may impel him: a public blood-sucker, who will live upon the blood and substance of those whom he ought to support: a tyrant, who will raze and depopulate the very cities and provinces which he ought to defend.

The least indulgence of the bad inclinations of children sometimes produces the most fatal effects in society. This is exemplified in the life of David, whose memory may be truly reproached on this article, for he was one of the most weak of all parents. Observe his indulgence of Amnon. It produced incest. Remark his indulgence of Absalom, who besought him to allow his brethren to partake of a feast, which he had prepared. It produced an assassination. See his weak fondness of the same Absalom, who endeavoured to make his way to the throne by mean and clownish manners, affecting to shake hands with the Israelites, and to embrace and kiss them (these are the terms of Scripture,) and practising all such popular airs as generally precede and predict sedition. This produced a civil war. Remark how he indulged Adonijah, who made himself chariots, and set up a retinue of fifty men. The sacred historian tells us, that "his father had not displeased him at any time, in saying, why hast thou done so?" 1 Kings, i. 6. This produced a usurpation of the throne and the crown.

To neglect the education of your children is to furnish them with arms against *yourselves*. You complain that the children, whom you have brought up with so much tenderness, are the torment of your life, that they seem to reproach you for living so long, and that, though they have derived their being and support from you, yet they refuse to contribute the least part of their superfluities to assist and comfort you! You ought to find fault with yourselves, for their depravity is a natural consequence of such principles as you have taught them. Had you accustomed them to respect order, they would not now refuse to conform to order: but they would perform the greatest of all duties; they would be the strength of your weakness, the vigour of your reason, and the joy of your old age.

To neglect the education of children is to prepare torments for a *future state*, the bare apprehension of which must give extreme pain to every heart capable of feeling. It is beyond a doubt, that remorse is one of the chief punishments of the damned, and who can question, whether the most excruciating remorse will be excited by this thought; I have plunged my children into this abyss, into which I have plunged myself?

Imagine a parent of a family discovering among the crowd of reprobates a son, whom he himself led thither, and who addresses to him this terrible language. "Barbarous father, what animal appetites, or what worldly views inclined you to give me existence? to what a desperate condition you have reduced me! See, wretch that you are, see these flames which burn and consume me. Observe this thick smoke which suffocates me. Behold the heavy chains with which I am loaded. These are the fatal consequences of the principles you gave me. Was it not enough to bring me into the

world a sinner? was it necessary to put me in arms against Almighty God? Was it not enough to communicate to me natural depravity? must you add to that the venom of a pernicious education? Was it not enough to expose me to the misfortunes inseparable from life? must you plunge me into those which follow death? Return me, cruel parent, return me to nothing, whence you took me. Take from me the fatal existence you gave me. Show me mountains and hills to fall on me, and hide me from the anger of my judge; or, if that divine vengeance which pursues thee, will not enable thee to do so, I myself will become thy tormentor; I will for ever present myself, a frightful spectacle before thine eyes, and by those eternal howlings, which I will incessantly pour into thine ears, I will reproach thee, through all eternity I will reproach thee, with my misery and despair."

Let us turn our eyes from these gloomy images, let us observe objects more worthy of the majesty of this place, and the holiness of our ministry. To refuse to dedicate our children to God by a religious education, is to refuse those everlasting pleasures, which as much surpass our thoughts as our expressions.

It is a famous question in the schools, whether we shall remember in heaven the connexions we had in this world? Whether glorified spirits shall know one another? Whether a father will recollect his son, or a son his father? And so on. I will venture to assert, that they who have taken the affirmative side, and they who have taken the negative on this question, have often done so without any reason.

On the one side, the first have pretended to establish their thesis on this principle, that something would be wanting to our happiness if we were not to know in a future state those persons, with whom we had been united by the tenderest connexions in this present world.

On the other hand, if we know, say the partisans of the opposite opinion, the condition of our friends in a future state, how will it be possible that a parent should be happy in the possession of a heaven, in which his children have no share; and how can he possibly relish pleasure at the right hand of God, while he revolves this dreadful thought in his mind, my children are now, and will for ever be tormented with the devil?

It should seem, the proof and the objection are equally groundless. The enjoyment of God is so sufficient to satiate a soul, that it cannot be considered as necessary to the happiness of it to renew such connexions as were formed during a momentary passage through this world. I oppose this against the argument for the first opinion: and I oppose the same against the objection, for the enjoyment of God is every way so sufficient to satiate a soul, that it can love nothing but in God, and that its felicity cannot be altered by the miseries of those with whom there will then be no connexion.

A consideration of another kind has always made me incline to the opinion of those who take the affirmative side of this question. The perfections of God are here concealed under innumerable veils. How often does he seem to countenance iniquity by granting a profusion of favours to the contrivers of the most infernal

schemes? How often does he seem to declare himself against innocence by the misfortunes which he leaves the innocent to suffer? How often have we seen tyrants on a throne, and good people in irons? Does not this awful phenomenon furnish us with an irrefragable argument for the doctrine of a general judgment and a future state? Which of your preachers has not frequently exhorted you to "judge nothing before the time," 1 Cor. iv. 5; at the end of the time comes "the restitution of all things," Acts iii. 21, which will justify Providence?

Now, it should seem, this argument, which none but infidels and libertines deny, and which is generally received by all Christians, and by all philosophers, this argument, I say, favours, not to say establishes in an incontestible manner, the opinion of those who think that the saints will know one another in the next life. Without this how could we acquiesce in the justice of the sentence, which will then be pronounced on all? Observe St. Paul, whose ministry was continually counteracted. What motive supported him under so much opposition? Certainly it was the expectation of seeing one day with his own eyes the conquest which he obtained for Jesus Christ; souls which he had plucked out of the jaws of Satan; believers whom he had guided to eternal happiness. Hear what he said to the Thessalonians, "What is our hope, our joy, our crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy," chap. ii. 19, 20.

Now, this is the *hope*, this is the *crown*, which I propose to you, heads of families, to engage you to dedicate your children to God by a religious education.

It was this thought which supported one of the wisest of the heathens against the fears of death, I mean Cato of Utica. No man had a greater affection for a son, than he had for his. No man bore the loss with greater firmness and magnanimity. "O happy day, when I shall quit this wretched crowd, and join that divine and happy company of noble souls, who have quitted the world before me! I shall there meet not only these illustrious personages, but my dear Cato, who, I will venture to say, was one of the best of men, of the best natural disposition, and the most punctual in the discharge of his duties, that ever was. I have put his body on the funeral pile, whereas he should have placed mine there; but his soul has not left me, and he has only stepped first into a country where I shall soon join him."

If this hope made so great an impression on the mind of a pagan, what ought it not to produce in the heart of a Christian? What infinite pleasure, when the voice shall cry, "Arise ye dead," to see those children whom God gave you? What superior delight, to behold those whom an immature death snatched from us, and the loss of whom had cost us so many tears? What supreme satisfaction, to embrace those who closed our eyes, and performed the last kind offices for us? O the unspeakable joy of that Christian father, who shall walk at the head of a Christian family, and present himself with all his happy train before Jesus Christ, offering to him hearts worthy to serve

such a master, and saying to him, "behold me, and the children which God hath given me," Heb. ii. 13.

We have been speaking of the fatal consequences of an irreligious education; and now we wish we could put you all into a condition to prevent them. But, alas! how can some of you reduce our exhortations to practice? you disconsolate fathers, you distressed mothers, from whom persecution has torn away these dear parts of yourselves, ye weeping Davids, ye mourning Rachels, who, indeed, do not weep because your children "are not," but because, though they are, and though you gave them existence, you cannot give them a religious education? Ah! how can you obey our voice? Who can calm the cruel fears, which by turns divide your souls? What results from all the conflicts, which pass within you, and which rend your hearts asunder? Will you go and expose yourselves to persecution? Will you leave your children alone to be persecuted? Will you obey the voice that commands, "flee out of Babylon, and deliver every man his own soul," Jer. i. 6; or that which cries, "Take the young child?" Matt. ii. 20. O dreadful alternative! Must you be driven, in some sort, to make an option between their salvation and yours? must you sacrifice yours to theirs, or theirs to your own?

Ah! cruel problem! Inhuman suspense! Thou tyrant, is not thy rage sufficiently glutted by destroying our material temples? must you lay your barbarous hands on the temples of the Holy Ghost? Is it not enough to plunder us of our property, must you rob us of our families? Is it not enough to render life bitter, would you make eternity desperate and intolerable?

But, it is not to tyrants that we address ourselves, they are inaccessible to our voice, or inflexible to our complaints. It is to God alone, who turns them as he thinks proper, that we address our prayers. Hagar found herself banished into a desert, and she had nothing to support her but a few pieces of bread, and a bottle of water. The water being spent, her dear Ishmael was ready to die with thirst. She laid him under a bush, and only desired that she might not see him die. She rambled to some distance, wept as she went, and said, "Let me not see the death of the child," Gen. xxi. 16, &c. See, she cannot help it, she sits "over against him, lifts up her voice, and weeps." God heard the voice of the mother and the child, and, by an angel, said unto her, "What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not, for God hath heard the voice of the lad. Arise, take hold of his hand, and lift him up, for I will make him a great nation." See what a source of consolation I open to you! Lift up the voice and weep. "O Father of spirits, God of the spirits of all flesh," Heb. xii. 9; Numb. xvi. 22. Thou Supreme, whose essence is love, and whose chief character is mercy, thou who wast touched to see Nineveh repent, and who wouldst not involve in the general destruction the many infants at nurse in that city, "who could not discern between their right hand and their left," John iv. 11; wilt not thou regard with eyes of affection and pity our numerous children, who cannot discern

truth from error, who cannot believe, because they have not heard, who cannot "hear without a preacher," and to whom, alas! no preacher is sent? Rom. x. 14.

But you, happy fathers, you, mothers, favourites of heaven, who assemble your children around you "as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings," Matt. xxiii. 37; can you neglect a duty, which is impracticable to others? That tyrants and persecutors should display their fury by making havoc of our children, and by offering them to the devil, is, I allow, extremely shocking, but there is nothing in it very wonderful: but that Christian fathers and mothers should conspire together in such a tragical design would be a spectacle incomparably more shocking, and the horror of which the blackest colours are unable to portray.

How forcible soever the motives, which we have alleged, may be, I fear they will be ineffectual, and such as will not influence the greatest part of you. It must be allowed, that, if there be any case, to which the words of our Saviour are applicable, it is this of which we are speaking, "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it," Matt. vii. 14.

A reformation of the false ideas which you form on the education of children, is, so to speak, the first step which you ought to take in the road set before you this day. No, it is not such vague instructions as you give your children, such superficial pains as you take to make them virtuous, such general exhortations as you address to them, is it not all this, that constitutes such a religious education as God requires you to give them. Entertain notions more rational, and remember the few *maxims*, which I am going to propose to you as the conclusion of this discourse.

First maxim. Delays, always dangerous in cases of practical religion, are peculiarly fatal in the case of education. As soon as children see the light, and begin to think and reason, we should endeavour to form them to piety. Let us place the fear of God in these young hearts, before the world can get possession of them, before the power of habit be united to that of constitution. Let us avail ourselves of the flexibility of their organs, the fidelity of their memories, and the facility of their conceptions, to render their duty pleasing to them by the ease with which they are taught to discharge it.

Second maxim. Although the end of the divers methods of educating children ought to be the same, yet it should be varied according to their different characters. Let us study our children with as much application as we have studied ourselves. Both these studies are attended with difficulties; and as self-love often prevents our knowing ourselves, so a natural fondness for our children renders it extremely difficult for us to discover their propensities.

Third maxim. A procedure, wise in itself, and proper to inspire children with virtue, may sometimes be rendered useless by symptoms of passion, with which it is accompanied. We cannot educate them well without a prudent mixture of severity and gentleness. But on the one hand, what success can we expect from

gentleness, if they discover, that it is not the fruit of our care to reward what in them is worthy of reward, but of a natural inclination, which we have not the courage to resist, and which makes us yield more to the motions of our animal machine, than to the dictates of reason? On the other hand, what good can they derive from our severity, if they see, that it proceeds from humour and caprice more than from our hatred to sin, and our desire to free them from it? If our eyes sparkle, if we take a high tone of voice, if our mouths froth, when we chastise them, what good can come of such chastisements?

Fourth maxim. The best means of procuring a good education lose all their force, unless they be supported by the examples of such as employ them. Example is also a great motive, and it is especially such to youth. Children know how to imitate before they can speak, before they can reason, and, so to speak, before they are born. In their mothers' wombs, at the breasts of their nurses, they receive impressions from exterior objects, and take the form of all that strikes them. What success, miserable mother, can you expect from your exhortations to piety, while your children see you yourself all taken up with the world, and its amusements and pleasures; passing a great part of your life in gaming, and in forming criminal intrigues, which, far from hiding from your family, you expose to the sight of all mankind? What success can you expect from your exhortations to your children, you wretched father, when they hear you blaspheme your Creator, and see you living in debauchery, drowning your reason in wine, and gluttony, and so on?

Fifth maxim. A liberty, innocent when it is taken before men, becomes criminal, when it is taken before tender minds, not yet formed. What circumspection, what vigilance, I had almost said, what niceties does this maxim engage us to observe? Certain words spoken, as it were, into the air, certain imperceptible allusions, certain smiles, escaping before a child, and which he has not been taught to suspect, are sometimes snares more fatal to his innocence than the most profane discourses, yea, they are often more dangerous than the most pernicious examples, for them he has been taught to abhor.

Sixth maxim. The indefatigable pains, which we ought always to take in educating our children, ought to be redoubled on these decisive events which influences both the present life, and the future state. For example, the kind of life to which we devote them, is one of these decisive events. A good father regulates his views in this respect, not according to a rash determination made when the child was in the cradle, but according to observations deliberately made on the abilities and manners of the child.

Companions too are to be considered as deciding on the future condition of a child. A good father with this view will choose such societies as will second his own endeavours, he will remember the maxim of St. Paul, "Evil communications corrupt good manners," 1 Cor. xv. 33; for he knows, that a dissolute compan-

ion has often eradicated from the heart of a youth all the good seeds which a pious family had sown there.

Above all, *marriage* is one of these decisive steps in life. A good father of a family, unites his children to others by the two bonds of virtue and religion. How can an intimate union be formed with a person of impious principles, without familiarizing the virtuous by degrees with impiety, without losing by little and little that horror which impiety would inspire, and without imbibing by degrees the same spirit? So necessary is a bond of virtue. That of religion is no less so, for the crime which drew the most cutting reproofs upon the Israelites after the captivity, and which brought upon them the greatest judgments, was that of contracting marriages with women not in the covenant. Are such marriages less odious now, when by a profane mixture people unite "light and darkness, Christ and Belial, the temple of God and idols?" 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15. Are such marriages less hateful now, when, by a horrible partition, the children, if there be any, are mutually ceded before hand, and in cold blood disposed of thus: the sons shall be taught the truth, the daughters shall be educated in error, the boys shall be for heaven, the girls for hell, a son for God, a daughter for the devil.

Seventh maxim. The best means for the education of children must be accompanied with fervent prayer. If you have paid any attention to the maxims we have proposed, I shall not be surprised to hear you exclaim, "Who is sufficient for these things?" 2 Cor. ii. 16. But, if it be the fear of not succeeding in educating your children, which dictates this language, and not that indolence, which tries to get rid of the labour, be you fully persuaded, that the grace of God will triumph over your great infirmities. Let us address to him the most fervent prayers for the happiness of those children, who are so dear to us, and let us believe that they will return in benedictions upon them. Let each parent collect together all his piety, and then let him give himself up to the tenderest emotions towards his children. O God! who didst present thyself to us last Lord's day under the amiable idea of a parent "pitying them that fear thee as a father pitieth his children," Ps. ciii. 13. O God! who thyself lovest thy Son with infinite tenderness and vehemence: O God! author of the tender affections, which unite me to the children thou hast given me, bless the pains I take in their education: disobedient children, my God, I disown. Let me see them die in infancy, rather than go along with the torrent of general immorality, and "run" with the children of the world to their "excess of riot," 1 Pet. iv. 4. I pray for their sanctification with an ardour a thousand times more vehement than I desire their fortune: and the first of all my wishes is to be able to present them to thee on that great day, when thou wilt pronounce the doom of all mankind, and to say to thee then, "Lord, behold, here am I, and the children thou hast given me." May God excite such prayers, and answer them! To him be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON LVI.

GENERAL MISTAKES.

ROMANS xii. 2.

Be not conformed to this world.

OF all the discourses delivered in this pulpit those which deserve the greatest deference, and usually obtain the least, are such as treat of general mistakes. What subjects require a greater deference? Our design in treating of them, is to dissipate those illusions, with which the whole world is familiar, which are authorized by the multitude, and which, like epidemical diseases, inflicted sometimes by Providence on public bodies, involve the state, the church, and individuals. Yet are any discourses less respected than such as these? To attack general mistakes is to excite the displeasure of all who favour them, to disgust a whole auditory, and to acquire the most odious of all titles, I mean that of public censor. A preacher is then obliged to choose either never to attack such mistakes as the multitude think fit to authorize, or to announce the advantages which he may promise himself, if he adapt his subjects to the taste of his auditors, and touch their disorders only so far as to accommodate their crimes to their consciences.

Let us not hesitate what part to take. St. Paul determines us by his example. I am going, to-day, in imitation of this apostle to guard you against the rocks, where the many are shipwrecked. He exhorts us, in the words of the text, not to take "the world for a model" "the world," that is, the crowd, the multitude, society at large. But what society has he in view? Is it that of ancient Rome, which he describes as extremely depraved in the beginning of this epistle? Does he say nothing of our world, our cities and provinces? We are going to examine this, and I fear I shall be able to prove to you, that our multitude is a dangerous guide to show us the way to heaven; and, to confine ourselves to a few articles. I shall prove that they are bad guides to direct us, first, in regard to faith;—secondly, in regard to the worship which God requires of us;—thirdly, in regard to morality; and lastly, in regard to the hour of death. In these four views, I shall enforce the words of our text, "Be not conformed to this world." This is the whole plan of this discourse.

I. The multitude is a bad guide to direct our *faith*. We will not introduce here the famous controversy on this question, whether a great number form a presumption in favour of any religion, or whether universality be a certain evidence of the true Christian church? How often has this question been debated and determined! How often have we proved against one community, which displays the number of its professors with so much parade, that if the pretence were well-founded, it would operate in favour of paganism, for pagans were always more numerous than Christians! How often have we told them, that in divers periods of the ancient church idolatry and idolaters have been en-

throned in both the kingdoms of Judah and Israel! How often have we alleged, that in the time of Jesus Christ the church was described as a "little flock," Luke xii. 32; that heathens and Jews were all in league against Christianity at first, and that the gospel had only a small number of disciples! How often have we retorted, that for whole centuries there was no trace, no shadow of the opinions of modern Rome! But we will not apply ourselves to this controversy to-day by fixing your attention on the sophisms of foreigners; perhaps we might divert your eyes from your own; by showing you our triumphs over the vain attacks made on us by the enemies of the reformation, perhaps we might turn away your attention from other more dangerous wounds, which the reformed themselves aim at the heart of religion. When I say the multitude is a bad guide in matters of faith, I mean, that the manner in which most men adhere to truth, is not by principles which ought to attach them to it, but by a spirit of negligence and prejudice.

It is no small work to examine the truth, when we arrive at an age capable of discussion. The fundamental points of religion, I grant, lie in the Scriptures clear and perspicuous, and within the comprehension of all who choose to attend to them: but when we pass from infancy to manhood, and arrive at an age in which reason seems mature, we find ourselves covered with a veil, which either hides objects from us, or disfigures them. The public discourses we have heard in favour of the sect, in which we were educated, the inveterate hatred we have for all others, who hold principles opposite to ours, the frightful portraits that are drawn before our eyes of the perils we must encounter, if we depart from the way we have been brought up in, the impressions made upon us by the examples and decisions of our parents, and masters, and teachers, the bad taste of those who had the care of our education, and who prevented our acquiring that most noble disposition, without which it is impossible ever to be a true philosopher, or a real Christian, I mean that of suspending our judgment on subjects not sufficiently proved; from all this arise clouds that render the truth inaccessible, and which the world cannot dissipate. We do not say, that natural talents, or supernatural assistance are wanting; we are fully convinced that God will never give up to final error any man who does all in his power to understand the truth. But the world are incapable of this work. Why? Because all the world, except a few, hate labour and meditation in regard to the subjects which respect another life; because all the world would choose rather to attach themselves to what regards their temporal interests than to the great interest of eternal happiness: because all the world like better to suppose the principles imbibed in their childhood true, than to impose on themselves the task of weighing them anew in the balance of a sound and severe reason: because all the world have an invincible aversion to suppose, that when they are arrived at manhood they have almost lost their time in some respects, and that when they leave school they begin to be capable of instruction.

If the nature of the thing cannot convince you, that the multitude continue through negligence in the profession of that religion in which they were born, experience may here supply the place of reasoning. There is an infinite variety of geniuses among mankind. Propose to an assembly a question, that no system has yet decided, and you will find, as it is usually said, as many opinions as heads.

It is certain, if mankind were attached to a religion only because they had studied it, we should find a great number of people forsake that in which they had been brought up, for it is impossible, that a whole society should unite in one point of error, or rather, it is clear, to a demonstration, that as truth has certain characters superior to falsehood, the temples of idols would be instantly deserted, erroneous sects would be soon abandoned, the religion of Jesus Christ, the only one worthy of being embraced, the only one that deserves disciples, would be the only one embraced, and would alone be received by all sincere disciples of truth.

Do not think, my brethren, that this reflection concerning that spirit of negligence, which retains most men in a profession of their own religion, regards only such communions as lay down their own infallibility for a fundamental article of faith, and which prescribe ignorance and blind submission as a first principle to their partisans, for it is but too easy to prove, that the same spirit of negligence reigns in all communities. Hence it comes to pass, that in general so few Christians can render a reason for their faith. Hence it is that people are usually better furnished with arguments to oppose such societies as surround them, than with those which establish the fundamental truths of Christianity. If then you follow the direction of the multitude in the study of religion, you will be conducted by a spirit of negligence, prejudice will be held for proof, education for argument, and the decisions of your parents and teachers for infallible oracles of truth.

II. The multitude is a bad guide in regard to that *worship*, which God requires of us; they defile it with a spirit of superstition. Superstition is a disposition of mind that inclines us to regulate all parts of divine worship, not by just notions of the Supreme Being, nor by his relation to us, nor by what he has condescended to reveal, but by our own fancies. A superstitious man entertains fantastical ideas of God, and renders to him capricious worships; he not unfrequently takes himself for a model of God: he thinks that what most resembles himself, however mean and contemptible, approaches nearest to perfection. We affirm, this disposition is almost universal.

It would be needless to prove this to you, my brethren, in regard to erroneous communities. Were superstition banished from the world, we should not see men, who are made in the image of God, disgrace their nature by prostrating themselves before idols, and marmosets, so as to render religious honours to half a block of wood or stone, the other half of which they apply to the meanest purposes: we should not see a crowd of idolaters performing a ceremonial, in which conviction of mind has no part, and which is all external and material,

we should not see a concourse of people receiving with respect, as the precious blood of the Saviour of the world, a few drops of putrefied water, which the warmth of the sun has produced by fermentation in the trunk of a decayed tree: we should not see pilgrims in procession mangle their flesh in the streets, dragging along heavy loads, howling in the highways, and taking such absurd practices for that repentance, which breaks the heart, and transforms and renews the life. You will easily grant all this, for I have observed, it is often less difficult to inspire you with horror for these practices, than to excite compassion in you for such as perform them.

But you ought to be informed, that there are other superstitions less gross, and therefore more dangerous. Among us we do not put a worship absolutely foreign to the purpose in the place of that which God has commanded and exemplified to us, but we make an estimate of the several parts of true worship. These estimates are regulated by opinions formed through prejudice or passion. What best agrees with our inclinations we consider as the essence of religion, and what would thwart and condemn them we think circumstantial.

We make a scruple of not attending a sermon, not keeping a festival, not receiving the Lord's Supper, but we make none of neglecting to visit a prisoner, to comfort the sick, to plead for the oppressed. We observe a strict decency in our religious assemblies while our ministers address prayer to God, but we take no pains to accompany him with our minds and hearts, to unite our ejaculations with his to besiege the throne of grace. We think it a duty to join our voices with those of a whole congregation, and to fill our places of worship with the praises of our Creator, but we do not think ourselves obliged to understand the sense of the psalm, that is sung with so much fervour, and, in the language of an apostle, to "sing with understanding," 1. Cor. xiv. 15. We lay aside innocent occupations the day before we receive the Lord's Supper, but no sooner do we return from this ordinance than we allow the most criminal pleasures, and enter upon the most scandalous intrigues. Who make these mistakes my brethren? Is it the few? "Be not conformed to this world," in regard to the worship that God requires of you, the multitude perform it in a spirit of superstition.

III. Neither are the many a better guide in regard to *morality*. Here, my brethren, we are going more particularly to describe that class of mankind, among which we live, and of which we ourselves are a part. Indeed, the portraits we are going to draw will not be flattering to them, for justice requires, that we should describe men as they are, not as they pretend to be. In order to exactness let us consider them separately and apart. First, In regard to the masters who govern them. Secondly, In regard to the professions, which they exercise. Thirdly, In regard to some maxims generally received. Fourthly, In regard to the splendid actions which they celebrate. And lastly, In regard to certain decisive occasions, that, like touchstones, discover their principles and motives.

1. Consider mankind in regard to the *masters* who govern them. Here I congratulate myself on the happiness of speaking to a free people, among whom it is not reputed a crime to praise what is praise-worthy, and to blame what deserves blame, and where we may freely trace the characters of some men of whom prudence requires us not to "speak evil, no not in thought, no not in the bedchamber, lest a bird of the air should carry the voice, and that which hath wings should tell the matter," Eccles. x. 20. Is it in the palaces of the great that humility reigns, humility which so well becomes creatures, who, though crowned and enthroned, are yet infirm, criminal, dying creatures, and who, in a few days, will become food for worms, yea, perhaps victims in the flames of hell? Is it in the palaces of the great, that uprightness, good faith, and sincerity reign? Yet without these society is nothing but a banditti, treaties are only snares, and laws cobwebs, which, to use a well known expression, catch only weak insects, while the fierce and carnivorous break through. Is it in the palaces of the great that gratitude reigns, that lawful tribute due to every motion made to procure our happiness? Is it there that the services of a faithful subject, the labours of an indefatigable merchant, the perils of an intrepid soldiery, blood shed and to be shed, are estimated and rewarded? Is it there that the cries of the wretched are heard, tears of the oppressed wiped away, the claims of truth examined and granted? Is it in the palaces of the great that benevolence reigns, that benevolence without which a man is only a wild beast! Is it there that the "young ravens which cry" are heard and fed? Ps. cxlvii. 9. Is it there that they attend to the bitter complaints of an indigent man, ready to die with hunger, and who asks for no more than will just keep him alive? Are the palaces of the great seats of piety and devotion? Is it there that schemes are formed for the reformation of manners? Is it there that they are "grieved for the affliction of Joseph," Amos vi. 6: and "take pleasure in in dust and stones of Zion?" Ps. cii. 14. Is it there that we hear the praises of the Creator? do they celebrate the compassion of the Redeemer of mankind?

What ideas are excited in our minds by the names of such as Caligula, Nero, Dioclesian, Decius, names detestable in all ages? What ideas could we excite in your minds, were we to weigh in a just balance the virtues of such heroes as have been rendered famous by the encomiums given them? You would be astonished to see that these men, who have been called the *delights of mankind*, have often deserved execration, and ought to be considered with horror. But I purposely forbear, and will not put in this list all that ought to be placed there, that is to say, all those who have had sovereign power, except a very few, who in comparison are next to none, and who are, as it were, lost in the crowd among the rest. And yet the elevation of kings makes their crimes more communicable, and their examples more contagious; their sins become a filthy vapour infecting the air, and shedding their malignant influence all over our cities and families, lightning, and thundering, and disturb-

ing the world. Accordingly, you see in general, that what the king is in his kingdom, the governor is in his province; what the governor is in his province, the nobleman is in his domain; what the nobleman is in his domain, the master is in his family. The multitude is a bad guide, mankind are a dangerous model, considered in regard to the masters who govern them.

2. Consider the many in regard to divers professions. What is the profession of a soldier, particularly of an officer of rank in the army? It is to defend society, to maintain religion, to be a parent to the soldiery, to bridle the licentiousness of arms, to oppose power against injustice, to derive from all the views of death that lie open before him, motives to prepare his accounts to produce before his Judge. But what is the conduct of a soldier? Is it not to brave society? Is it not to trample upon religion? Is it not to set examples of debauchery, licentiousness, and vengeance? Is it not to let out his abilities, and to sacrifice his life to the most ambitious designs, and to the most bloody enterprises of princes? Is it not to accustom himself to ideas of death and judgment till he laughs at both, to stifle all remorse, and to extirpate all the fears, which such objects naturally excite in the consciences of other men?

What is the profession of a judge? It is to have no regard to the appearances of men, it is to be affable to all who appeal to authority, to study with application the nature of a cause which he is obliged to decide, it is patiently to go through the most fatiguing details of proofs and objections. But what is often the conduct of a judge? Is it not to be struck with the exterior difference of two parties appearing before him? Is it not to be inaccessible to the poor, to invent cruel reserves, and intolerable delays? Is it not to grovel in ignorance, and to hate study and labour?

What is the profession of a man learned in the law? It is to devote his service only to truth and justice, to plead only a good cause, to assist even those who cannot reward his labours. What is the conduct of counsel? Is it not to support both the true and the false, and to maintain by turns both justice and iniquity? Is it not to adjust his efforts to his own glory, or to his client's ability to pay?

What is the profession of a merchant? It is to detest false weights and measures, to pay his dues, and never to found his fortune on falsehood, fraud, and perjury. But what is the conduct of a merchant? Is it not to use false weights and measures? Is it not to cheat the state of its dues? Is it not to indulge an insatiable avidity? Is it not to enrich himself by telling untruths, by practising frauds, by taking false oaths?

What is the profession of a minister? It is to devote himself wholly to truth and virtue, to set the whole church an example, to search into hospitals, and cottages, to relieve the miseries of the sick and the poor; it is to determine himself in his studies, not by what will acquire him reputation for learning and eloquence, but by what will be most useful to the people over whom he is set; it is to regulate his choice of subjects, not by what will make himself shine,

but by what will most benefit the people among whom he exercises his ministry; it is to take as much care of a dying person in an obscure family, lying on a bed of straw, lost in oblivion and silence, as of him, who with an illustrious name lives amidst silver and gold, and for whom the most magnificent and pompous funeral honours will be prepared, it is to "cry aloud, to lift up his voice like a trumpet, and show the people their transgressions, and the house of Israel their sins," Isa. lviii. 1; Mic. iii. 8; and 2 Cor. v. 16; "it is to know no man after the flesh" when he ascends the pulpit, boldly to reprove vice, how eminent soever the seat of it may be. What is the usual conduct of a minister? . . . O God! "Enter not into judgment with thy servants, for we cannot answer one complaint of a thousand!" Ps. cxlii. 2; Job ix. 3.

3. Consider the multitude in regard to some general maxims which they adopt, and hold as rules and approved axioms. Have you read in the gospel the following maxims? Charity begins at home. Youth is a time of pleasure. It is allowable to kill time. We should not pretend to be saints. Slander is the salt of conversation. We must do as other people do. It is unworthy of a man of honour to pocket an affront. A gentleman ought to avenge himself. Ambition is the vice of great souls. Provided we commit no great crimes, we sufficiently answer our calling. Impurity is an intolerable vice in a woman, but it is pardonable in a man. It would be easy to enlarge this catalogue. Which of these maxims, pray, does not sap some of the first principles of the religion of Jesus Christ? Yet which of these maxims is not received in society as a fundamental rule of action, which we should be accounted singular and petulant to condemn?

4. Consider the multitude in regard to certain actions, of which they lavish praise and write encomiums. We do not mean to speak at present of such crimes as the depravity of the world sometimes celebrates under the notions of heroic actions. Our reflections are of another kind. It is pretty clear, that depravity is general, and piety in the possession of a very few, when persons of a superficial knowledge are praised for the depth of their understanding, and when such as perform very small and inconsiderable actions of virtue are considered as the wonders of the world. Sometimes I hear the world exclaim, What benevolence! What liberality! What generosity! I inquire for the evidences of these virtues, on which such lavish encomiums are bestowed; I expect to find another St. Paul, who, "wished himself accursed for his brethren," Rom. ix. 3. I hope to meet with another Moses, praying to be "blotted out of the book" of life rather than see his nation perish, Exod. xxxii. 32. But no; this boasted generosity and charity is that of a man, who distributed to the poor on one solemn occasion, once in his life, such a sum of money as he expends every day in prodigality and superfluity. It is that of a man, who bestows on all the members of Jesus Christ almost as much as he does on the walls of a room, or the harness of a horse. I hear the world exclaim in some circumstances, What friendship! What tenderness! I inquire for

this tender, zealous, generous friend. I expect to find such an original as I have seen described in books, though I have never met with such a one in society. I hope at least to see one example of a friend saying to a dying man, appoint me your executor, and leave me your children to bring up, and your widow to provide for. But no; I find nothing but the friendship of a man, who by improving the fortune of another, attracts the chief advantage to himself. I hear the world exclaiming in certain circumstances, What virtue! What purity! What a mother of a family! Again I look for the object of these encomiums. I hope to see such a woman as Solomon imagined, a mother of a family, who makes her house a house of God, and her children patterns of piety. But no; I meet with a woman, who indeed does not defile the nuptial bed, who only does not outlive her income, and teaches her children only the little course of domestic economy. All these actions are praiseworthy. All these examples ought to be imitated. But is there any ground for exclaiming as if virtue had been carried to its highest pitch? Are these then such great efforts of religion? Alas! my brethren, complete characters must needs be very scarce in the world, since the world is in raptures on account of these imperfect virtues; there must needs be a great dearth of wise men in the world, since there is so much boasting of one man, who takes only one step in the path of wisdom.

5. Consider mankind in regard to certain *decisive occasions*, which, like touchstones, discover their hearts. We do not know ourselves, we form false ideas of ourselves, when our virtues have not been brought to the test. We imagine we incline to be patient, clement, and charitable, in cases where we are not tried, where neither our fortune, nor our reputation; nor our honour are affected: but the moment a stroke is aimed at any of these, the countenance changes, the brain ferments, the mouth foams, and we breathe nothing but hatred and vengeance. Nothing is more common among us than to talk highly of justice, to detest and censure iniquity, and to engage ourselves invariably to follow such rules of equity as are marked out in the divine law. Let any man bring an action against us, with reason or without, and all these ideas vanish, we instantly become familiar with the very vices to which we thought we had an invincible aversion. We disguise our cause, we suppress unfavourable circumstances, we impose on our counsel, we try to take even the judges by surprise, we pretend to make great matters of the importance of our rank, the worth of our names, the credit of our families, the tone of our voices, and all this we wish to incorporate in our cause. A disinterested spirit is always the subject of our utmost admiration and praise. A generous man is the admiration of all mankind, his noble actions unite all hearts, and every man is eager to give such actions their dignity and praise; but no sooner have we a little business to do, in which we have no kind of interest, but disinterestedness appears odious to us, and magnanimity seems to us more proper for a hero of a romance than for a man living and acting in society, and generous

actions appear to us mere creatures of imagination. O how little does the multitude deserve consideration in regard to manners!

IV. No more ought they to be imitated in regard to the manner, in which they quit the world. Here I foresee, my brethren, you will all side with one another against our doctrine, and that we shall be obliged to blame both persons and things about dying people; such as are dying, such as surround them, such as visit them; in short, all are in disorder in the case before us. Almost every person that dies is canonized. If the light of Christianity had not abolished deification, we should have filled heaven with saints, and heroes, and deified souls. Each house of mourning echoes with the praises of the dead, none of his looks towards heaven are forgotten, not a sigh, not an ejaculation has escaped notice. The funeral convoys of persons the most worldly, whose hearts had been the most hardened in sin, are all uttering orations in praise of the dead. For our parts, my brethren, we, who have seen a great number of sick people, and attended many in their dying hours, we freely grant, that the salvation of many of them is probable. We have hardly seen one, of whose salvation we quite despair; but how seldom have we been inclined to say, while we saw such people expire uttering the language of the most eminent saints in Scripture, "Let us die the death of these righteous" people, and "let our last end be like theirs!" Numb. xxiii. 10. I will give you a short list of general mistakes on this subject.

The first mistake is this. Most sick people are ingenuous to disguise the danger of their illness. Be not conformed to this world.—Whenever a dangerous illness attacks you, be aware of your condition, and let each say to himself, I have not long to live, at least this may be my last illness. My brethren, this supposition is never unseasonable, we are in little danger of being deceived by thinking death at hand, for the numberless accidents to which we are exposed justify the thought. Is there any thing extravagant, pray, in affirming that sickness added to all these accidents, renders the near approach of death highly probable?

The second mistake is this. Most dying people put off the regulation of their temporal affairs too long. Be not conformed to this world. You should take patterns from better models, both for reasons of affection, and reasons of prudence. True affection to a family engages a man to preclude in favour of his heirs such troubles and divisions as are the inseparable consequences of an undivided or perplexed estate. Prudence, too, will foresee, that while our minds are all occupied about temporal affairs, a thousand ideas will intrude to disturb our devotion. Do not wait till the last moment to settle your affairs, to make your will, to dispose of your family, and be not so weak as to imagine that the discharge of these necessary duties will hasten your death. Employ yourselves wholly about the state of your souls, and let each say to himself, since I have been in the world I have hardly devoted one whole day to devotion: since I have been a member of the church I have been exercised about affairs which interest the whole society;

but now that I am come to the end of my life, now that I am passing out of this world, now that I am going where I shall have no more portion for ever in any thing done *under the sun*, disturb me no more, ye worldly ideas; thou fashion of this world passing away, appear no more in my sight: ye wild fowls, interrupt my sacrifice no more.

The third mistake is this. Most dying people delay sending for their ministers till the last moment. They would have us do violence to the laws of nature, they set us to exhort trunks, to instruct carcasses, to prepare skin and bones for eternity. "Be not conformed to this world." Why should ye delay? Is there any thing odious in our ministry? We do not bring death along with us, we do not hasten its approach: if we denounce the judgments of God against you, it is not with a design to terrify you, but to free you from them, and to "pull you out of the fire," Jude 23.

To these I add a fourth mistake. Most dying people think it a duty to tell their pastors of excellent sentiments, which indeed they have not, and they are afraid to discover their defects. When death makes his formidable appearance before them, they think religion requires them to say, they are quite willing to die. We desire, say they, to depart, when alas! all their desires are to make a tabernacle in the world, for it is good, they think, to be there. They tremble at the coming of Christ, and yet they cry, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." Ah! "Be not conformed to this world," open thy heart that it may be known, discover the maladies of thy soul, that we may apply such remedies as are proper. Do not imagine you will acquire such sentiments and emotions as saints of the first order had by talking their language; but imbibe their principles in your mind, and their tempers in your heart, before you make use of their language.

The fifth mistake is this. Most dying people speak to their ministers only in the presence of a great number of attendants, and most attendants interfere in what ministers say on those occasions. "Be not conformed to this world." Two reasons may convince you of the necessity of being alone. The first regards the pastor. Surrounding attendants divert his attention from the sick person. The second regards the sick person himself. Would it be just or kind to give him directions in public? What! would you have us in the presence of a husband lay open the intrigues of an immodest wife, and endeavour to bring her to repent of her lasciviousness by convicting her of her crimes? Would you have us reprove the head of a family for the iniquity that has disgraced his long life, in the presence of his son? Would you have us exhort a dying man to make restitution of his ill-gotten wealth in the presence of a hungry heir, who already gluts his eyes, and satiates his soul with hopes of succession? Were we casuists after the Roman fashion, did we compel consciences to reveal secrets to us, which ought to be confessed to God alone, did we interfere with your families and properties, there would be some ground for your scruples: but while we desire nothing but to exonerate your consciences, and to awake your souls to a sense of danger before they be plunged into an

abyss of eternal misery, respect our conduct, and condescend to submit to our instruction.

To these I add one mistake more. Most dying people trust too much to their ministers, and take too little pains themselves to form such dispositions as a dying bed requires. "Be not conformed to this world." It is not enough to have external help to die well, we ourselves must concur in this great work, we must, by profound meditation, by frequent reflections, and by fervent prayers, support ourselves under this last attack, and thus put the last hand to the work of our salvation. It is true, the infirmities of your bodies will affect your minds, and will often interrupt your religious exercises: but no matter, God does not require of a dying person connected meditations, accurate reflections, precise and formal prayers, for one sigh, one tear, one ejaculation of your soul to God, one serious wish rising from the bottom of your heart will be highly esteemed by the Lord, and will draw down new favours upon you.

To conclude. The multitude is a bad guide in regard to faith, in regard to manners, and in regard to departing out of this life. A man who desires to be saved, should be always upon his guard lest he should be rolled down the torrent: he ought to compile in his closet, or rather in his conscience, a religion apart, such as is, not that of the children of the world, but that of the disciples of wisdom. "Be not conformed to this world."

I finish with two reflections. I address the first to those who derive from this discourse no consequences to direct their actions: the second to such as refer it to its true design.

First. I address myself to you who do not draw any consequences from this discourse to regulate your actions. You have seen a portrait of the multitude. I suppose you acknowledge the likeness, and acquiesce in the judgment we have made. It seems, too many proofs and demonstrations establish this proposition, the multitude is a bad guide. Now you may follow which example you please. You may make your choice between the maxims of Jesus Christ and the maxims of the world. But we have a right to require one thing of you, which you cannot refuse us, without injustice; that is, that granting the genius of the multitude, when you are told you are destroying yourselves, you do not pretend to have refuted us by replying, we conduct ourselves as the world does, and every body does what you condemn in us. Thanks be to God your proposition is not strictly true! Thanks be to God, the rule has some exceptions! There are many regenerate souls, hidden perhaps from the eyes of men, but visible to God. There are even some saints, who shine in the sight of the whole world, and who, to use the expression of Jesus Christ, are a "city set on a hill," Matt. v. 14. What then, you never cast your eyes on the most illustrious objects in this world! Do you reckon for nothing what alone merits observation in society, and what constitutes the true glory of it? Have you no value for men for whose sake the world subsists, and society is preserved?

However, your proposition is indisputable in a general sense, and we are obliged to allow it, for our whole discourse tends to elucidate and establish the point. Allege this proposition, but

do not allege it for the purpose of opposing the censures you have heard, or of getting rid of our reproofs. By answering in this manner you give us an advantage over you, you lay a foundation which you mean to destroy, you do not furnish yourselves with a shield against your ministers, but you yourselves supply them with arms to wound and destroy you. Why do we declaim against your conduct? What do we mean when we reprove your way of living, except to convince you that it is not answerable to the Christian character which you bear? What do we mean except that you break the vows made for you in your baptism, and which you yourselves have often ratified at the Lord's table? What, in one word, except that you do not obey the laws of the gospel? But what can you advance more proper to strengthen the testimony which we bear against you than that which you advance to weaken it, that is, that you live as the world live?

All the world, say you, conduct themselves as we do, and every body does what you censure us for doing. But all the world conduct themselves badly, all the world violate the spirit of religion, all the world attack the maxims of Jesus Christ, all the world run in the broad road of perdition, all the world are destroying themselves, and the apostle exhorts us not to take the world for an example.

Secondly, I address myself to you who sincerely desire to apply this discourse to its true design. I grant, the road opened to you is difficult. To resist the torrent, to brave the multitude, to see one's self, like Elijah, alone on the Lord's side, and, in this general apostacy, in which a Christian so often finds himself, when he desires to sacrifice all his duty, to recollect motives of attachment to it, this is one of the noblest efforts of Christian heroism.

However, after all, it would argue great puerility to magnify our ideas of the crowd, the many, the multitude; it would be childish to be too much struck with these ideas, every body thinks in this manner, all the world act thus. I affirm, that truth and virtue have more partisans than error and vice, and God has more disciples than Satan. What do you call the crowd, the many, the multitude? What do you mean by all the world? What! You and your companions, your family, your acquaintances, your fellow-citizens, the inhabitants of this globe, to which the Creator has confined you; is this what you call all the world? What littleness of ideas! Cast your eyes on that little molehill, occupied by a few thousand ants, lend them intelligence, propose to one of these insects other maxims than those of his fellows, exhort him to have a little more ambition than to occupy a tiny imperceptible space upon that molehill, animate him to form projects more noble than that of collecting a few grains of corn, and then put into the mouth of this little emmet the same pretext that you make use of to us; I shall be alone, all the world conduct themselves in another manner. Would you not pity this insect? Would not he appear more contemptible to you for his mean and spiritless ideas

than for the diminutiveness of his body? Would you not look with disdain on an ant, that had no other ambition than that of taking for a model other insects about him, and preferring their approbation before that of mankind, who hold a rank so high in the scale of the world? My brethren, give what colours you will to this imagination, it is however certain, that you will form unjust ideas of this insect. An emmet has no relation to those beings, which you propose to him for models. Such ideas of happiness as you trace to him have no proportion to his faculties. Is an emmet capable of science to be allured by the company of the learned? Can an ant form plans of sieges and battles to render himself sensible of that glory, which exploits of war acquire, and for which the heroes of the world sacrifice their repose and their lives?

It is you, who have that meanness of soul, which you just now pitied in an ant. You inhabit cities and provinces, which, compared with the rest of the world, resemble the size of molehills; the whole globe itself is nothing, in comparison of the immense spaces, in which other works of the Creator are lodged. You creep on earth with a handful of men much less in comparison with the thousand thousands of other intelligences than an ant hill is in comparison of mankind. You have intimate relations to these intelligences; you, like them, are capable of great and noble functions; like them you are capable of knowledge; like them you are able to know the Supreme Being; you can love like them; you can form tender and delicate connexions as they can; and like them you are destined to eternal duration and felicity.

Do not say then, I shall be alone, nobody lives as you would have me live. They are the men, who surround you, that are *nobody* in comparison of the intelligences, whom I propose to you for examples. It ill suits insignificant men to consider themselves alone as in the centre of divine benevolence, and as the only subjects of a monarch, who reigns over all existence. "He sitteth upon the circle of the earth, whence the inhabitants appear to him as grasshoppers. He bringeth princes to nothing, he considereth the judges of the earth as vanity. He shall blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away like stubble," Isa. xl. 22.

But ye, celestial intelligences, ye seraphim burning with love, ye angels mighty in strength, messengers of the divine will, spirits rapid as the wind, and penetrating as fire, ye "redeemed of all nations, all kindred, all people, all tongues," Rev. v. 9; ye make the crowd, ye fill the court of the sovereign of the world; and, when we refuse to conform ourselves to this world, we imitate you; and when the slaves of the world shall be loaded with chains of darkness, we shall share with you the "river of pleasures" at the right hand of that God whom you serve, and to whose service, we, like you, devote ourselves. God grant us this grace! To him be honour and glory for ever.

Amen.

SERMON LVII.

THE ADVANTAGES OF PIETY.

1 TIMOTHY iv. 8.

Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

THERE never was a disposition more odious, or more unjust than that of the profane Jews, of whom Jeremiah speaks in the forty-fourth chapter of his prophecies. He had addressed to them the most pressing and pathetic exhortations to dissuade them from worshipping the goddess Isis, and to divert them from the infamous debaucheries, with which the Egyptians accompanied it. Their reply was in these words, "As for the word that thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee: but we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto her, as we have done, we and our fathers, our kings and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, for then had we plenty of victuals, and were well and saw no evil: but since we left off to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto her, we have wanted all things, and have been consumed by the sword, and by the famine," ver. 16—18. Nothing can equal the sacrifices which religion requires of us; therefore nothing ought to equal the recompense which it sets before us. Sometimes it requires us, like the father of the faithful, to quit our country and our relations, and to go out, not knowing whither we go, according to the expression of St. Paul, Heb. xi. 8. Sometimes it requires us to tread in the bloody steps of those who "had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, of bonds and imprisonment. Some were stoned, others were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword, wandered about in sheep skins, and goat skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented," ver. 36, 37. Always it calls us to triumph over our passions, to renounce our own senses, to mortify the flesh with its desires, and to bring all the thoughts of our minds, and all the emotions of our hearts into obedience to Jesus Christ. To animate us to sacrifices so great, it is necessary we should find in religion a superiority of happiness and reward, and it would be to rob it of all its disciples, to represent it as fatal to the interests of such as pursue it.

As this disposition is odious, so it is unjust. The miserable Jews, of whom the prophet Jeremiah speaks, did indeed consult the prophets of God, but they would not obey their voice; they would sometimes suspend their idolatrous rites, but they would never entirely renounce them: they discovered some zeal for the exterior of religion, but they paid no attention to the spirit and substance of it, and as God refused to grant to this outside of piety such advantages as he had promised to the

truly godly, they complained that the true religion had been to them a source of misery.

Were they the Jews of the prophet's time? Are they only Jews who make such a criminal complaint? Are they the only persons, who, placing religion in certain exterior performances, and mutilated virtues, complain that they do not feel that peace of conscience, those ineffable transports, that anticipated heaven, which are foretastes and earnest of eternal joy? We are going to-day, my brethren, to set before you the treasures, which God opens to us in communion with him: but we are going at the same time to trace out the character of those, on whom they are bestowed. This is the design of this discourse, and for this purpose we will divide it into two parts: First, we will examine what the apostle means by "godliness," in the words of the text: and secondly, Point out the advantages affixed to it. "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

I. What is *godliness* or piety? It is difficult to include an idea of it in the bounds of what is called a definition. Piety is a habit of knowledge in the mind—rectitude in the conscience—sacrifice in the life—and zeal in the heart. By the knowledge, that guides it, it is distinguished from the visions of the superstitious: by the rectitude, from whence it proceeds, it is distinguished from hypocrisy; by the sacrifice, which justifies it, it is distinguished from the unmeaning obedience of him, who goes as a happy constitution leads him; in fine, by the fervour that animates it, it is distinguished from the languishing emotions of the lukewarm.

1. Piety supposes *knowledge* in the mind. When God reveals a doctrine of religion to us, he treats us as reasonable beings, capable of examination and reflection. He does not require us to admit any truth without evidence. If he would have us believe the existence of a first cause, he engraves it on every particle of the universe. If he would have us believe the divinity of revelation, he would make some character of that divinity shine in every part of it. Would he have us believe the immortality of the soul, he attests it in every page of the sacred book. Accordingly, without previous knowledge, piety can neither support us under temptations, nor enable us to render to God such homage as is worthy of him.

It cannot support us in temptation. When Satan endeavours to seduce us he offers us the allurements of present and sensible good, and exposes in our sight the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. If we have nothing to oppose against him but superficial opinions of a precarious and ignorant system, we shall not find ourselves in a condition to withstand him.

Nor can piety destitute of knowledge enable us to render to God such worship as is worthy of him: for when do we render to God worship suitable to his majesty? Is it when submitting to the church, and saying to a man, in the language of Scripture, *Rabbi, Rabbi*, we place him on a sovereign throne, and make our reason fall prostrate before his

intelligence? No, certainly; it is when, submitting ourselves to the decisions of God, we regard him as the source of truth and knowledge, and believe, on his testimony, doctrines the most abstruse, and mysteries the most sublime.

True piety is wise; it rises out of those profound reflections which the godly man makes on the excellence of religion. "Open thou mine eyes," said the prophet formerly, "that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. I have more understanding than all my teachers, for thy testimonies are my meditation. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in thy word," Ps. cxix. 18. 99. 105. 148.

This is the first character of godliness, and this character distinguishes it from superstition. A superstitious man does not derive his principles from the source of knowledge. A family tradition, a tale, a legend, a monkish fable, the reverie of a confessor, the design of a council, this is his law, this is his light, this is his gospel.

2. Piety must be *sincere*, and this distinguishes it from hypocrisy. A hypocrite puts on all the appearance of religion, and adorns himself with the most sacred part of it. Observe his deportment, it is an affected gravity, which nothing can alter. Hear his conversation, he talks with a studied industry on the most solemn subjects, he is full of sententious sayings, and pious maxims, and so severe, that he is ready to take offence at the most innocent actions. Mind his dress, it is precise and singular, and a sort of sanctity is affected in all his furniture, and in all his equipage. Follow him to a place of worship, there particularly his hypocrisy erects its tribunal, and there he displays his religion in all its pomp. There he seems more assiduous than the most wise and zealous Christians. There he lifts up his eyes to heaven. There he sighs. There he bewetters the earth with his tears. In one word, whatever seems venerable in the church he takes pains to practise, and pleasure to display.

Jesus Christ has given us the original of this portrait in the persons of the pharisees of his time; and the only inconvenience we find in describing such characters is, that, speak where we will, it seems as if we intended to depict such individuals of the present age as seem to have taken these ancient hypocrites for their model. Never was the art of counterfeiting piety carried to such perfection by any men as by the old Pharisees. They separated themselves from a commerce with mankind, whom they called in contempt "people of the world."* They made long prayers. They fasted every Monday and Friday. They lay on planks and stones. They put thorns on the bottom of their gowns to tear their flesh. They wore strait girdles about their bodies. They paid tithes, not only according to law, but beyond what the law required. Above all, they were great makers of proselytes, and this was in some sort their distinguishing charac-

ter, and when they had made one, they never failed to instruct him thoroughly to hate all such as were not of their opinion on particular questions. All this was show, all this proceeded from a deep hypocrisy: by all this they had no other design than to acquire reputation for holiness, and to make themselves masters of the people, who are more easily taken with exterior appearances than with solid virtue.

Such is the character of hypocrisy, a character that God detests. How often does Jesus Christ denounce anathemas against people of this character? How often does he cry concerning them, "wo, wo?" Sincerity is one character of true piety, "O Lord, thou hast proved my heart, thou hast visited me in the night, thou hast tried me, and shall find nothing; I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress. Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee," Ps. xvii. 3; John xxi. 17. This character makes our love to God resemble his to us. When God gives himself to us in religion, it is not in mere appearances and protestations: but it is with real sentiments, emanations of heart.

3. Piety supposes *sacrifice*, and by this we distinguish it from a devotion of humour and constitution, with which it has been too often confounded. There is a devotee of temper and habit, who, really, has a happy disposition, but which may be attended with dangerous consequences. Such a man consults less the law of God to regulate his conduct than his own inclinations, and the nature of his constitution. As, by a singular favour of heaven, he has not received one of those irregular constitutions, which most men have, but a happy natural disposition, improved too by a good education, he finds in himself but little indisposition to the general maxims of Christianity. Being naturally melancholy, he does not break out into unbridled mirth, and excessive pleasures. As he is naturally collected in himself, and not communicative, he does not follow the crowd through the turbulence and tumult of the world. As he is naturally inactive, and soon disgusted with labour and pains-taking, we never see him animated with the madness of gadding about every where, weighing himself down with a multitude of business, not permitting any thing to happen in society without being himself the first mover, and putting to it the last hand. These are all happy incidents; not to run into excessive pleasure, not to follow the crowd in the noise and tumult of the world, not to run mad with hurry, and weary himself with an infinity of business, to give up the mind to recollection, all this is worthy of praise; but what is a devotion of this kind, that owes its birth only to incidents of this sort? I compare it to the faith of the man who believes the truths of the gospel only through a headstrong prejudice, only because, by a lucky chance, he had a father or a tutor who believed them. As such a man cannot have a faith acceptable to God, so neither can he who obeys the laws of God, because, by a sort of chance of this kind, they are conformable to his natural temper, offer to him the sacrifice of true obedience. Had you been naturally inclined to dissipation, you would have

* See Godwin's Moses and Aaron. Book I. Chap. X. Sect. 7.

ben excessively dissipated, for the very same reason that you are now excessively fond of retirement. Had you been naturally industrious, you would have exceeded in labouring on the very principle which now inclines you to be too fond of ease and stillness. Had you been naturally inclined to mirth, you would have shown excessive levity, on the very principle that now turns your gravity into gloom and melancholy. Would you know yourselves? See, examine yourselves. You say, your piety inclines you to surmount all temptations to dissipation; but does it enable you to resist those of retirement? it makes you firm against temptations to pleasure, but does it free you from sullenness? It enables you to surmount temptations to violent exertions, but does it raise you above littleness? The same may be said of the rest. Happy he, who arranges his actions with a special regard to his own heart, inquiring what he can find there opposite to the law of God, attacking the strong holds of Satan within himself, and directing all his fire and force to that point. "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts. I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. Sacrifice and offering thou dost not desire, mine ears hast thou opened. Lo, I come. I delight to do thy will, O my God, yea, thy law is within my heart," Gal. v. 24; Rom. xii. 1; Ps. xl. 7, &c.

4. Zeal and fervour are the last characters of piety. By this we know the godly man from such lukewarm Christians as practise the duties of religion in substance, but do so with a coldness, that sinks the value of the service. They can hear the afflictions of the church narrated without emotion, and see a confused heap of stones, sad remains of houses consecrated to our God, without "favouring the dust thereof," according to the expression of Scripture. They can see the dimensions of the "love" of God measured, the "breadth and length, and depth and height," without feeling the least warmth from the ardour and flame of so vehement a love. They can be present at the offering of one of those lively, tender, fervent prayers, which God Almighty himself condescends to hear and answer, and for the sake of which he forgives crimes and averts judgment, without entering at all into the spirit of these subjects. Such men as these require persuasion, compulsion, and power, to force them.

A man, who truly loves God, has sentiments of zeal and fervour. Observe David, see his joy before the ark; neither the royal grandeur, nor the prophetic gravity, nor the gazing of the populace, nor the reproaches of an interested wife, could cool his zeal. Observe Elijah, "I have been," said he, "very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword, and I, even I only am left, and they seek my life to take it away," 1 Kings xix. 10. Behold good Eli, the frost of fourscore could not chill the ardour that inflamed him. "What is there done, my son?" said he to the

unwelcome messenger, who came to inform him of the defeat of his army: the messenger replied, "Israel is fled before the Philistines, and there hath also been a great slaughter among the people, and thy two sons Hophni and Phinehas are dead:" thus far he supported himself; but the man went on to say, "the ark of God is taken;" instantly on hearing that the ark was gone, he "fell backward," he could not survive the loss of that august symbol of the divine presence, but died with grief. Observe Nehemiah, to whom his royal master put the question, "Why is thy countenance sad?" said he, "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?" chap. ii. 2, &c. Consider St. Paul, "We glory in tribulations, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us," Rom. v. 3. 5.

Do you imagine you truly love God, while you have only languid emotions towards him, and while you reserve all your activity and fire for the world? There is between God and a believer a tender and affectionate intercourse. Godliness has its festivals and exuberances. "Flesh and blood!" Ye that "cannot inherit the kingdom of God," 1 Cor. xv. 50, ye impure ideas of concupiscence, depart, be gone far away from our imaginations! There is a time, in which the mystical spouse faints, and utters such exclamations as these, "I sleep, but my heart waketh. Set me as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thine arm, for love is strong as death, jealousy as cruel as the grave, the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it," Cant. v. 2.

These are some characters of piety. Let us go on to examine the advantages of it.

II. Our apostle says, "godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." There is an enormous difference between these two sorts of blessings. The blessings of the life to come are so far superior to the blessings of the present life, that when we can assure ourselves of the first, we ought to give ourselves very little concern about the last. To add a drop of water to the boundless ocean; to add a temporal blessing to the immense felicities, which happy spirits enjoy in the other life, is almost the same thing. St. Paul tells us, that the idea of life to come so absorbs the idea of the present life, that to consider these two objects in this point of view, his eyes could hardly get sight of the one, it was so very diminutive, and his mind reckoned the whole as nothing: "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, which are temporal, but at the things which are not seen, which are eternal," 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.

Few imitate this apostle. The present, because it is present; and in spite of its rapidity, fixes our eyes, becomes a wall between us and eternity, and prevents our perceiving it. We should make many more converts to virtue, could we prove that it would render mankind

happy here below, but we cannot change the order of things. Jesus Christ and his apostles have told us, that "in the world we shall have tribulation," and that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution," John xvi. 33; 2 Tim. iii. 12. However, it is true, that even here piety procures pleasures, which usually surpass all those of worldly people: at least, which are sufficient to support us in a road leading to eternal happiness.

1. Consider first, how piety influences our health. Our bodies decay, I allow, by numberless means. Death enters them by the air we breathe, and by the elements that support them, and whatever contributes to make them live, contributes at the same time to make them die. Let us allow, my brethren, that most maladies take their rise in such excesses as the law of God condemns. How can a man, devoured with ambition, avarice and vengeance, a man whose passions keep him in perpetual agitations, depriving him of peace, and robbing him of sleep; how can he, who passes whole nights and days in gaming, animated with the desire of gaining his neighbour's money, tortured by turns with the hope of a fortune, and the fear of a bankruptcy; how can he, who drowns himself in wine, or overcharges himself with gluttony; how can he, who abandons himself without a curb to excessive lewdness, and who makes every thing serve his voluptuousness; how is it possible for people of these kinds to expect a firm and lasting health? Godliness is a bar to all these disorders; "the fear of the Lord prolongeth days: it is a fountain of life to guard us from the snares of death," Prov. x. 27; and xii. 27. If then it be true that health is an invaluable treasure, if it be that, which ought to hold the first rank among the blessings of life, if without it all others are of no value, it is as certain that without love to the law of God we cannot enjoy much pleasure in life.

The force of this reflection is certainly very little felt in the days of youth and vigour, for then we usually consider these as eternal advantages, which nothing can alter: but when old age comes, when by continual languors, and by exquisite pains, men expiate the disorders of an irregular life, then that fear of God is respected, which teaches us to prevent them. Ye martyrs of concupiscence, ye victims of voluptuousness, you, who formerly tasted the pleasures of sin, and are now thoroughly feeling the horrors of it, and who, in consequence of your excesses, are already given up to an anticipated hell, do you serve us for demonstration and example? You are become knowing by experience, now teach our youth how beneficial it is to lead a regular life in their first years, and as your intemperance has offended the church, let the pains you endure serve to restrain such as are weak enough to imitate your bad examples. Those trembling hands, that shaking head, those discoloured knees, that extinguished resolution, that feeble memory, that worn out brain, that body all infection and putrefaction, these are the dreadful rewards which the devil bestows on those on whom he is preparing himself shortly to exercise all his fury and rage. On this article, then, instead of saying with the profane, "what profit is it to keep the ordinances of God, and to walk

mournfully before the Lord of hosts?" Mal. ii. 14. We ought to say with St. Paul, "What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death," Rom. vi. 21.

2. Consider next how piety influences our reputation. I am aware, that worldly men by decrying piety, endeavour to avenge themselves for the want of courage to practise it. I am aware, too, that practise wickedness as much, as often, and as far as ever we can, we shall always find ourselves in a circle of companions like ourselves. But after all, it is however indisputable, that good people usually acquire the respect of such as have not the laudable ambition of imitating them. I appeal only to your own conscience. Is it not true, that, even while you are gratifying your own passions, you cannot help admiring such as subdue theirs? Is it not true, that, except on some occasions, in which you want, and therefore seek, accomplices in sin, you would rather choose to form connexions, to make bargains, and to deal with such as obey the laws of God, than with those who violate them? And amidst all the hatred and envy, which your irregularities excite against good people, is it not true, that your heart feels more veneration for wise, upright, and pious people, than for others, who have opposite qualities? As these are your dispositions towards others, know of a truth, they are also dispositions of others towards you. Here it is, that most men are objects of great pity. The irregularities, which seem to conduct us to the end we propose, are often the very causes of our disappointment. May I not address one of you thus? You trample upon all laws human and divine; you build up a fortunate house with the substance of widows, and orphans, and oppressed people, and you cement it with their blood; you sell your votes; you defraud the state; you deceive your friends; you betray your correspondents, and after you have enriched yourself by such ways, you set forth in a most pompous manner your riches, your elegant furniture, your magnificent palaces, your superb equipages, and you think the public take you for a person of great consideration, and that every one is erecting in his heart an altar to your fortune. No such thing. You deceive yourself. Every one says in private, and some blunt people say to your face, you are a knave, you are a public blood-sucker, and all your magnificence displays nothing but your crimes. May I not say to another, You affect to mount above your station by arrogant language, and mighty assumptions. You deck yourself with titles, and adorn yourself with names unknown to your ancestors. You put on a supercilious deportment, that ill assorts with the dust which covered you the other day, and you think by these means to efface the remembrance of your origin. No such thing. You deceive yourself. Every one takes pleasure in showing you some of your former rags to mortify your pride, and they say to one another, he is a mean genius, he is a fool, he resembles distracted men, who having persuaded themselves that they are princes, kings, emperors, call their cottage a palace, their stick a sceptre, and their domestics courtiers. May I not speak thus to a third, You are intoxicated

with your own splendour, and fascinated with your own charms, you aspire at nothing less than to make all mankind your worshippers, offering incense to the idol you yourself adore; with this view you break through the bounds of law, and the decency of your sex; your dress is vain and immodest, your conversation is loose, your deportment is indecent, and you think the world take you for a sort of goddess. No such thing. You deceive yourself. People say you have put off Christian modesty, and laid aside even worldly decency, and as they judge of your private life by your public deportment, how can they think otherwise? Fathers forbid their sons to keep your company, and mothers exhort their daughters to avoid your bad example.

3. Observe how godliness influences our *fortune*, by procuring us the confidence of other men, and above all by acquiring the blessing of God on our designs and undertakings.— You are sometimes astonished at the alarming changes that happen in society, you are surprised to see some families decay, and others fall into absolute ruin. You cannot comprehend why some people, who held the other day the highest places in society, are now fallen from that pinnacle of grandeur, and involved in the deepest distress. Why this astonishment? There is a Providence, and though God often hides himself, though the ways of his providence are usually impenetrable, though it would be an unjust way of reasoning to say, such a person is wealthy, therefore he is holy, such a one is indigent, therefore he is wicked; yet the Lord sometimes comes out of that darkness in which he usually conceals himself, and raises a saint out of obscurity into a state of wealth and honour.

4. Consider what an influence godliness has in our *happiness* by calming our passions, and by setting bounds to our desires. Our faculties are finite: but our desires are boundless. From this disproportion between our desires and our faculties a thousand conflicts arise, which distress and destroy the soul. Observe the labour of an ambitious man, he is obliged to sacrifice to his prince his ease, his liberty, and his life; he must appear to applaud what he inwardly condemns; and he must adjust all his opinions and sentiments by the ideas of his master. See what toils worldly honour imposes on its votaries; a man of honour must revenge an affront after he has pardoned it, and to that he must expose his establishment and his fortune, he must run the risk of being obliged either to quit his country, or to suffer such punishment as the law inflicts on those, who take that sword into their own hands, which God has put into the hand of the magistrate, he must stab the person he loves, the person who loves him, and who offended him more through inadvertence than animosity; he must stifle all the suggestions which conscience urges against a man who ventures his salvation on the precarious success of a duel, and who by so doing braves all the horrors of hell. Above all, what is the condition of a heart, with what cruel alternatives is it racked and torn, when it is occupied by two passions, which oppose and counteract each other. Take ambition and avarice for an example; for, my

brethren, the heart of a man is sometimes the seat of two opposite tyrants, each of whom has views and interests different from the other. Avarice says keep, ambition says give, avarice says hold fast, ambition says give up. Avarice says retire, ambition says go abroad. Ambition combats avarice, avarice combats ambition, each by turns distresses the heart, and if it groans under tyranny, whether avarice or ambition be the tyrant is indifferent. The pleasure of seeing one passion reign is always poisoned by the pain of seeing the other subdued. They resemble that woman, whose twin "children struggled together within her," and who *said* during the painful sensations, *If it must be so, why was I a mother?*

Piety prevents these fatal effects, it makes us content with the condition in which Providence has placed us: it does more, it teaches us to be happy in any condition, how mean soever it may be. "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content: I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Every where and in all things I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need," Phil. iv. 11, 12.

5. Consider the *peace* which piety diffuses in the conscience. The prosperity of those who desire to free themselves from conscience, is such as to make them miserable in the midst of their greatest success. What pleasure can a man enjoy, who cannot bear to be one moment alone; a man, who needs perpetual dissipation to hide from himself his real condition; a man, who cannot reflect on the past without remorse, think on the present without confusion, or the future without despair; a man, who carries within himself that obstinate reprover, on whom he cannot impose silence, a man, who already feels the "worm that dieth not" gnawing him; a man, who sees in the midst of his most jovial festivals the writing "of a man's hand," which he cannot read, but which his conscience most faithfully and terribly interprets; I ask what pleasure can such a man enjoy?

Godliness not only frees us from these torments, but it communicates joy into every part of the pious man's life. If the believer be in prosperity, he considers it as an effect of the goodness of God, the governor of this universe, and as a pledge of blessings reserved for him in another world. If he be in adversity, indeed he considers it as a chastisement coming from the hand of a wise and tender parent: and the same may be said of every other condition.

6. In fine, consider how piety influences the happiness of life, by the assurance it gives us of a safe, if not a comfortable *death*. There is not a single moment in life, in which it is not possible we should die; consequently there is not one instant, that may not be unhappy, if we be not in a condition to die well. While we are destitute of this assurance, we live in perpetual trouble and agitation; we see the sick, we meet funeral processions, we attend the dying, and all these different objects become motives of horror and pain. It is only when we are prepared to die well, that we bid defiance to winds and waves, fires and shipwrecks, and that, by opposing to all these perilous casualties the hope of a happy death,

we every where experience the joy with which it inspires such as wait for it.

Collect all these articles, and unite all these advantages in one. I ask now, is it an improbable proposition, that virtue has a reward in itself, sufficient to indemnify us for all we suffer on account of it, so that though there were nothing to expect from this life, yet it would be a problem, whether it would not be better, all things considered, to practise godliness than to live in sin.

But this is not the consequence we mean to draw from our principles. We do not intend to make this use of our observations. We will not dispute with the sinner whether he finds pleasure in the practice of sin, but as he assures us, that it gives him more pleasure to gratify his passions than to subdue them, we will neither deny the fact, nor find fault with his taste, but allow that he must know better than any body what gives himself most pleasure. We only derive this consequence from all we have been hearing, that the advantages which accompany godliness, are sufficient to support us in a course of action, that leads to eternal felicity.

This eternal felicity the apostle had chiefly in view, and on this we would fix your attention in the close of this discourse. "Godliness hath promise of the life that now is," is a proposition, we think, plain and clear: but however, it is disputable you say, subject to many exceptions, and liable to a great number of difficulties: but "godliness hath promise of the life that is to come," is a proposition which cannot be disputed, it is free from all difficulty, and can admit of no exception.

Having taken up nearly all the time allotted to this exercise, I will finish with one reflection. "Promise of the life to come," annexed to godliness, is not a mere promise, it puts even in this life the pious man in possession of one part of the benefits, the perfect possession of which he lives in hope of enjoying. Follow him in four periods—First in society—Next in the closet—Then in a participation of holy ordinances—And lastly, at the approach of death: you will find him participating the eternal felicity, which is the object of his hope.

In *society*. What is the life of a man, who never goes into the company of his fellow creatures without doing them good; of a man who after the example of Jesus Christ "goes about doing good;" a man, who every where shows the light of a good example, who endeavours to win all hearts to God, who never ceases to publish his perfections, and to celebrate his praise, what, I ask, is the life of such a man? It is an angelical life, it is a heavenly life, it is an anticipation of that life which happy spirits live in heaven, it is a foretaste and prelibation of those pleasures which are at the "right hand of God," and of that "fulness of joy," which is found in contemplating his majesty.

Follow the pious man into the silent *closet*. There he recollects, concentrates himself, and loses himself in God. There, in the rich source of religion, he quenches the thirst of knowing, elevating, perpetuating, and extending himself, which burns within him, and there he feels how God, the author of his nature, proportions himself to the boundless capacity of

the human heart. There, ye earthly thoughts, ye worldly cares, ye troublesome *birds of prey*, that so often perplex us in life, there you have no access! There, revolving in his mind the divers objects presented to him in religion, he feels the various emotions that are proper to each. Sometimes the rich gifts of God in nature, and the insignificance of man the receiver, are objects of his contemplation, and then he exclaims, "O Lord, my Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained," Ps. viii. 1. 3. I cannot help crying, "What is man that thou art mindful of him! and the son of man that thou visitest him!" ver. 4. Sometimes the brightness of the divine perfections shining in Jesus Christ fixes his attention, and then he exclaims, "Thou art fairer than the children of men, grace is poured into thy lips, therefore God hath blessed thee for ever!" Ps. xlv. 2. Sometimes his mind contemplates that train of favours, with which God has enriched every believer in his church, and then he cries, "Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order before thee! Would I declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered!" Ps. xl. 5. Sometimes it is the sacrifice of the cross, and then he says, "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh!" 1 Tim. iii. 16. Sometimes it is the joy of possessing God, and then his language is, "My soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness!" Ps. lxxiii. 5. Sometimes it is the desire of enjoying God in a greater measure, and in a richer abundance, and then he says with Asaph, "My supreme good is to draw near to God. When shall I come, O when shall I come and appear before God!" Ps. lxxiii. 28, and xlii. 2.

Follow this man in the participation of holy ordinances. Represent to yourselves a man, who after preparing himself some days, or some weeks for the holy communion, bringing thither a heart proportioned to the labour, which he has taken to dispose it properly: imagine such a man sitting at this table along with the ambitious, the impure, the revengeful, the vain, all the members of this community; suppose this man saying to himself, they are not only men who see and consider me, they are angels, who encamp around such as love God; it is Jesus Christ, who sits amidst his disciples assembled in his name; it is God himself who sees all, and examines all the dispositions I bring to his table. It is not only an invitation to this table given by ministers, it is "wisdom who hath furnished her table, mingled her wine," Prov. ix. 1, 2, and who cries, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters," Isaiah lv. It is my Saviour, who says to me, "With desire I have desired to eat with you," Luke xxii. 15. It is not only material bread that I am receiving, it is a symbol of the body and blood of Christ, it is his flesh and blood under the elements of bread and wine. It will be not only a little tranquility of conscience, which I shall receive at this table, if I enter into the spirit of the mystery set before me: but I shall have consolations on my death-bed,

triumphs after death, and oceans of felicity and glory for ever. God has not preserved me till now merely to give me an opportunity of sitting here: but to open to me the treasures of his patience and long-suffering; to enable me to repent of my former negligence of breaking the sabbath, profaning the communion, committing iniquity, forgetting my promises, and offending my Creator.

I ask, my brethren, what is the man who approaches the Lord's table with such dispositions? Is he a common man? Verily with eyes of flesh, I see nothing to distinguish him from the crowd. I see this man confounded with all others, whom a lax discipline suffers to partake of this ordinance, and to receive with unclean hands and a profane mouth, the most holy symbol of our religion; at most, I see only an agitation of his senses, a spark shining in his eye, a look cast towards heaven, emotions which the veil of humility that covers him cannot entirely conceal: but with the eyes of my mind I behold a man of a superior order, a man in paradise, a man nourished with pleasure at the right hand of God, a man at whose conversion the angels of God rejoice, a man fastened to the triumphal car of Jesus Christ, and who makes the glory of the triumph, a man who has the happy art of making heaven descend into his soul; I behold amidst the miseries and vanities of the world, a man already "justified," already "raised," already "glorified," already "sitting in heavenly places with Jesus Christ," Rom. viii. 30; Eph. ii. 6. I see a man ascending to heaven along with Jesus Christ, amidst the shouting of the heavenly choir, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and let the King of glory in," Ps. xxiv. 7. I see a man "with uncovered face beholding the glory of the Lord," and changing "from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord," 2 Cor. iii. 18.

But it is particularly in a *dying bed* that the pious man enjoys foretastes of the life to come. A worldling is confounded at the approach of that dismal night, which hides futurity from him; or rather, despair seizes his soul at the rising of that dreadful light, which discovers to him a dispensation of punishment, in spite of his obstinate denial of it. Then he sees fire, flames, devils, "a lake of fire, the smoke of which ascendeth up for ever and ever." Then he shrinks back from the bitter cup, the

dregs of which he must drink; he tries, though in vain, to put off the end by his too late prayer, and he cries at its approach "Mountains fall on me, hills cover me!" As for the believer, he sees and desires nothing but that dispensation of happiness, which he has already embraced by faith, possessed by hope, and tasted by the comforts of the Holy Spirit in his soul; and hence comes that active fervour, which makes his countenance luminous like that of departing Stephen. I cannot better express such sentiments than in the words of the primitive saints, who so happily experienced them.

"I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord! 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, and mine eyes shall behold and not another. Though thou slayest me, yet will I trust in thee, O God! Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. 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. Neither count I my life dear so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord. I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Lord Jesus receive my spirit. 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. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? In these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. 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! When shall I come and appear before God? How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, they will be still praising thee! Thine altars, even thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God."

May you all, my brethren, may every one of you, know these truths by experience. God grant you the grace. To him be honour and glory for ever.

SERMON LVIII.

THE REPENTANCE OF THE UN-
CHASTE WOMAN.

LUKE vii. 36—50.

And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. And behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him, saw it, he spake within himself, saying, this man, if he were a prophet, would have known who, and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner. And Jesus answering, said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor, which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, thou hast rightly judged. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss; but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. Mine head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins which are many, are forgiven; for she loveth much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, thy sins are forgiven. And they that sat at meat with him, began to say within themselves, who is this that forgiveth sins also? And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.

“LET me fall into the hands of the Lord, for his mercies are great: but let me not fall into the hand of man,” 2 Sam. xxiv. 14. This was the request that David made in the most unhappy moment of his life. A prophet sent by an avenging God came to bring him a choice of afflictions, “I offer thee three things, choose one of them, that I may do it unto thee.—Shall three years of famine come unto thee in thy land? or wilt thou flee three months before thine enemies, while they pursue thee? or that there be three days pestilence in thy land? Now advise, and see what answer I shall return to him that sent me,” ver. 12, &c.

What a proposal was this to a man accustomed to consider Heaven as a source of benedictions and favours! Henceforth he was to consider it only as a cavern of thunder and lightning, flashing and rolling, and ready to strike him dead! which of these punishments would he choose? Which of them could he choose without reproaching himself in future

that he had chosen the worst? Which would you have chosen had you been in his place, my brethren? Would you have determined for war? Could you have borne the bare idea of it? Could you have endured to see the once victorious armies of Israel led in triumph by an enemy, the ark of the Lord a captive, a cruel and barbarous soldiery reducing a kingdom to ashes, rasing fortresses, ravaging a harvest, and destroying in a moment the crop of a whole year? Would you have determined for famine? Would you have chosen to have the heaven become as iron, and the earth brass, the seed dying in the earth, or the corn burning before it was ripe? “The locust eating what the palmer worm had left, and the canker worm eating what the locust had left,” Joel i. 4; men snatching bread from one another's hands, struggling between life and death, and starving till food would afford no nourishment? Would you have chosen mortality? Could you have reconciled yourselves to the terrible times in which contagion on the wings of the wind carries its deadly poison with the rapidity of lightning from city to city, from house to house; a time in which social living is at an end, when each is wholly employed in guarding himself from danger, and has no opportunity to take care of others; when the father flees from the sight of the son, the son from that of the father, the wife avoids the husband, the husband the wife; when each dreads the sight of the person he most esteems, and receives, and communicates poisonous and deadly infection? These are the dreadful punishments out of which God required guilty David to choose one. These he was to weigh in a balance, while he agitated the mournful question, which of the three shall I choose for my lot? However, he determines, “Let me fall into the hands of the Lord, for his mercies are great: but let me not fall into the hand of man.” He thought, that immediate strokes from the hand of a God, merciful though displeased, would be most tolerable. He could conceive nothing more terrible than to see between God and himself, men who would intercept his looks, and would prevent his access to the throne of grace.

My brethren, the wish of David under his consternation may direct ours in regard to all the spots that have defiled our lives. True, the eyes of God are infinitely more pure than those of men. He indeed discovers frailties in our lives which have escaped our notice, and “if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart.” It is true, he hath punishments to inflict on us infinitely more dreadful than any mankind can invent, and if men can “kill the body, God is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” However, this Almighty God, this terrible, this avenging God, is a merciful God, “great are his tender mercies;” but men, men are cruel; yea, the very men who allow themselves to live in the most shameful licentiousness, men who have the most need of the patience of others, men who themselves deserve the most rigorous punishments, these very men are usually void of all pity for their fellows. Behold a striking example. The unchaste woman in the text experienced both, and by turns made trial of the judgment of God, and the judgment of men. But she met with a very

different treatment. In Jesus Christ she found a very severe legislator, who left her awhile to shed tears, and very bitter tears; a legislator, who left her awhile to her own grief, and sat and saw her hair dishevelled, and her features distorted; but who soon took care to dry up her tears, and to address this comfortable language to her, "Go in peace." On the contrary, in the hands of men she found nothing but barbarity and cruelty. She heard a supercilious Pharisee endeavour to arm against her the Redeemer of mankind, try to persuade him to denounce on her sentence of death, even while she was repenting of her sin, and to do his utmost to cause condemnation to flow from the very fountain of grace and mercy.

It is this instructive, this comfortable history, that we set before you to-day, and which presents three very different objects to our meditation, the conduct of the incontinent woman, that of the Pharisee, and that of Jesus Christ. In the conduct of the woman, prostrate at the feet of our Saviour, you see the principal characters of repentance. In that of the Pharisee you may observe the venom which not unfrequently infects the judgments which mankind make of one another. And in that of Jesus Christ you may behold free and generous emotions of pity, mercy, and compassion. Let us enter into the matter.

I. Let us first observe the *incontinent woman* now become a penitent. The question most controverted by interpreters, and very differently answered by them, is that, which in our opinion is the least important, that is, who was this woman? Not that a perfect knowledge of her person, and the history of her life, would not be very proper, by explaining the nature of her sins, to give us a just idea of her repentance, and so contribute to elucidate the text: but because, though we have taken a great deal of pains, we have found nothing on this article worthy to be proposed to critical hearers, who insist upon being treated as rational men, and who refuse to determine a point without evidence.

I know, some expositors, misled by a resemblance between this anointing of Jesus Christ, and that mentioned in the eleventh chapter of St. John, when our Saviour supped with Lazarus, have supposed that the woman here spoken of was the same Mary, the sister of Lazarus, who paid such a profound attention to the discourse of Jesus Christ, and who, according to the evangelist, "anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair." And as other parts of the gospel speak of another "Mary called Magdalen," some have thought that Mary the sister of Lazarus, Mary Magdalen, "out of whom" it is said, Jesus Christ had "cast seven devils," and the woman of our text, were one and the same person.

We do not intend to enter on these discussions. It is sufficient to know, first, that the woman here in question lived in the city of Nain, which sufficiently distinguishes her from Mary the sister of Lazarus, who was at Bethany, and from Mary Magdalen, who probably was so called, because she was born at *Magdala*, a little town in the tribe of Manasseh. Secondly, the woman of our text was one of a bad life, that is to say, guilty of impurity. The original

word signifies a *sinner*. This term sometimes signifies in Scripture the condition of such as lived out of the covenant, and in this sense it is used in the epistle to the Galatians, where St. Paul calls pagans *sinners*: but the word is applied in Greek authors to those women who were such as all the circumstances of our history engage us to consider this woman. Though it is easy to determine the sin of this woman in general, yet it is not easy to determine the particular kind, whether it had been adultery, or prostitution, or only some criminal intrigue. Our reflections will by turns regard each of these conditions. In fine, it is highly probable, both by the discourse of the Pharisee, and by the ointment, with which this woman anointed the feet of Jesus Christ, that she was a person of some fortune. This is all I know on this sort of questions. Should any one require more, I should not blush to avow my ignorance, and to recommend him to guides wiser than any I have the honour of being acquainted with, or to such as possess that, which in my opinion, of all the talents of learned men, seems to me least to be envied, I mean that of having fixed opinions on doubtful subjects unsupported by any solid arguments.

We will confine ourselves to the principal circumstances of the life of this *sinner*; and to put our observations into a kind of order, we will examine first, her grief—next, the Saviour to whom she applied—then, the love that inflamed her—and lastly, the courage with which she was animated. In these four circumstances we observe four chief characters of repentance. First, Repentance must be lively, and accompanied with keen remorse. Our sinner weeps, and her tears speak the language of her heart. Secondly, Repentance must be wise in its application. Our sinner humbles herself at the feet of him, "who is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world," 1 John ii. 2. Thirdly, Repentance must be tender in its exercise, and acts of divine love must take place of the love of sin. Fourthly, Repentance must be bold. Our sinner surmounts all the scruples dictated by false honour, she goes into the house of the Pharisee, and acknowledges her misconduct in the presence of all the guests, and was no more ashamed to disavow her former crimes than she had been to commit them.

We consider, in the repentance of this woman the *grief* with which she was penetrated. Repentance must be accompanied with keen remorse. It is the chief character of it. In whatever class of unchaste people this woman ought to be placed, whether she had been a common prostitute, or an adulteress, or whether being unmarried she had abandoned herself for once to criminal voluptuousness, she had too much reason to weep and lament. If she had been guilty of *prostitution*, she could not shed tears too bitter. Can any colours sufficiently describe a woman, who is arrived at such a pitch of impurity as to eradicate every degree of modesty; a woman letting herself out to infamy, and giving herself up to the highest bidder; one who publicly devotes herself to the greatest excesses, whose house is a school of abomination, whence proceed those detestable maxims, which poison the minds of men, and

those infamous debaucheries, which infect the body, and throw whole families into a state of putrefaction? It is saying too little to affirm that this woman ought to shed bitter tears at the recollection of her scandalous and dissolute life. The priests and magistrates, and people of Nain ought to have covered themselves in sackcloth and ashes, for having tolerated such a house, for not having one spark of the zeal of "Phinehas the son of Eleazar," Numb. xxv.

11. For having left one stone upon another as a monument of the profligacy of the city, and for not having rased the very foundations of such a house, though they, who were employed in the business, had been buried in the ruins. One such a house suffered in a city is enough to draw down the curse of heaven on a whole province, a whole kingdom.

Rome, what a fair opportunity have I now to confound thee! Am I not able to produce in the sight of the whole world full proof of thy shame and infamy? Do not a part of thy revenues proceed from a tax on prostitution? Are not prostitutes of both sexes thy "nursing fathers and nursing mothers?" Is not the holy see in part supported, to use the language of Scripture, by "the hire of a whore, and the price of a dog?" Deut. xxxii. 18. But alas! I should leave thee too much reason to retort. I should fear, you would oppose our excesses against your excesses. I should have too much reason to fear a wound by the dart shot at thee. I should tremble lest thou shouldst draw it smoking from thine own unclean heart, and lodge it in ours. O God! "teach my hands today to war, and my fingers to fight." My brethren, should access to this pulpit be for ever forbidden to us in future; though I were sure this discourse would be considered as a torch of sedition intended to set all these provinces in a flame; and should a part of the punishment due to the fomenters of the crime fall upon the head of him who has the courage to reprove it, I do, and I will declare, that the prosperity of these provinces can never, no never, be well established, while such affronts are publicly offered to the majesty of that God, "who is of purer eyes than to behold evil," Hab. i. 13. Ah! proclaim no more fasts, convoke no more solemn assemblies, appoint no more public prayers to avert the anger of heaven. "Let not the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, let them not say, spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach," Joel ii. 17. All this exterior of devotion will be useless, while there are amongst us places publicly set apart for impurity. The filthy vapour that proceeds from them will ascend, and form a thick cloud between us and the throne of grace, a cloud which the most ardent prayers cannot pierce through.

Perhaps our penitent had been guilty of *adultery*. What idea must a woman form of herself, if she has committed this crime, and considers it in its true point of light? Let her attentively observe the dangerous condition into which she has plunged herself, and that to which she is yet exposed. She has taken for her model the woman described by Solomon, and who has had too many copies in latter ages, that "strange

woman in the attire of a harlot, who is subtle of heart, loud and stubborn, her feet abiding not in her house, now without, now in the streets, lying in wait at every corner, and saying to such among the youth as are void of understanding, "I have peace-offerings with me, this day have I paid my vows. I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry, with fine linen of Egypt. I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. Come, let us take our fill of love, for the good man is not at home, he is gone a long journey, and will not come home till the day appointed," Prov. vii. 5, &c. Is it necessary, think you, my brethren, to alter many of these descriptive expressions to give a likeness of the manners of our times?

Are not modern dissipations described in the perpetual motion of this "strange woman, whose feet abide not in her house, who is now without in the country, then in the streets, and at every corner?" What are some curious, elegant, and fashionable dresses, but the "attire of a harlot?" Are not the continual artifices, and accumulated dissimulations, which some people use to conceal future designs, or to cover past crimes, are not these features of this "subtle woman?" What are those pains taken to form certain parties of pleasure, but features of this woman, who says, "I have peace-offerings with me, I have this day paid my vows, come, let us solace ourselves with loves?" What are certain moments expected with impatience, managed with industry, and employed with avidity, but features of this woman, who says "to fools among the youth, the good man is not at home, nor will he come home till the day appointed?"—I stop—if the unchaste woman in the text, had been guilty of adultery, she had defiled the most sacred and inviolable of all connexions. She had kindled discord in the family of him who was the object of her criminal regard. She had given an example of impurity and perfidy to her children and her domestics, to the world and to the church. She had affronted in the most cruel and fatal manner the man, to whom she owed the tenderest attachment, and the most profound respect. She had covered her parents with disgrace, and provoked such as knew her debauchery to inquire from which of her ancestors she had received such impure and tainted blood. She had divided her heart and her bed with the most implacable enemy of her family. She had hazarded the legitimacy of her children, and confounded the lawful heir with a spurious offspring. Are any tears too bitter to expiate such an odious complication of crimes? Is any quantity too great to shed, to wash away such guilt as this?

But we will not take pains to blacken the reputation of this penitent: we may suppose her unchaste, as the evangelist leads us to do, without supposing her an adulteress or a prostitute. She might have fallen *once*, and only once. Her sin, however, even in this case, must have become a perpetual source of sorrow: thousands and thousands of sad reflections must have pierced her heart. Was this the only fruit of my education? Is this all I have learned from the many lessons, that have been given me from my cradle, and which seem so proper to guard me for ever against

* See Sermon xviii. in the note.

the rocks where my feeble virtue has been shipwrecked? I have renounced the decency of my sex, the appurtenances of which always have been timidity, scrupulosity, delicacy, and modesty. I have committed one of those crimes which, whether it were justice or cruelty, mankind never forgive. I have given myself up to the unkindness and contempt of him, to whom I have shamefully sacrificed my honour. I have fixed daggers in the hearts of my parents; I have caused that to be attributed to their negligence, which was occasioned only by my own depravity and folly. I have banished myself for ever from the company of prudent persons. How can I bear their looks? Where can I find a night dark enough to conceal me from their sight?

Thus might our mourner think; but to refer all her grief to motives of this kind would be to insult her repentance. She has other motives more worthy of a penitent. This heart, the heart that my God demanded with so much condescension and love, I have denied him, and given up to voluptuousness. This body, which should have been a "temple of the Holy Ghost," is become the den of an impure passion. The time and pains I should have employed in the work of my salvation, I have spent in robbing Jesus Christ of his conquests. I have disputed with my Saviour the souls he redeemed with his blood, and what he came to save I have endeavoured to sink in perdition. I am become the cause of the remorse of my accomplice in sin, he considers me with horror, he reproaches me with the very temptations, to which he exposed me, and when our eyes meet in a religious assembly, or in the performance of a ceremony of devotion, he tacitly tells me, that I made him unworthy to be there. I shall be his executioner on his death-bed, perhaps I shall be so through all eternity. I have exposed myself to a thousand dangers, from which nothing but the grace of God has protected me, to a thousand perils and dreadful consequences, the sad and horrible examples which stain all history. Such are the causes of the tears of this penitent. "She stood at the feet of Jesus Christ, weeping, and washed his feet with tears." This is the first character of true repentance, it consists in part in keen remorse.

Repentance must be *wise* in its application. Our sinner did not go to the foot of Mount Sinai to seek for absolution under pretence of her own righteousness, and to demand justification as a reward due to her works. She was afraid, as she had reason to be, that the language of that dreadful mountain proceeding from the mouth of divine justice would pierce her through. Nor did she endeavour to ward off the blows of justice by covering herself with superstitious practices. She did not say, "wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" Micah vi. 7. She did not even require priests and Levites to offer propitiatory sacrifices for her. She discerned the sophisms of

error, and acknowledged the Redeemer of mankind, under the veils of infirmity and poverty that covered him. She knew that "the blood of bulls and of goats" could not purify the conscience. She knew that Jesus sitting at table with the Pharisee was the only offering, the only victim of worth sufficient to satisfy the justice of an offended God. She knew that he was "made unto sinners wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption;" that his *name* was "the only one among men whereby they might be saved." It was to Jesus Christ that she had recourse, bedewing with tears the feet of him who was about to shed his blood for her, and receiving by an anticipated faith the benefit of the death that he was going to suffer, she renounced dependence on every kind of satisfaction except his.

The third character of the repentance of this sinner is *love*. It should seem, Jesus Christ would have us consider all her actions as evidences of love, rather than as marks of repentance; "she hath loved much." These things are not incompatible. Though "perfect love casteth out fear," yet it does not cast out grief, for the pardon of sin received by an elect soul, far from diminishing the regret which it feels for committing it, contributes to augment it. The more we love God, the greater the pain felt for offending him. Yea, this love that makes the happiness of angels, this love that inflames seraphim, this love that supports the believers under the most cruel torments, this love is the greatest punishment of a penitent. To have offended the God we love, a God rendered amiable by infinite perfections, a God so tender, so compassionate as to pardon the very sins we lament; this love excites in a soul such emotions of repentance as we should labour in vain to express, unless your hearts, in concert with our mouths, feel in proportion as we describe.

Courage is the fourth character of the repentance, or, if you will, the love of this woman. She does not say, *What will they say of me?* Ah, my brethren, how often has this single consideration, *What will they say of me?* been an obstacle to repentance! How many penitents have been discouraged, if not prevented by it! To say all in one word, how many souls has it plunged into perdition! Persons affected by this, though urged by their consciences to renounce the world and its pleasures, have not been able to get over a fear of the opinions of mankind concerning their conversion. Is any one persuaded of the necessity of living retired? This consideration, *What will be said of me?* terrifies him. It will be said, that I choose to be singular, that I affect to distinguish myself from other men, that I am an enemy to social pleasure. Does any one desire to be exact in the performance of Divine worship? This one consideration, *What will they say of me?* terrifies. They will say, I affect to set myself off for a religious and pious person, I want to impose on the church by a specious outside; they will say, I am a weak man, full of fancies and phantoms. Our penitent breaks through every worldly consideration. "She goes," says a modern author, "into a strange house, without being invited, to disturb the pleasures of a festival, by an ill-

timed sorrow, to cast herself at the feet of the Saviour, without fearing what would be said, either of her past life, or of her present boldness, to make by this extraordinary action a kind of public confession of her dissoluteness, and to suffer for the first punishment of her sins, and for a proof of her conversion, such insults as the pride of the Pharisees, and her own ruined reputation would certainly draw upon her.* We have seen the behaviour of the penitent; now let us observe the judgment of the Pharisee. "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who, and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, for she is a woman of bad fame."

II. The evangelist expressly tells us, that *the Pharisee who thus judged*, was the person at whose table Jesus Christ was eating. Whether he were a disciple of Jesus Christ, as is very probable, and as his calling Christ *Master* seems to import, or whether he had invited him for other reasons, are questions of little importance, and we will not now examine them. It is certain, our Saviour did often eat with some Pharisees, who far from being his disciples, were the most implacable enemies of his person and doctrine. If this man were a disciple of Jesus Christ, it should seem very strange that he should doubt the divinity of the mission of Christ, and inwardly refuse him even the quality of a prophet. This Pharisee was named Simon; however, nothing obliges us either to confound Simon the Pharisee with Simon the leper, mentioned in Matthew, and to whose house Jesus Christ retired, or the history of our text with that related in the last mentioned place, for the circumstances are very different, as it would be easy to prove, had we not subjects more important to propose to you. Whosoever this Pharisee might be, he said within himself, "This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who, and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him; for she is a sinner." There are four defects in this judgment—a criminal indolence—an extravagant rashness—an intolerable pride—an anti-Christian cruelty. As we cannot help condemning the opinion of the Pharisee for these four defects, so we cannot avoid censuring most of the judgments, that people form on the conduct of their neighbours for the same reasons.

A criminal indolence. That disposition of mind, I allow, is very censurable, which inspires a perpetual attention to the actions of our neighbours, and the motive of it is sufficient to make us abhor the practice. We have reason to think, that the more people pry into the conduct of their neighbours, the more they intend to gratify the barbarous pleasure of defaming them: but there is a disposition far more censurable still, and that is to be always ready to form a rigorous judgment, on the least appearances of impropriety, and without taking pains to inquire, whether there be no circumstances that diminish the guilt of an action apparently wrong, nothing that renders it deserving of patience or pity. It does not belong to us to set ourselves up for judges of the actions of our brethren, to become inquisitors

in regard to their manners, and to distribute punishments of sin and rewards of virtue. At least, when we usurp this right, let us not aggravate our conduct by the manner in which we exercise the bold imperious usurpation. Let us not pronounce like bold iniquitous judges on the actions of those sinners, to whom nature, society, and religion, ought to unite us in an affectionate manner. Let us procure exact informations of the causes of such criminals as we summon before our tribunals, and let us not deliver our sentences till we have weighed in a just balance whatever tends to condemn, or to absolve them. This would bridle our malignity. We should be constrained to suspend for a long time our avidity to solicit, and to hasten the death of a sinner. The pleasure of declaring him guilty would be counterbalanced by the pain of trying the cause. Did this Pharisee give himself time to examine the whole conduct of the sinner, as he called her? Did he enter into all the discussions necessary to determine whether she were a penitent sinner, or an obstinate sinner: whether she were reformed, or hardened like a reprobate in the practice of sin? No, certainly. At the sight of the woman he recollects only the crimes of which she had been guilty; he did not see her, and he did not choose to see her in any other point of light; he pronounced her character rashly, and he wanted Jesus Christ to be as rash as himself; this is a woman of bad fame. Do you not perceive, my brethren, what wicked indolence animated this iniquitous judge, and perverted his judgment?

The Pharisee sinned by rashness. See how he judged of the conduct of Christ, in regard to the woman, and of what the woman ought to expect of Jesus Christ, on supposition his mission had been divine, "this man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that touched him, for she is a sinner." This opinion supposes, that a prophet ought not in any case to have patience with a woman of this sort. As if it were impossible for a prophet to have any design impenetrable to the eye of a Pharisee! As if any one had a right to censure the conduct of a man under the direction of the infinite Spirit! But it is because this man is a prophet, it is because he is more than a prophet, it is because he is the spring, the ocean, from which all the prophets derived the supernatural knowledge of the greatest mysteries of revelation, of predicting events the least likely to come to pass, of seeing into the most distant and impenetrable futurity; it is because of this, that he is capable of forming a just notion of the character of a sinner, and the nature of a sin. Yes, none but God can form such a judgment. "Who art thou, that judgest another?" Rom. xiv. 4. Such a judgment depends on so many difficult combinations, that none but an infinite intelligence is capable of making it with exactness.

In order to judge properly of a crime, and a criminal, we must examine the power of the temptations to which he was exposed, the opportunities given him to avoid it, the force of his natural constitution, the motives that animated him, the resistance he made, the virtues he practised, the talents God gave him,

* Flechier, panegyrique de la Magdeleine.

the education he had, what knowledge he had acquired, what conflicts he endured, what remorse he has felt. An exact comparison ought to be made of his sins with his virtues, in order to determine whether sin prevails over virtue, or whether virtue prevails over sin, and on this confronting of evidence a proper idea of the sinner in question must be formed. It must be examined whether he were seduced by ignorance, or whether he were allured by example, or whether he yielded through weakness, whether dissipation or obstinacy, malice, or contempt of God and his law, confirmed him in sin. On the examination of all these articles depends the truth of the judgment, which we form of a fellow creature. There needs nothing but one circumstance, nothing but one degree of more or less in a moral action to change the nature of it, to render it pardonable or irremissible, deserving compassion or horror. Now who is he, who is the man, that is equal to this combination? Accordingly, nothing more directly violates the laws of benevolence and justice than some decisive opinions, which we think proper to give on the characters of our neighbours. It is indeed the office of judges to punish such crimes as disturb the peace of society; and each individual may say to his brethren, this is the path of virtue, that is the road of vice. We have authority indeed to inform them that "the unrighteous," that is "adulterers, idolaters, and fornicators shall not inherit the kingdom of God," 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. Indeed we ought to apprise them of danger, and to make them tremble at the sight of the bottomless pit, towards which they are advancing at a great pace: but to make such a combination as we have described, and to pronounce such and such people reprobates is rashness, it is to assume all the authority of the sovereign judge.

There is in the opinion of the Pharisee a selfish *pride*. What is it then that makes this woman deserve his indignation? At what tribunal will she be found more odious than other sinners who insolently lift their heads both in the world and the church? It is at the tribunal of pride. Thou superb Pharisee! Open thine eyes, see, look, examine, there is within the walls, where thy feast is prepared, there is even at thy table a much greater sinner, than this woman, and that sinner is thyself! The sin, of which thou art guilty, and which is more abominable than unchastity, more abominable than adultery, more abominable than prostitution itself, is pride, and above all Pharisaical pride. The sin of pride is always hateful in the eyes of God, whether it be pride of honour, pride of fortune, or pride of power; but pride arising from an opinion of our own righteousness, is a direct crime against the divine Majesty. On what principles, good God! is such a pride founded! What insolence has he, who is animated with it when he presents himself before God? He appears without fear or dread before that terrible throne, in the presence of which seraphim cover their faces, and the heavens themselves are unclean. He ventures to say to himself, I have done all my duty. I have had as much respect for Almighty God as he deserves. I have had as

much zeal and ardour in prayer as the exercise requires. I have so restrained my tongue as to have no word, so directed my mind as to have no thought, so kept my heart as to have no criminal emotion to reproach myself with; or if I have had at any time any frailty, I have so fully made amends for it by my virtue, that I have sufficiently satisfied all the just demands of God. I ask no favour, I want nothing but justice. Let the Judge of the world call me before him. Let devouring fire, and eternal flames glitter in my presence. Let the tribunal of retribution be prepared before me. My arm shall save me, and a recollection of my own righteousness shall support me in beholding all these objects. You sufficiently perceive, my brethren, what makes this disposition so hateful, and we need not enlarge on the subject. Humility is the supplement of the virtues of the greatest saints. What application soever we have made to our duty, we have always fallen short of our obligations. We owe so much homage to God as to acknowledge, that we cannot stand before him, unless we be objects of his mercy; and a crime humbly acknowledged is more tolerable in his eyes, than a virtue set forth with pride and parade.

What above all poisons the judgment of the Pharisee, is that spirit of cruelty which we have observed. He was content, though all the tears of true repentance shed by this woman were shed in vain, and wished, when the woman had recourse to mercy, that God would have assumed in that very instant a shocking character, that is, that he would have "despised the sacrifice of a broken and a contrite heart," Ps. li. 17. It is delightful, my brethren, to combat such a fatal pretence. There is a high satisfaction in filling one's mind with just and elevated ideas of divine mercy. All we say against the barbarity of the Pharisee will serve to strengthen our faith, when Satan endeavours to drive us to despair, as he endeavoured once to destroy us by security: when he magnifies the sins we have committed, as he diminished them, when he tempted us to commit them.

The mercy of God is not an abstract attribute, discovered with great difficulty through shades and darkness by our weak reason: but it is an attribute issuing from that among his other perfections, of which he has given the most clear and sensible proofs, I mean his goodness. All things preach to us, that God is good. There is no star in the firmament, no wave of the ocean, no production of the earth, no plant in our gardens, no period in our duration, no gifts of his favour, I had almost said no strokes of his anger, which do not contribute to prove this proposition, God is good.

An idea of the mercy of God is not particular to some places, to any age, nation, religion, or sect. Although the empire of truth does not depend on the number of those that submit to it, there is always some ground to suspect we are deceived, when we are singular in our opinions, and the whole world contradict us: but here the sentiments of all mankind to a certain point agree with ours. All have acknowledged themselves guilty, and all have professed to worship a merciful God. Though

mankind have entertained different sentiments on the nature of true repentance, yet all have acknowledged the prerogatives of it.

The idea of the mercy of God is not founded merely on human speculations, subject to error: but it is founded on clear revelation; and revelation preaches this mercy far more emphatically than reason. These decisions are not such as are expressed in a vague and obscure manner, so as to leave room for doubt and uncertainty, but they are clear, intelligible, and reiterated.

The decisions of revelation concerning the mercy of God do not leave us to consider it as a doctrine incongruous with the whole of religion, or unconnected with any particular doctrine taught as a part of it: but they establish it as a capital doctrine, and on which the whole system of religion turns. What is our religion? It is a dispensation of mercy. It is a supplement to human frailty. It is a refuge for penitent sinners from the pursuits of divine justice. It is a covenant, in which we engage to give ourselves wholly up to the laws of God, and God condescends to accept our imperfect services, and to pardon our sins, how enormous soever they have been, on our genuine repentance. The promises of mercy made to us in religion are not restrained to sinners of a particular order, nor to sin of a particular kind; but they regard all sinners and all sins of every possible kind. There is no crime so odious, no circumstance so aggravating, no life so obstinately spent in sin, as not to be pitiable and pardonable, when the sinner affectionately and sincerely returns to God. If perseverance in evil, if the sin against the Holy Ghost exclude people from mercy, it is because they render repentance impracticable, not because they render it ineffectual.

The doctrine of divine mercy is not founded on promises to be accomplished at some remote and distant period; but experience has justified these promises. Witness the people of Israel, witness Moses, David, Ahab, Hezekiah, witness Manasseh, Nineveh, Nebuchadnezzar. What has not repentance done? By repentance the people of Israel suspended the judgments of God, when they were ready to fall on them and crush them. By repentance Moses "stood in the breach, and turned away the wrath of God." By repentance David recovered the joy of his salvation, after he had committed the crimes of murder and adultery. By repentance even Ahab obtained a reprieve. By repentance Hezekiah enlarged the term of his life fifteen years. By repentance Manasseh saved himself and his people. By repentance Nineveh obtained a revocation of the decree that a prophet had denounced against it. By repentance Nebuchadnezzar recovered his understanding and his excellent majesty. It would be easy to enlarge this list. So many reflections, so many arguments against the cruel pretence of the Pharisee.

III. You have seen in our first part the repentance of the immodest woman. In the second you have seen the judgment of the Pharisee. Now it remains to consider the judgment of Jesus Christ concerning them both. "There was a certain creditor, which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the

other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, thou hast rightly judged. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. Mine head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins which are many are forgiven: for she loved much: but to whom little is given, the same loveth little." This is our third part.

These words have occasioned a famous question. It has been asked whether the pardon granted by Jesus Christ to this woman were an effect of her love to Jesus Christ: or whether her love to Jesus Christ were an effect of the pardon she had received from him. The expressions, and the emblems made use of in the text, seem to countenance both these opinions.

The parable proposed by our Saviour favours the latter opinion, that is, that the woman's love to Jesus Christ was an effect of the pardon that she had received. "A certain creditor had two debtors, when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave the one five hundred pence, and the other fifty. Which of them will love him most?" The answer is, "He, I suppose, to whom he forgave most." Who does not see, that the love of this debtor is an effect of the acquittance from the debt? And as this acquittance here represents the pardon of sin, who does not see that the love of this woman, and of all others in her condition, is here stated as the effect of this pardon? But the application which Jesus Christ makes of this parable, seems to favour the opposite opinion, that is, that the love here spoken of was the cause and not the effect of pardon. "Seest thou this woman?" said Jesus Christ to Simon, "I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss; but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. Mine head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins which are many are forgiven; for she loved much." Does it not seem, that the application of this parable proposes the pardon of the sins of this penitent, as being both the cause and the effect of her love?

This question certainly deserves elucidation, because it regards words proceeding from the mouth of Jesus Christ himself, and on that account worthy of being studied with the utmost care: but is the question as important as some have pretended? You may find some interpreters ready to excommunicate one another on account of this question, and to accuse their antagonists of subverting all the foundations of true religion. There have been times (and may such times never return) I say, there were times, in which people thought they distin-

guished their zeal by taking as much pains to envenom controversies, as they ought to have taken to conciliate them; and when they ought to serve true religion by aggravating the errors of opposite religions. On these principles, such as took the words of the text in the first sense taxed the other side with subverting the whole doctrine of free justification; for, said they, if the pardon here granted to the sinner be an effect of her love to Jesus Christ, what become of all the passages of Scripture, which say, that grace, and grace alone, obtains the remission of sin? They of the opposite sentiment accused the others with subverting all the grounds of morality; for, said they, if this woman's love to Jesus Christ be only an effect of pardon, it clearly follows, that she had been pardoned before she exercised love: but if this be the case, what become of all the passages of the gospel, which make loving God a part of the essence of that faith without which there is no forgiveness? Do you not see, my brethren, in this way of disputing, that unhappy spirit of party, which defends the truth with the arms of falsehood; the spirit that has caused so many ravages in the church, and which is one of the strongest objections that the enemy of mankind can oppose against a reunion of religious sentiments, so much desired by all good men? What then, may it not be affirmed in a very sound sense, that we love God before we obtain the pardon of our sins? Have we not declaimed against the doctrine of such divines as have advanced that attrition alone, that is to say, a fear of hell without any degree of love to God was sufficient to open the gates of heaven to a penitent? Recourse to the Saviour of the world, such a recourse as makes the essence of faith, ought it to have no other motive than that of desiring to enjoy the benefits of his sacrifice? Should it not be animated with love to his perfections? But on the other hand, may it not also be said, in a sense most pure, and most evangelically accurate, that true love to God is an effect of the pardon we obtain of him? This love is never more ardent, than when it is kindled at the flame of that which is testified in our absolution. Is our zeal for the service of God ever more fervent than when it is produced by a felt reconciliation to him? Are the praises we sing to his glory ever more pure, than when they rise out of such motives as animate glorified saints, when we can say with them, "unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, be glory, and dominion?" Rev. i. 5. Do different views of this text deserve so much wormwood and gall?

But what is the opinion of the Saviour of the world, and what would he answer to the question proposed? Was the pardon granted to the sinner the cause of her love, or the effect of it? Which of the two ideas ought to prevail in our minds, that in the parable, or that in the application of it? The opinion most generally received in our churches is, that the love of this woman ought to be considered as the effect of her pardon, and this appears to us the most likely, and supported by the best evidence: for the reason on which this opinion is grounded, seems to us unanswerable. There is neither a critical remark, nor a change of

version, that can elude the force and evidence of it: "a creditor had two debtors, he forgave the one five hundred pence, and the other fifty, the first will love him most." Undoubtedly this love is the effect, and not the cause of the acquittance of the debt. On the contrary, the reason on which the second opinion is founded may be easily answered. It is grounded on this expression, "Her sins are forgiven, for she loved much." The original reading is capable of another sense. Instead of translating "for she loved much," the words may be rendered without any violence to the Greek text, "her sins are forgiven, and because of that," or "on account of that she loved much." There are many examples of the original term being taken in this sense. We omit quotations and proofs only to avoid prolixity.

We must then suppose, that the tears now shed by this woman were not the first, which she had shed at the remembrance of her sins. She had already performed several penitential exercises under a sense of forgiveness, and the repetition of these exercises proceeded both from a sense of gratitude for the sentence pronounced in her favour, and from a desire of receiving a ratification of it. On this account we have not assigned the fear of punishment as a cause of the grief of this penitent, as we ought to have done had we supposed that she had not already obtained forgiveness. Our supposition supported by our comment on the words of the text, in my opinion, throw great light on the whole passage. The Pharisee is offended because Jesus Christ suffered a woman of bad character to give him so many tokens of her esteem. Jesus Christ makes at the same time an apology both for himself and for the penitent. He tells the Pharisee, that the great esteem of this woman proceeds from a sense of the great favours, which she had received from him: that the Pharisee thought he had given sufficient proof of his regard for Jesus Christ by receiving him into his house, without any extraordinary demonstrations of zeal, without giving him "water to wash his feet, oil to anoint his head," or "a kiss" in token of friendship; and that what prevented him from giving greater marks of esteem was his considering himself in the condition of the first debtor, of whom only a little gratitude was required, because he had been released from an obligation to pay only a small and inconsiderable sum: but that this woman considered herself in the condition of the other debtor, who had been forgiven "five hundred pence;" and that therefore she thought herself obliged to give her creditor the highest marks of esteem. "Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but she hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but she hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven." On this account she hath loved much; and has given me all these proofs of affection which are so far superior to those, which I have received at your table, "for he, to whom little is forgiven, loveth little."

At length, Jesus Christ turns himself towards the penitent, and, affected at her weeping afresh, repeats his assurances of forgiveness, and appeases that sorrow, which the remembrance of her crimes excited in her heart, though she no longer dreaded punishment. "Go," says he, "thy sins are forgiven thee. . . Go in peace."

Ye rigid casuists, who render the path of life strait, and difficult, ye, whose terrifying maxims are planted like briars and thorns in the road of paradise; ye messengers of terror and vengeance, like the dreadful angels who with flaming swords kept guilty men from attempting to return to the garden of Eden; ye who denounce only hell and damnation; come hither and receive instruction. Come and learn how to preach, and how to write, and how to speak in your pulpits to your auditors, and how to comfort on a dying bed a man, whose soul hovers on his lips, and is just departing. See the Saviour of the world; behold with what ease and indulgence he receives this penitent. Scarcely had she begun to weep, scarcely had she touched the feet of Jesus Christ with a little ointment, but he crowned her repentance, became her apologist, pardoned during one moment of repentance the excesses of a whole life, and condescended to acknowledge for a member of "a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing," this woman, and what kind of a woman? A woman guilty perhaps of prostitution, perhaps of adultery, certainly of impurity and fornication. After this do you violently declaim against conversion, under pretence that it is not effected precisely at such time as you think fit to appoint? Do you yet refuse to publish pardon and forgiveness to that sinner, who indeed has spent his whole life in sin, but who a few moments before he expires puts on all the appearance of true repentance, covers himself with sorrow, and dissolves himself in tears, like the penitent in the text, and assures you that he embraces with the utmost fervour the feet of the Redeemer of mankind?

Do I deceive myself, my brethren? I think I see the audience quicken their attention. This last reflection seems to suit the taste of most of my hearers. I think, I perceive some reaching the right hand of fellowship to me, and congratulating me for publicly adjuring this day of gloomy and melancholy morality, more likely to drive sinners to despair than to reclaim them.

How, my brethren, have we preached to you so many years, and you after all so little acquainted with us as to imagine that we have proposed this reflection with any other design than that of showing you the folly of it? Or rather are you so little acquainted with your religion, with the spirit of the gospel in general, and with that of my text in particular, as to derive consequences diametrically opposite to the design of the inspired writers? And where, pray, are these barbarous men? Where are these messengers of vengeance and terror? Where are the casuists, whose maxims render the road to eternal life inaccessible. Who are the men, who thus excite your anger and indignation? What! Is it the man, who has spent fifty or sixty years in examining the human

heart; the man, who assures you, that, after a thousand diligent and accurate investigations, he finds impenetrable depths of deception in the heart; the man, who, from the difficulty of his own examinations derives arguments to engage you not to be satisfied with a superficial knowledge of your conscience, but to carry the light of the gospel into the darkest recesses of your heart; the man, who advises you over and over again, that if you content yourselves with a slight knowledge of yourselves, you must be subject to ten thousand illusions, that you will take the semblance of repentance for repentance itself, that you will think yourselves "rich and increased with goods," while you are "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked," Rev. iii. 17. Is this the rigid casuist, who offends and irritates you?

Perhaps, it is the man, who tells you that, in order to assure yourselves that you are in a state of grace, you must love God with an esteem of preference, which will engage you to obey him before all his creatures; the man, who, judging by innumerable evidences that you prefer "serving the creature more than the Creator," Rom. i. 25; concludes from this sad phenomenon that you have reason to tremble: the man, who advises you to spend at least one week in recollection and retirement before you partake of the Lord's Supper; the man, who would have you purify your hands from the blood of your brethren, and your heart burning with hatred and vengeance, and on that account placed in a catalogue of *murderers'* hearts, according to the spirit of the gospel: the man, who forbids you to come to the Lord's Supper while your wicked curses are only suspended instead of being reformed, and while your cruel exactions are only delayed instead of being entirely left off? Perhaps this is the man! Is this the rigid casuist, who offends and irritates you?

Or, probably, it is the man, who has attended you three, four, or half a dozen times in fits of sickness, who then saw you covered with tears, every time acknowledging your sins, and always calling heaven and earth to witness your sincere intention to reform, and to change your conduct, but who has always seen you immediately on your recovery return to your former course of life, as if you had never shed a tear, never put up a prayer, never made a resolution, never appealed to heaven to attest your sincerity: the man, who concludes from such sad events as these that the resolutions of sick and dying people ought always to be considered as extremely suspicious; the man, who tells you that during all his long and constant attendance on the sick he has seldom seen one converted on a sick-bed, (for our parts, my brethren, we are mournful guarantees of this awful fact), the man alarmed at these frightful examples, and slow to publish the grace of God to dying people of a certain class; I say, probably, this is the man, who offends you! Is not this the cruel casuist, who provokes you?

What! Is it the man, who sees the sentence of death written in your face, and your house of clay just going to sink, to whom you appear more like a skeleton than a living body, and who fears every morning lest some messenger should inform him that you were found dead in

your bed, who fears all this from your own complaints? What am I saying? From your own complexion, from the alarms of your friends, and from the terrors of your own family; the man, who is shocked to see that all this makes no impression upon you, but that you live a life of dissipation and security, which would be unpardonable in a man, whose firm health might seem to promise him a long life; the man, who cries to you, "awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light," Eph. i. 11; improve the remainder of life, the breath, which, though it leaves thee to totter, prevents thy falling down dead. Is this the man, the rigid casuist who offends and irritates you? Such maxims, such discourses, such books, such sermons, are they systems of morality, which confound you, and drive you to despair?

After all, where are the sinners whom these casuists have driven to despair? Where are those tormented and distracted consciences? For my part, I see nothing, turn my eyes which way I will, but a deep sleep. I see nothing but security, lethargy, insensibility. How is it possible that the history of our text, that the language of Jesus Christ, "Woman, thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace," that the voice of eternal truth should incline you to raise objections full of error and illusion? Is there no difference between your case and that of this penitent woman, none between Jesus Christ and your casuists? Is there any thing in which they agree? The casuist conversing with this penitent was a prophet, a prophet! he was a God, who "searched the reins and the hearts," who saw the bottom of her soul, and who penetrated through all the veils, with which a frail human heart is covered, and beheld the truth of her conversion and the genuineness of her grief: but you, my brethren, you have no such casuists, and we can judge only by external performances, which ascertain your state only on condition that they proceed from your heart. Our penitent lay prostrate at the feet of the Lord of religion, who could save her, if he pleased, by extraordinary means, and who could deliver her from death and hell by a singular effort of power, not to be repeated: but your casuists are servants, who act by commission, under express directions and orders, and who have no right to announce peace till you answer the description given in the royal instrument. Such ministers, whatever assurances of grace and pardon they affect to give, ought never to calm your consciences till you have exactly conformed to the orders of their and your sovereign master. Our penitent came to ask pardon in a free and voluntary manner, while she was in perfect health, all her actions were unconstrained and spontaneous; but you wait till death hales you to the tribunal of God; you loiter till the fear of eternal flames fright you away from such pleasures as you continue to love, and to which you would most likely return again, did not God spare you the shame by not giving you an opportunity. The penitent of our text did all she could in her circumstances to express the truth of her repentance, there was no sacrifice so dear that she did not offer, no victim so valuable that she did not stab, if I may use such an expression, with the

knife of repentance, no passion so inveterate that she did not eradicate, no marks of love for her Saviour so tender that she did not with all liberality express. Behold her eyes flowing with tears over the feet of Jesus Christ, behold her hair dishevelled, her perfumes poured out, behold all the character of sincerity, which we have observed in our first paper. Is there any one mark of a true conversion which she does bear? But you, how many reserves, how many artifices have you? How many actions of your lives, which we must not be allowed to state to you in their true point of light? How many tempers in your hearts, which must not yet be touched? Here, it is an enemy, the bare sound of whose name would increase your fever, and hasten your death. There, it is an iniquitous acquisition, which you reserve for your son to enable him to take your name with greater honour, and to support with more dignity that vain parade, or rather that dust and smoke in which you have all your life involved yourself. Our penitent never deceived Jesus Christ: but you, you have deceived your casuist a thousand and a thousand times. Our penitent wept over the odious parts of her life, and, far from being too proud to confess her sins, gloried in her confession while she blushed for her crimes: but your eyes, on the contrary, your eyes are yet dry, and it is Jesus Christ, who is weeping at your feet, it is he who is shedding tears over you, as formerly over Jerusalem, it is he who is saying, O that "thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! O that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways!" Luke xix. 42; Ps. lxxxi. 13. It is not then to you, but it is to your kind of repentance, that sentences of absolution ought to be refused. The repentance of the unchaste woman was exactly conformable to the covenant of grace, to the genius of the gospel, and to the end of the mission of Jesus Christ. Hence from the mouth of the Saviour of the world proceeded, in spite of her former libertinism, in spite of the cruel censure of the Pharisee, and in spite of the murmuring of the guests, these comfortable words, "Woman, thy sins are forgiven thee. Woman, thy faith hath saved thee. Go, depart in peace."

Here, my brethren, the evangelist finishes the history of the penitent woman! and here we will finish this discourse. There is, however, one circumstance, which St. Luke has omitted, and which, if I may venture to say so, I wish he had recorded in the most severe and circumstantial manner. What were the future sentiments of this woman after the courageous steps she had taken at her setting out? What emotions did absolution produce in her soul? What effects in her conscience did this language of the Saviour of the world cause, "Woman, thy sins are forgiven—thy faith hath saved thee—go in peace?" But there is nothing in this silence that ought to surprise us. Her joy was not a circumstance that came under the notice of the historian. In the heart of this frail woman, converted and reconciled to God, lay this mystery concealed. There was that "peace of God, which passeth all understanding, that joy unspeakable and full of glory, that white stone, and that new name, which

no man knoweth saying he that receiveth it." May you receive it, my brethren, that you may know it! May the grief of a lively and bitter repentance wound your hearts, that mercy may heal and comfort them, and fill them with pleasure and joy! God grant us this grace! To him be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON LIX.

THE VANITY OF ATTEMPTING TO OPPOSE GOD.

PROVERBS XXI. 30.

There is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord.

How mean and despicable soever the human heart since the fall may be, there are always found in it some principles of grandeur and elevation. Like such superb edifices as time has demolished, it discovers even in its ruins some vestiges of its primitive splendour. Whatever presents itself to man under the idea of great and noble, strikes and dazzles him: whatever presents itself to him under the idea of low and servile, shocks and disgusts him. Accordingly one of the most formidable methods of attacking religion is to exhibit it as a contrivance fit for narrow geniuses and mean souls. One of the most proper means to establish irreligion is to represent it as suited to great and generous minds. To rise above vulgar ideas, to shake off the yoke of conscience, to derive felicity and glory from self, to make fortune, victory, Providence, and deity itself yield to human will, these are pretensions, which have, I know not what in them, to flatter that foolish pride, which an erroneous mind confounds with true magnanimity. We propose to-day, my brethren, to combat these dangerous prejudices, to dissipate all such appearances of grandeur and elevation, and to make you feel the extravagance of all those, who have the audacity to attempt to oppose Almighty God. The Wise Man calls us to this meditation in the words of the text. "There is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord."

Perhaps you will accuse us (and we will enter on the subject by examining this objection,) perhaps you will accuse us of creating phantoms to combat. Perhaps you will defy us to find among the different classes of idiots, whom society cherishes in its bosom, any one who has carried his extravagance so far as to presume to oppose God, or to pretend to constrain him by superior knowledge or power.

My brethren, one of the most difficult subjects in the study of the human heart is, when a man leads a certain course of life, to determine whether he has adopted the extravagant principles on which his conduct is founded, and without which his conduct is the most palpable folly. Take which side we will, whether that he acts on principles, or without them, the case will appear extremely difficult. On the one hand, we can hardly persuade ourselves that an intelligent creature, who is capable of

governing a state, regulating a large and extensive commerce, and of arranging a variety of systems, should entertain notions seemingly incompatible with the very least degree of intelligence. On the other hand, we know not how to comprehend, that a course of action, which is the natural effect of such notions, can subsist without them.

Follow us a moment, my brethren, into these labyrinths of the human heart, or rather let us endeavour to know ourselves, and to reconcile ourselves to ourselves, and let each of us put a few questions to himself.

I, who have some idea of the perfections of God, and who cannot doubt whether he knows the most secret thoughts of my heart, can I promise myself to impose on him in his temple by a painted outside, by a grave deportment, and by a mournful countenance, while my understanding and my affections take no part in religious exercises, while my ideas are confused, and while my passions promise me an immediate indemnity for the violence I have offered them during the few moments of this seeming devotion? But, if I have not this thought, how is it then that I think to obtain the favour of God by exercises of this kind?

I, who was educated in the Christian church, can I imagine that God has less dominion over me when the air is calm, the heavens serene, and the earth firm under my feet, than when the clouds are thick and black, the thunder rolls in the air, the lightning flashes, and the earth seems to open under my feet? But, if I have not adopted this opinion, how comes it to pass that I commit the greatest crimes without remorse in the first period, and in the second reproach myself for the most pardonable of all my frailties?

I, who am surrounded with the dying and the dead; I, who feel myself dying every day; I, who carry death in my face, who feel it in my veins, who, when I lay on a sick bed a few months ago, and thought myself come to the last moment of life, felt the most violent remorse; I, who would have then given the whole world, had the whole world been at my disposal, to have been delivered from sin, can I persuade myself that I shall live here always? Can I even persuade myself that I shall live much longer? Or if I could, that when death shall present itself to me, I shall be exempt from remorse, and that the crimes, which now make the pleasure of my life, will not be the poison of my dying bed? But, if I be incapable of adopting opinions so opposite to what I know by feeling and experience, what am I doing? How is it possible for me to live as if I thought myself immortal, as if I had made a covenant with death and were at agreement with the grave, as if I had stifled for ever the feelings of my conscience, as if I were sure of dictating myself the decree of divine justice concerning my own eternal state?

And, not to multiply examples, of which the extravagance of the human mind would furnish a great number, I, whose views are so short, whose knowledge is so confined, whose faculties are so frail, and whose power is so limited, can I promise myself success in opposing the designs of that God, who says in his word, "My counsel shall stand, and I will

do all my pleasure?" Isa. xlvii. 10. Can I promise myself to subdue a God "great in counsel, and mighty in work," Jer. xxxii. 19, and to constrain him by superior power? But, if I have not adopted such extravagant thoughts, what mean the obstacles which I oppose against his will? What signify my plans of felicity, which are diametrically opposite to those which he has traced for me in his word? Why do I not direct all my intentions and actions to incorporate in my interest him, whose will is productive and efficient? Why do I not found my system of living on this principle of the Wise Man, "There is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord."

My brethren, explain to us these enigmas, discover yourselves to yourselves, and reconcile yourselves with yourselves. O miserable man! What kind of madness animates thee? Is it that of having conceived these extravagant thoughts, which are alone capable of varnishing over thy conduct? Or is it that of acting without thought, which is a sort of raving madness, for even erroneous opinions might seem to thee to apologize for thine actions? O "heart of man, deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know thee!" Jer. xvii. 9.

However, the knowledge of this heart so difficult to be known, is not entirely unattainable, it is even essential to our happiness. How should we correct ourselves without knowing ourselves? How should we acquire real wisdom without knowing precisely what our folly is, and by what means to get rid of it?

It should seem we ought to search for a solution of these difficulties in the artifices of our own passions. The passions not only disguise exterior objects, but they disguise even our own thoughts, they persuade us that we do not think what we do think, and in this manner they confirm us in the most extravagant notions, the absurdity of which we could not help seeing were we dispassionate and cool. The work therefore to which we ought most seriously to apply ourselves, is to take off such coverings as our passions throw over our opinions, and which prevent our seeing that we think as we do; to this important work I shall address myself in the remaining part of this discourse.

A modern philosopher has founded on this principle the whole of his system on the difference between right and wrong. He says, justice consists in affirming that a thing is what it is, and injustice in denying it. He explains this thought by another, that is, that we affirm and deny not only by words, but also by actions, and that the second manner of affirming or denying is more express and decisive than the first. I will not examine whether this philosopher has not carried his principles too far: but I am going to prove by the actions of men that they pretend to oppose God, and that they set four obstacles against his will, their grandeur, their policy, their pleasures, and their stoical obstinacy. I am going to prove at the same time to worldly politicians and grandees, to voluptuous and stoical people, that to undertake to resist God is the height of extravagance. "There is no wisdom nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord."

I. We will consider our text in regard to worldly grandeur. We sometimes see those, who are called grandees in the world, resist God, pretend to compel him by superior force, or by greater knowledge. And whom do we intend to characterize? Is it a Pharaoh, who boldly demands, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?" Is it a Sennacherib, who uttered this insolent language, "Beware lest Hezekiah persuade you, saying, the Lord will deliver us. Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath and Arphad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? Who are they amongst all the gods of those lands, that have delivered their land out of my hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?" Is it a Nebuchadnezzar, to whom the prophet puts this mortifying question, "How art thou fallen from heaven, thou day star, thou son of the morning? Thou who didst weaken the nations, 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 be like the Most High," Isa. xxxvi. 18. 20. and chap. xiv. 12—14.

Is it a Nero, who could hear without trembling those blasphemous eulogies, "If the fates had no other methods of placing Nero on the throne than those civil wars, which deluged Rome with blood, ye gods, we are content; the most atrocious crimes, the most sanguinary executions are agreeable at this price. Lift up your eyes, Cesar, and choose your place among the immortal gods, take the thunder of Jupiter, and succeed the father of gods and men. Mount the chariot of the sun, and give the world light, all the gods will count it felicity and glory to submit to thy laws, and to give up their place and their power to thee."

But nature produces few such monsters. Our age has too much knowledge, and our manners are too refined to suffer such plain and open declarations. Yet how often is grandeur even now in our times a patent for insolence against God! What, for example, is that perpetual parade of the great, and that vain ostentation, with which they dazzle the eyes of their dependants, and of which they avail themselves to rob God of the hearts of men? What is that haughty confidence, which they place in their forces, after they have guarded their cities, built forts, and filled their treasuries, they live in security, even though they have provoked God by acts of the most crying injustice, by the most barbarous executions, and by the most execrable blasphemies! Whence that immoderate avidity of praise, which makes them nourish themselves with the incense of a vile flatterer, and live on the titles of immortals, invincibles, arbiters of peace and war? Whence that contempt of religion, and that spirit of impiety and profaneness, which usually reigns in the hearts of princes? Whence that dominion which some of them exercise over conscience, and those laws, which they dare to give mankind to serve God against their own convictions, to form ideas of him, which they think injurious to his majesty, to perform a worship, which they

think contrary to his express commands, and to profess a religion directly opposite to what they themselves believe to be the true religion of Jesus Christ? Whence are all these dispositions, and what are all these actions? My brethren, open the folds of the human heart, take off the coverings under which the turpitude is concealed, penetrate into the principles of men's actions, and you will find that to oppose God, to pretend to control him by a superior power is not a disposition of mind so rare as you might at first sight have imagined. You see the great worldling makes his opulence, his titles, his grandeur, his navy, his army, a force to set against Almighty God. But what is such a man? An idiot. What are his titles and grandeurs, his navies and armies, and all his opulence? What is all this? A little chaff, a little dust, a nothing in the presence of the omnipotent God.

I recollect here a piece of instruction which a king one day gave his courtiers. They were calling him Lord of earth and sea. The monarch put on his robes, and caused himself to be carried to the sea-shore. There he sat on the beach, and said to the waves, "The land on which I sit is mine, and you, sea, you are under my dominion, I command you to respect your king, and to come no farther." The waves, deaf to his voice, came rolling forward, the first wetted his feet, the second seemed to threaten to carry him away. "There," said the king to his courtiers, "see what a lord I am of earth and sea." Great lesson to all worldly potentates! Insignificant man, put on thy crown, dazzle thyself first with the glitter of it, and then try to beguile the eyes of others, deck thyself in thy royal robes, try thy strength, show us the extent of thy power, say to winds and waves, to fortune, and sickness, and death, I command you to stop, and to respect your king.

O think of the glorious *attributes*, the sublime ideas, the deep counsels, and the abundant power of that God whom thou opposest. "He stretched 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. He divideth the sea with his power, and by his understanding he smiteth through the proud. He meteth out heaven with a span, and comprehendeth the dust of the earth in a measure. He weigheth the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance. He sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers. Behold all nations are as the drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance. All things before him are as nothing, and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity. He bringeth princes to nothing, he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity," Job xxvi. 7, 8, 11, 12; and Isa. xl. 12. 22. 15. 17. 23.

Think of thy soul, thou wilt find nothing there but infirmity and ignorance. Thou art confined as a man, and more confined still as a great man, for grandeur usually contracts the limits of knowledge and improvement.

Think of the author of those advantages which swell thee with pride. Thou art indebted

for them to that very Being whom thou pretendest to resist. It is his breath that animates thee, his arm upholds thee, his earth supports thee, his food nourishes thee, and it is his air which thou borrowest to breathe.

Think what mortal blows of just vengeance God has given to some insolent creatures, who presumptuously oppose his majesty. So perished Antiochus, who, in the language of the book of Maccabees, a "little afore thought he might command the waves of the sea, and weigh the high mountains in a balance, was now cast on the ground, so that the worms rose up out of his body, his flesh fell away, and the filthiness of his smell was noisome to all his army," 2 Mac. ix. 8—10. So perished Herod: "His bowels were consumed with an inward fire. His entrails were full of ulcers. The stench of his breath infected his room, and drove away all his family." So perished Maximinus, of whom Lactantius gives this frightful account: "The wound gained his vitals, there vermin engendered, the palace and the city were infected, his body putrefied, the more his sores were cleansed, the more innumerable were the swarms of vermin that proceeded from them, of which his entrails were an inexhaustible source."*

Think of thine end. Look through the deceitful splendour that covers thee. See the weakness of thine organs, behold thy hands already shaking, thy knees already trembling, thy head, all crowned and glittering as it is, bending towards that earth from which it was taken, and to which it will presently return. Imagine thyself dying, cold, pale, groaning, and vainly calling to thine assistance thy courtiers, thy sceptre, and thy crown. Is this the immortal man? This the arm that ruled the fate of whole nations? Is this the potentate, whose looks made the world tremble? Oh! how eloquent is humility, my brethren, to him who is willing to hear it! Oh! how sufficient in motives is the school of humility to him who is willing to be taught there! How, how can a creature so mean, so vile, so limited, so frail, so momentary as man, how can he possibly oppose Almighty God? How can he resist his power? "Wilt thou yet say before him that sayeth thee, I am God? But thou shalt be a man and no god in the hand of him that slayeth thee," Ezek. xxviii. 9.

II. *Worldly policy* is a second obstacle, which some men set against the laws of heaven, and by which they discover a disposition to resist God, and to compel him by superior force. Had the man, of whom I speak, other ideas, he would lay down as first principles and grounds of action—that the wisest maxims of state are those of religion—that the best we can do for society is to render God propitious—and that the happiest people are they "whose God is the Lord." When councils were held to deliberate on peace or war, such a man would do from religious principle what was anciently done at Rome from the mere dictates of natural justice. It would be examined not only whether it would be advantageous to make war in the present conjuncture, but whether it were just; whether it proceeded from an insa-

* Lactant. libro de mortib. persecutor. C. xxxiii.

tiable desire of dominion and wealth, or from the right, which all mankind have to guard and defend themselves. When the question was, Whether any one should be invested with magisterial authority, such a man would examine with as much care the religious principles as the political virtues of the candidate for power; he would not consider whether he were able to practise crimes of state, which have been long successful, but whether he inviolably respected the laws of religion, the exercise of which sooner or later must necessarily crown its adherents with prosperity and victory. Never would he assist in placing at the head of a political body a blasphemer or an atheist.

But when we see men pursue a conduct directly opposite to this, when we see men always forget that they are Christians, when they deliberate on the public good, and lay aside, if I may be allowed to speak so, faith, conscience, and the gospel, at the door of the council room; when we see a certain disdainful air, a look of affected pity put on at the proposals of such as wish to direct the public good by the principles of religion; when we see people of this character pretend by their prudence to avert public calamities; have we not a right to say of such men, that they resist God, and pretend to compel him with superior power?

But what are such men? Idiots. With your pernicious maxims you banish religion and piety, and by so doing deprive yourselves of all the advantages which you might have derived from the inclinations of a people well disposed to be religious and good. Should the people live by the rules of religion, they would pay taxes with fidelity, obey their governors with respect, generously prefer the public good before private interest, and so establish such a correspondence between subject and sovereign as can alone render states prosperous and happy: but while they see that their masters wander out of this right road, they act towards you as you do towards God, they employ their power to resist your authority, and their knowledge and address to elude your laws.

With these pernicious maxims you render social interest a chimera. You consider a public body as a being, permanent, and in a manner eternal, which ought to employ itself about what concerns it as a public body: but you never recollect that this public body is composed of only individuals, one of whom has only a few years, and another only a few months to live in this world, so that the real interest of such as compose this body has no relation to the duration of the body, a duration which individuals cannot expect, and which regards them only to the end of their own days. You labour to promote a general interest, in which individuals have only a very small share, and you act against the true interest of each, which consists not in consolidating a world that he is just quitting, but in learning to pass through it with dignity, and to leave it with ease.

With these pernicious maxims you keep memorable catastrophes out of sight, those terrible subversions of wicked societies; as the history of the old world, that of Sodom and Gomorrah, that of the kingdom of Judah, that of the ten tribes, that of Babylon, that of the

seven eastern churches, and that of many others, whose sad but edifying ruins should always be before our eyes.

With these pernicious maxims, for the sake of a few trifling directions which you give society for maxims of state, you deprive us of the powerful protection of a God, who would himself sit at the helm; you raise his justice against us, you put into his hands thunder and lightning to destroy us, and, instead of being our parents and guides, you are disturbers of the state, and the most implacable enemies of sound civil polity.

O "pillar of a cloud!" O "wisdom that is from above!" Animate, for ever animate, the conductors of this people, preside in their councils, march at the head of their armies, sanctify their reflections, and engrave for ever on their souls this maxim of my text, that "there is no wisdom nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord," James iii. 17.

III. Our third article concerns the *voluptuous*. One of the most inviolable laws of God is, that felicity should be the reward of virtue, and misery the punishment of vice. What does a voluptuous man oppose against the execution of this law? Noise, company, diversions, refinements of lasciviousness. In these he intrenches himself, and defies us to force him thence. While the catechumen is studiously employing himself to clear away the difficulties, and to determine the important questions, on which all his future hopes depend; while the believer is striving against the stream, and endeavouring to subdue his own passions; while the penitent feels and bows under the weighty remembrance of his sins; while the martyr falls a victim to the rage of his persecutors; the voluptuary feels a joy, which he thinks unalterable, and creates a kind of fool's paradise, in which he pretends to brave God, and to be happy in spite of him, whose sovereign command condemns him to misery. Absurd tranquillity! Senseless security! I appeal to reason, I appeal to old age, I appeal to death, I appeal to judgment.

What a system is that of the voluptuary, when it is examined at the bar of *reason*! There he is taught, that he owes his existence to a Supreme Being, and that he is under infinite obligations to him; there he is made to feel that he had no assurance of living four days, that within fifteen, twenty, or thirty years, he will be taken out of this world, and that at the end of this term there will be before him nothing but death, eternity, and hell. He knows nothing against this, he agrees to all this, he inwardly feels demonstrations of all this: but instead of trying to avoid the evil day, he tries to forget it: and, as if the existence of beings depended on the attention we paid to them, he imagines he has annihilated these dreadful objects, because he has found the art of obliterating them from his memory.

What a system is that of the voluptuary, when it is examined at the tribunal of *conscience*! For, in fact, whatever efforts may be employed to drown the voice of conscience, it sometimes roars, and will be heard. Even a depraved conscience has a kind of periodical power, it cannot be always intoxicated with worldly pleasure. Belshazzar, on a certain fes-

tival day, was sitting at table with his court. In order to insult the God of Israel, he ordered the sacred vessels, which his father had brought away from the temple of Jerusalem, to be brought into company, that he and his "princes, his wives and his concubines, might drink therein, and praise the gods of gold and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone." All on a sudden "his countenance changes, and his thoughts trouble him; so that the joints of his loins are loosed, and his knees smite one against another," Dan. v. 2. 4. 6; thus proving the truth of what the Wise Man observes, that "the wicked flee when no man pursueth," Prov. xxviii. 1. Unhappy king! What is the occasion of all this terror and fear? Dost thou see a sword hanging over thee by a single thread, and ready to fall on thee, and cut thee asunder? Have thine enemies, who are besieging the capital, found a way into it? Does the earth reel under thy feet? Is hell opening to thine eyes? Do the infernal furies surround thee, and cause the serpents on their heads to hiss in thine ears? No: but a "hand is writing over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall," ver. 5. And what have you to fear from that hand? You are not acquainted with the characters. Perhaps the writing is an encomium on thee. Perhaps it is an oracle, foretelling thee some new acquisition of splendour and glory. Why, of two senses, of which the writing is capable, dost thou imagine the worst? My brethren, behold the solution of this difficulty. These *fingers of a man's hand* are not alone; the finger of God accompanies them. The subject is not only written on the wall of the royal palace; but it is also inscribed on the heart of the king. His eyes could not read the characters, but his conscience knew how to explain them. Ah! miserable hypocrite! cease calling for astrologers; leave off consulting magicians and Chaldeans. Listen to your own heart. The expositor is within thee, and thy conscience will tell thee more than all the wise men in thy kingdom.

What a system is that of a voluptuary considered in the *decline of life*! A voluptuous man, when his organs are become feeble, and his faculties worn out, finds he has outlived his felicity, yet he looks after the gods, of which time has despoiled him, and in vain expects that voluptuousness can rid him of the painful reflections which torment and excruciate him.

What a system is that of a voluptuary considered in regard to *death and future punishment*! These certainly, ought to alarm all that expect them: but they ought above all to terrify a voluptuous man. What will be the sensibility of such a man? What will be his despair, when he shall pass from a bed of down to all-pervading pain, from pleasure to eternal fire, from excessive lasciviousness to chains of darkness, from the company of those who ministered to his voluptuousness, to that of the executioners of divine vengeance.

IV. In fine, a *stoical obstinacy* is the fourth obstacle, which some place against the purposes of God. Would you see this hardness represented in the most insolent language? Would you see how far men have been able to carry their extravagance on this article?

Hear one of the most admired of the ancient philosophers, but the least worthy of admiration. Hear what an idea he gives of his wise man: "There are neither walls nor towers, which battering rams cannot subvert; but there are no machines that can shake the soul of a wise man. Do not compare him to the walls of Babylon, which Alexander knew how to destroy; nor to those of Carthage and Numantia, which human power subverted. Do not compare him either to the citadel or the capital, where the marks of enemies attempting to render themselves masters of them are yet to be seen. Arrows shot at the sun never reach him. Sacrileges committed in the temples of the Deity, by breaking in pieces the symbols, and by subverting the edifices, never affect him. What am I saying? the gods themselves may be buried in the ruins of their own temples; but the wise man never can; or, could he be overwhelmed, he could suffer no damage. Jupiter hath nothing more than the wise man, except his immortality. But the wise man, in his turn, hath this superiority, that he is perfectly happy during the short space of this life. In this he is as much greater than Jupiter, as it is more glorious to compress all happiness into a narrow space than to diffuse it through one more considerable, and to possess as much felicity in one single instant, as the greatest of the gods enjoys in eternity."

Who would believe, my brethren, that men, who were formerly the admiration of a world, had been able to oppose such crude and fanciful ideas against all the evidences of their depravity and dependence? Who could conceive, that they seriously set these against sickness, poverty, pain, conscience, death, the grave, the punishment of hell, and the majesty of God?

Are there any of this extraordinary sect yet subsisting? Hath Zeno any disciples now? Are there any who yet follow and revere the doctrine of the portico? Yes, my brethren, there are yet people, who, under another name, maintain the same sentiments. I know not whence the evil comes, whether from the air we breathe in these provinces, or from our diet, or from any other cause. I cannot tell whether dulness of fancy produce in us what excessive vivacity produces in other countries, but it should seem, we have as many of this sort among us as there are in other places. We have people who affect an unshaken firmness, who glory in preserving their tranquillity under all extremes of fortune; people who behold the king of terrors with intrepidity, and who laugh at the horrors of death, alike immovable in the hearing of the most alarming truths, the most terrible descriptions of futurity, censures the most sharp, and threatenings the most dreadful. And whence do they derive this calm intrepidity? From vows addressed to heaven? No. Is it from the progress they have made in religion? Not at all. Is it from the clearness of a close, connected, and evident system? Nothing of all this. Whence then do they derive these sentiments? From I know not what secret pride, from I know not what absurd gravity, from I know not what infernal inflexibility, from a sort of stoical, or shall I

rather call it brutal philosophy, which they have revived. We ingenuously acknowledge that the sight of people of this character always excites emulation in us, at least it leads us to deplore the inefficacy of religion in some people's minds. Truth with all its brightness, virtue with its graces, religion with its evidences, eternity with its demonstrations, celestial felicity with its pomp, all these things can hardly hold some trembling Christians steady to their profession, who yet seem to adhere to Jesus Christ: while these men without light, without proofs, without demonstration, without certainty, yea without hope discover a tranquillity, which we should congratulate ourselves for producing, even after we have spent twenty or thirty years in the ministry.

But how fair soever this exterior may seem, how insurmountable soever this difficulty may appear, how strong soever it may seem to prevent the judgments of God, and to dispose of the terrors which they naturally excite in the conscience, it is an effort of wickedness easily defeated; and although this fourth way seems to surpass the three others in wisdom, yet it actually goes beyond them all in absurdity and extravagance.

Do we impose on people of this kind? Let them tell us on what their tranquillity is founded. Allowing the circumstances in which we now are, there can be only two ways of acquiring tranquillity in prospect of death. The first is, to prove that religion is a human contrivance; that all we propose concerning a future state, a heaven and a hell, and concerning the means of escaping the last and enjoying the first, is either exaggerated or imaginary. The second is, to bring full proof that we have performed the duties, to which religion has annexed a promise of freedom from misery, and the possession of eternal felicity. In which class shall I place the man I have been describing?

He would complain of injustice should I put him in the first class. He always professed himself a Christian. He has all his life long been present at public worship, and has partaken of our sacraments. In any case, if he be an infidel, he is a mere idiot. Distracted with the cares of life, he has never made such inquiries as are absolutely necessary to refute the system of religion, even supposing the system could be refuted; and I pledge myself, let him take which side he will, to silence him, whether he undertake to attack religion, or to defend it, so grossly ignorant is he of every thing that belongs to the subject.

Has he then obtained satisfaction by the second method? A man, who has set his heart entirely at ease, because he can give full proof that he has performed the duties to which the gospel has annexed a promise of exemption from future misery, and a possession of endless felicity; such a man is truly happy; he has arrived at the highest degree of felicity that can possibly be obtained in this valley of tears; for his tranquillity is that "joy unspeakable and full of glory," of which our scripture speaks. It is that "peace of God, which passeth all understanding." It is the "white stone, which no man knoweth saving him that receiveth

it." But is this the condition of the man whom I have been describing?

On what conditions does religion promise eternal life to a statesman? On condition that he always sets before his eyes that King, "by whom kings reign, and princes decree justice," Prov. viii. 15; on condition that he does not regard the appearance of persons; on condition that he take no bribes, which God declares "blind the eyes." You have not performed this condition, you are intoxicated with your own grandeur, you are inaccessible to the cries of widows and orphans, you are flexible to presents, though you know they are given you to be returned in actions disguised under the fair names of impartiality and equity. And are you in a state of tranquillity?

On what condition does the gospel promise eternal felicity to a counsellor? On condition that he perform the oath administered to him when he entered on his profession, an oath in which he called God to witness that he would never plead any but just causes. You have not performed this condition, you have been known to take either side of a cause, yea both, when your interest required it; you have been seen exercising your talents in varnishing over such causes as you durst not state in their true point of light, and straining every nerve to mislead the judges. And you are in a state of tranquillity, and will be so the day you die.

On what condition does religion promise eternal happiness to a man in possession of property unjustly acquired? On condition of his making restitution. You are, in this case, I mean in the case of him who holds such property, for "the stone crieth out of the walls of your houses, and the beam out of the timber witnesses against you. The hire of the labourers which have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth, and the cries are entered into the ears of the Lord of Hosts," Hab. ii. 11; Jam. v. 4. You have not made restitution; you will not even suffer us to utter this frightful word, Restitution; you are going to transmit this accursed patrimony to your children, and you too are tranquil and easy! What! are you also a philosopher? Are you also a stoic? Extravagant stoicism, senseless philosophy, absurd tranquillity! Is it thus you pretend to oppose Almighty God! "There is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord."

Let us conclude. The most reasonable part, that an intelligent creature can take, is to submit to his Creator. Happy, if it were as easy to affect our hearts, as it is to convince our judgments of this article! Happy, if the heart never appealed from the dictates of reason, and if the passions had no distinct and separate system! A system the more dangerous, because reason is present only in a few moments of our attention; whereas the other, on the contrary, always carries us away when we follow the suggestions of our passions, that is in the usual course of our lives.

My brethren, let us act like intelligent creatures, let us form a just idea of sin, let us always have before our eyes this image, which the Wise Man has given us, and which is so

proper to demonstrate to us the extravagance of it. Let us remember, that a sinner is an idiot, who attempts to resist God, who opposes his laws, and who undertakes to counteract him by superior skill or force. Let us seek in a reconciliation to God those succours of which our silly pride offers us only an appearance. But you love grandeur, you are struck with the courage of a man, who opposes God, and who pretends to resist and triumph over him. Well, consider the path we open to you in this point of light. This Almighty God is armed against you, his anger is ready to crush you to atoms, his thunder roars, his lightnings flash in your eyes, his fire is kindled, and his justice requires your destruction: but there is an art of disarming God. This was the skill of Jacob, who wept, and prayed, and said, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me," Gen. xxxii. 26. This was the wisdom of Moses, who stood in the breach to turn away the wrath of heaven, of that Moses to whom God said, "Let me alone, that I may consume this people," Exod. xxxii. 10; but Moses said, "O forgive their sin, and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of the book which thou hast written," ver. 32. This is the art which Jesus Christ taught us, "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force," Matt. xi. 12. These are powerful weapons, which God will not oppose. These are arms always effectual. This was the method which the Lord formerly taught his people by the ministry of Isaiah, "Who would set briars and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together. O, let him take hold of my strength, he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me," Isa. xxvii. 4, 5. Let us not make a vain parade before God of fanciful greatness, let us rather appear in our own insignificance, let us show ourselves as we are, "poor, miserable, blind, and naked." Let us not pretend to surprise him with the wisdom of our counsels; but let us endeavour to move his compassion, by acknowledging our uncertainty, our darkness, our ignorance, our superficial thoughts on the government of the world, and on that of our families. Let us not appear before him intoxicated with pleasure, but mortified, contrite, bowed down under the weight of our sins, prostrate in the dust, and wounded with sincere repentance. Let us not resist him with a brutal security, but let us lay before him our timidity, our doubts, and our fears. Let us conjure him, by the sad objects of our frailty and insignificance to pity our condition. These are invincible arms, these are impenetrable shields, this is the infallible art of prevailing with Almighty God. May he deign to teach us how to exercise it! May he condescend to crown our efforts with success! Amen! To him be honour and glory both now and for ever! Amen.

SERMON LX.

IMAGINARY SCHEMES OF HAPPINESS.

ECCLISIASTES i. 9.

The thing that hath been, is that which shall be; and that which is done, is that which shall be done; and there is no new thing under the sun.

THERE are few people in the world, who do not form in their minds agreeable plans of happiness, made up of future, flattering prospects, which have no foundation, except in their own fancies. This disposition of mind, which is so general among mankind, is also one of the principal causes of their immoderate desire to live. Some have questioned, whether any mortal were ever so happy as to choose to live his life over again, on condition of passing through all the events through which he had gone from his birth to his last hour. Without investigating this problem, I venture to affirm that mankind would be much less attached to the world, if they did not flatter themselves with the hope of enjoying more pleasure than they had hitherto experienced. A child fancies, that as soon as he shall arrive at a certain stature, he shall enjoy more pleasure than he has enjoyed in his childhood, and this is pardonable in a child. The youth persuades himself that men, who are what they call settled in the world, are incomparably more happy than young people can be at his age. While we think ourselves condemned to live single, solitude seems intolerable; and when we have associated ourselves with others, we regret the happy days we spent in the tranquillity of solitude. Thus we go on from fancy to fancy, and from one chimera to another, till death arrives, subverts all our imaginary projects of happiness, and makes us know by our own experience what the experience of others might have fully taught us long before, that the whole world is vanity; that every state, all ages, and all conditions, have inconveniences peculiar to themselves, and one which is common to them all, I mean a character of disproportion to our hearts; so that by changing our situation we often do no more than change our kind of infelicity.

Of this vanity I would endeavour to-day to convince you, my brethren, and I dedicate this discourse to the destruction of imaginary schemes of happiness. "The thing that hath been, is that which shall be: and that which is done, is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun." It is not unjust to reason thus; as I have hitherto found nothing but vanity in all the enjoyments of the world, which I singled out for myself as most likely to make me happy, this experience of what has been shall guide me in my expectations of what

shall be. I have reason to suppose that the world can offer me no object in future different in its nature from those which I have always hitherto found inadequate to my happiness. All the past has been vanity, and all the future will be vanity to the end of the world. "The thing that hath been is that which shall be: and that which is done is that which shall be done; and there is no new thing under the sun."

In order to enter into the views of the Wise Man, we must observe three things: first, the *error* which he attacks—next, the *arms* he employs—and, lastly, the *end* he proposes in attacking it. Suffer me, before I enter on the discussion of these articles, to give you a more exact idea of my meaning, and to lead you more fully into the plan of this discourse.

In the *first* article I shall try to develop the idea of Solomon, and to engage you to enter into the most intricate labyrinths of your own hearts, and to make you acknowledge that we are all, more or less, prejudiced in favour of this bewitching opinion, that future life will produce something more solid and satisfactory, than we have hitherto found, especially if we obtain some advantages, which we have long had in prospect, but which we have not been able to obtain.

In the *second* part, we will prove, that even supposing the happiest revolutions in our favour, we should be deceived in our hopes, so that whether they happen or not we shall be brought to acknowledge that there is nothing in this world capable of rendering us perfectly happy.

In the *last* place, we shall conclude from these two principles with the Wise Man, that though a reasonable creature may be allowed to better his condition, and to obtain a happier state in this world than the past or the present, yet he ought by no means to promise himself much success, and that, in one word, it is in God alone, and in the hope of a future state of happiness in another life, that we ought to place our felicity.

I. Let us first of all determine the sense of the text, and examine what *error* the Wise Man attacks. We have already explained the idea we affix to his expressions, but as they are vague and indeterminate, they must be, first of all, restrained by the nature of the subjects of which he speaks, and secondly, explained by the place they occupy.

1. When the Wise Man says, "that which hath been is that which shall be," he does not mean to attribute a character of firmness and consistency to such events as concern us. No man ever knew better than he the transitoriness of human affairs: but it is not necessary to our knowledge of the subject to occupy a post as eminent as that which he held; for a superficial view of the condition of public bodies, and of that of individuals, will be sufficient to open a wide field to our reflections.

The condition of public bodies is usually founded on materials so brittle, that there is no room to be astonished at sudden and perpetual variations. A spectator, sitting in his observations, and distant from the central point, is amazed at the rapid changes which he beholds suddenly take place like the creation of new worlds; he supposes whole ages must pass in

removing these enormous masses, public bodies, and in turning the current of prosperity and victory. But should he penetrate into the spring of events, he would soon find, that a very small and inconsiderable point gave motion to that wheel, on which turned public prosperity, and public adversity, and which gave a whole nation a new and different appearance.

Sometimes all the wise counsels, the cool deliberations, the well-concerted plans, that constitute the prosperity of a nation, proceed from the prudence of one single head. This one head represses the venality of one, and the animosity of another; the ambition of this man, and the avarice of that. Into this head one single vapour ascends; prosperity relaxes it, death strikes it off. Instantly a new world arises, and then that which was is no more, for with that head well-concerted measures, cool deliberations, and wise counsels, all vanished away.

Sometimes the rare qualities of one single general animate a whole army, and assign to each member of it his proper work; to the prudent, a station which requires prudence; to the intrepid, a station which requires courage; and even to an idiot a place where folly and absurdity have their use. From these rare qualities a state derives the glory of rapid marches, bold sieges, desperate attacks, complete victories, and shouts of triumph. This general finishes his life by his own folly, or is supplanted by a party cabal, or sinks into inaction on the soft down of his own panegyrics, or a fatal bullet, shot at random and without design, penetrates the heart of this noble and generous man. Instantly a new world appears, and that which was is no more; for with this general, victory and songs of triumph expired.

Sometimes the ability and virtue of one single favourite enable him to direct the genius of a prince, to dissipate the enchantments of adulation, to become an antidote against the poison of flattery, to teach him to distinguish sober applause from self-interested encomiums, and to render him accessible to the complaints of widows and orphans. This favourite sinks into disfavour, and an artful rival steps into his place. Rehoboam neglected the advice of prudent old counsellors, and followed the suggestions of inconsiderate youth. Any one of these changes produces a thousand consequences.

It would be easy to repeat of individuals what we have affirmed of public bodies, that is, that the world is a theatre in perpetual motion, and always varying; that every day, and in a manner, every moment, exhibits some new scene, some change of decoration. It is then clear, that the proposition in the text ought to be restrained to the nature of the subject spoken of.

2. But these indeterminate words, "that which hath been shall be, and there is no new thing under the sun," must be explained by the *place* they occupy. Our chief guide to determine the meaning of some vague propositions of an author is to examine where he placed them, and what precise idea he had in his mind when he wrote them. By observing this rule, we find, that the same phrases are often taken in different senses. Without quoting other examples, we observe, that the words under con-

sideration occur twice in this book, once in the text, and again in the fifteenth verse of the third chapter, where we are told, "that which hath been is now, and that which is to be hath already been." However, it is certain, that these two sentences, so much alike in sound, have a very different meaning. The design of Solomon, in the latter passage, is to inform such persons as tremble at the least temptation, that they were mistaken. We complain, say they, that God exercises our virtue more than he does that of other men, and though he allows these rude attacks, yet he does not afford us strength sufficient to resist them. No, says Solomon, whatever variety there may appear to be in the conduct of God towards men, yet there is always a certain uniformity, that characterizes his conduct. Indeed he gives five talents to one, while he commits only one talent to another, and in this respect there is a variety: but he does not require of him, to whom he has committed one talent, an account of more than one talent; while he calls him to account for five talents, to whom he committed five, and in this respect there is a perfect uniformity in his conduct; and so of the rest. "I know that whatsoever God doth (these are the words of Solomon,) I know that whatsoever God doth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it, and God doth it, that men should fear before him. That which hath been is now, and that which is to be hath already been, and God requireth that which is past."

But in our text the same words, "the thing that hath been is that which shall be," have a different meaning. It is evident, by the place in which the Wise Man put them, that he intended to decry the good things of this life, to make the vanity of them appear, and to convince mankind, that no revolutions can change the character of vanity essential to their condition. The connexion of the words establishes the meaning. From what events do mankind expect, says he, to procure to themselves a firm and solid happiness in this life? What efforts can be made greater than have been made? Yet "what profit hath a man of his labour which he taketh under the sun? One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh," but the world continues the same; "the sun riseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose. The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits. All rivers run into the sea, and whence they come, thither they return again, ver. 3—7. The moral world resembles the world of nature. It is in vain to expect any vicissitude that will render the remaining part of life more happy than the former. "The eye is not satisfied with seeing," ver. 8; or, as may be translated, "with considering; nor the ear filled with hearing;" or, as the words may be rendered, "the ear never ceases to listen."^{*} But this contention, which makes us stretch all our faculties in search of

something to fill the void, that all past and present enjoyments have left in our hearts, this does not change the nature of things; all will be vanity in future, as all has been vanity in former times. "The thing which hath been, is that which shall be; and that which is done, is that which hath been done; and there is no new thing under the sun."

Weigh these words, my brethren, "the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing." It seems this is precisely the disposition of mind which the Wise Man attacks; a disposition, as I said before, common to mankind, and one of the principal causes of our immoderate attachment to life. Let each of us study his own heart, and let us examine whether we know the portrait that we are now going to try to sketch.

We often declaim on the vanity of the world; but our declamations are not unfrequently more intended to indemnify pride, than to express the genuine feelings of a heart disabused. We love to declaim against advantages out of our reach, and we take vengeance on them for not coming within our grasp by exclaiming against them. But such ideas as these, how just soever they may appear, are only superficial. It would be a fatal error indeed, to persuade ourselves that we are really undeceived, and consider the world in a true point of light on this account.

A dying man is all taken up with his then present condition. A desire of health occupies all the capacity of his soul; but he does not observe, that, should he recover, he would find the same troubles and pains as before, and on account of which he has felt so much uneasiness, and shed so many tears. A man waiting on the coast, to go abroad, wishes for nothing but a fair wind; and he does not think that he shall find other, and perhaps greater calamities, in another climate than those which compelled him to quit his native soil. This is an image of us all. Our minds are limited, and when an object presents itself to us, we consider it only in one point of view, in other lights we are not competent to the examination of it.

Hence the interest we take in some events, in the revolutions of states, the phenomena of nature, and the change of seasons: hence that perpetual desire of change; hence sportive phantoms incessantly created by our imaginations; hence chimerical projects for ever revolving in our minds; or, as the Wise Man expresses it, "Eyes never satisfied with seeing, and ears never filled with hearing." O, says one, could I get cured of this illness, which renders life a burthen—could I, says another, get free from the company that poison all my pleasures—could I go, says a third, and settle in a country where maxims and laws are altogether different from those under which I live—could I but obtain that place, which would take me out of the obscurity in which I am buried alive, and render me conspicuous—could I acquire a sufficient fortune to support a certain number of domestics, and to procure me certain accommodations, then, in retirement and silence, I would gratify the desire that alone animates me, of employing my life in a pursuit of wisdom, and virtue, and happiness! Poor mortals! will you always run after phan-

^{*} Visus et auditus synecdochice ponuntur pro omnibus quibus voluptatem percipimus. Horum autem sensuum meminit, tum quia curiosissimi sunt; tum quia et minimo labore et maxima cum delectatione exercentur, Poli Synops. in loc. R.

tooms? No, it is not any of the revolutions you so earnestly desire can alter the vanity essential to human things: with all the advantages which you so earnestly desire, you would find yourself as void and as discontented as you are now. "The thing which hath been, is that which shall be; and that which is done, is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun." O that it were as easy to imprint these truths on our hearts, as it is to give evidence that they are truths to the judgment!

II. Let us endeavour to admit these truths, with all their effects (and this shall be the second part of our discourse,) let us attempt the work, though we have so many reasons to fear a want of success. Let us first examine the destination of man—next let us look into the school of the world—then into the experience of Solomon—and, lastly, let us review the history of our own lives. These are four barriers against imaginary projects; four proofs, or rather four sources of demonstrations in evidence of the truth of the text. "The thing that hath been, is that which shall be: and that which is done, is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun."

I. Let us first observe the *appointment* of man, and let us not form schemes opposite to that of our Creator. When he placed us in this world, he did not intend to confine us to it; but when he formed us capable of happiness, he intended we should seek in it an economy different from this. Without this principle man is an inexplicable enigma; his faculties and his wishes, his afflictions and his conscience, his life and his death, every thing that concerns man is obscure, and beyond all elucidation.

His *faculties* are enigmatical. Tell us what is the end and design of the faculties of man? Why has he the faculty of knowing? What, is it only to arrange a few words in his memory? only to know the sounds or the pictures to which divers nations of the world have associated their ideas? Is it merely to learn Greek and Hebrew, to collect a chaos of ancient history, to go beyond remote ages, and to discover with some degree of probability what were the habits, the customs, and the follies, of the first inhabitants of this universe? Has man intelligence only for the purpose of racking his brain, and losing himself in a world of abstractions, in order to disentangle a few questions from metaphysical labyrinths? what is the origin of ideas, what are the properties, and what is the nature of spirit? Glorious object of knowledge for an intelligent being! An object in general more likely to produce skepticism, than demonstration of a science properly so called. Let us reason in like manner on the other faculties of mankind.

His *desires* are problematical. What power can eradicate, what power can moderate his desire to extend and perpetuate his duration? The human heart includes in its wish the past, the present, the future, yea eternity itself. Explain to us, what proportion there can be between the desires of man and the wealth which he accumulates, the honours he pursues, the sceptre in his hand, and the crown on his head?

His *miseries* are enigmatical. This article

opens a more ample field of meditation than the former, for the pleasures of mankind are only a point, only an atom in comparison of the miseries which pursue and overtake him. Who can reconcile the doctrine of a good God with that of a miserable man, with the doubts that divide his mind, with the remorse that gnaws his heart, with the uncertainties that torment him, with the catastrophe that envelops him, with the vicissitudes which are always altering his situation, with the false friends who betray him, with pain that consumes him, with indigence that contracts him, with neglect and contempt which mortify him, and with such a number of other inconveniences and calamities as conspire to embitter his existence?

His *life* is a mystery. What part, poor man, what part are you acting in this world? Who misplaced you thus?

His *death* is enigmatical. This is the greatest of all enigmas; four days of life, a life of sixty, or a hundred years, is all that this creature called man has to expect in this world; he disappears almost as soon as he makes his appearance, he is gone in an instant from the cradle to the coffin, his swaddling bands are taken off, and his shroud is put on.

Lay down the principle which we have advanced, grant that the great design of the Creator, by placing man amidst the objects of this present world, was to draw out and extend his desires after another world, and then all these clouds vanish, all these veils are drawn aside, all these enigmas explained, nothing is obscure, nothing is problematical in man.

His *faculties* are not enigmatical; the faculty of knowing is not confined to such vain science as he can acquire in this world. He is not placed here to acquire knowledge, but virtue; at least he is placed in this world to acquire knowledge only so far as it contributes to the acquisition of virtue. If he acquire virtue, he will be admitted into another world, where his utmost desire of knowledge will be gratified.

His *desires* are not mysterious. When the laws of order require him to check and control his wishes, let him restrain them. When the profession of religion requires it, let him deny himself agreeable sensations, and let him patiently suffer the cross, tribulations, and persecutions. Let him subdue his passion for elevation and grandeur, and let him humbly rest in that mean situation where it has pleased Providence to place him. Let him moderate his love of riches, and let him patiently submit to poverty and indigence. After he shall have thus submitted to the laws of his Creator, he may expect another period in which his desire to be great will be satisfied.

His *miseries* are no more enigmatical; they exercise his virtue, and will be rewarded with glory.

His *life* ceases to be mysterious; it is a state of probation, a time of trial, a period given him to make choice of an eternity of happiness, or an eternity of misery.

His *death* is no longer a mystery, and it is impossible that either his life or his death should be enigmas, for the one unfolds the other: the life of man is not an enigma, because it tends to death, and death verifies,

proves, and demonstrates the idea we have given of life.

We conclude, then, that the destination of man is one great barrier against imaginary schemes of happiness. Change the face of society, subvert the order of the world, put despotical government in the place of a democracy, peace in the place of war, plenty in the place of scarcity, and you will alter nothing but the surface of human things, the substance will always continue the same. "The thing that hath been, is that which shall be; and that which is done, is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun."

2. The *school of the world* opens to us a second source of demonstrations. Enter this school, and you will renounce all vain schemes of felicity.

There you will learn, that the greatest part of the pleasures of the world, of which you entertain such fine notions, are only phantoms, which seem indeed at a distance to have some solidity and consistence, but which vanish the moment you approach and try to enjoy them.

There you will learn, that the extensive views, the great designs, the plans of immortality and glory, which revolve in the mind of an ambitious man, keep him continually upon the rack, trouble his repose, deprive him of sleep, and render him insensible to all the pleasures of life.

There you will understand, that the friends who attach themselves to us when we have favours to bestow, are venal souls, who put up their esteem at auction, and sell it to the highest bidder: blood-suckers, who live upon the substance of those round whom they twist and twine; that the sacred names of friendship, tenderness, zeal, and devotedness, are nothing in their mouths but empty sounds, to which they affix no ideas.

There you will find that those passions, which men of high rank have the power of fully gratifying, are sources of trouble and remorse, and that all the pleasure of gratification is nothing in comparison of the pain of one regret caused by the remembrance of it.

There you will learn, that the husbandman, who all day follows the plough or the cart, and who finds at home in the evening a family of love, where innocent and affectionate children surround a table furnished with plain and simple diet, is incomparably more happy, than the favourite of victory and fortune, who rides in a superb carriage attended by a splendid retinue, who sits at a table where art and nature seem to vie with each other in lavishing out their treasures, who is surrounded with courtiers watching their fate in the cast of his eye, or the signal of his hand.

In a word, you will there understand, that what may seem the most fortunate events in your favour, will contribute very little to your happiness.

3. But if the school of the world is capable of teaching us to renounce our fanciful projects of felicity, Solomon is the man in the world the most learned in this school, and the most able to give us intelligence. Accordingly, we

have made *his declaration* the third source of our demonstrations.

When our preachers declaim against the vanity of human things, you secretly say to yourselves, their judgment merits very little regard. You think that they, generally educated in silence and retirement, having breathed only the dusty air of schools and libraries, are unacquainted with that world against which they declaim. I will not now examine this reproach. People of our order, I grant, are very apt to form false ideas of the world. But take our word for one truth, for which we could allege a thousand proofs, that is, that if they magnify worldly objects, it is because they are strangers to the world. A hermit who has spent all his days in dens and deserts; a nun sequestered from society in her childhood, and buried in the cells and solitary walks of a convent; a man who has grown gray over his books; people of this kind generally imagine that the world is full of pleasure, and that the demon of voluptuousness has strewed all the paths with flowers and perfumes in favour of such as travel them. I know no one more proper to teach us a good course of morality than an old reformed courtier, who chooses to retire after he has spent the prime of his life in dissipation.

On this principle, what an impression ought the declaration of Solomon to make on our minds? But what an idea does he give us of all the good things of which he had made an experiment? "and this also," says he of each particular, in the catalogue of the whole, "and this also is vanity." This word seems to me very remarkable, "THIS also, and this also is vanity."

Few men are so fascinated with the world as not to know that some things in it are vain and vexatious. Most men say of some particular object, *this is vanity*; but very few are so rational as to comprehend all the good things of this life in the same class, and to say of each, as Solomon did, "this also is vanity." A poor peasant, whose ruinous cottage does not keep out the weather, will readily say, My cottage is vanity; but he imagines there is a great deal of solidity in the happiness of him who sleeps in a superb palace. A man who is admitted only into a small circle of company, hardly known in society, will say without hesitation, my circle is vanity; but he fancies there is a great deal of solidity in the happiness of those who are admitted into circles; or, shall I rather say, into that chaos, where Jews and Greeks, Barbarians and Scythians, people of all nations, and of every religion, seem to contribute to a general disorder and confusion?

Solomon knew all these conditions of life, and it was because he knew them all, that he declaimed against them; and had you, like him, known them all by experience, you would form such an idea as he did of the whole. See what a list he makes, and observe, he says that of each, which he said of the whole, "this also is vanity." What! Is it vain to possess great riches? Yes. "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; this is also vanity." What! Is it vain to become a celebrated author, a model of erudition? Yes,

says he, of making many books "there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh. This also is vanity. Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher, all is vanity."

4. To reflections on the experience of Solomon add your own, and to this purpose recollect the *history of your life*. Remember the time when sighing and wishing for the condition in which Providence has since placed you, you considered it as the centre of felicity, and verily thought, could you obtain that state you should wish for nothing more. You have obtained it. Do you think now as you did then?

You, who formerly had hardly enough to subsist on, now possess enough for your subsistence, and almost enough for your wishes, have you less inclination now to augment your superfluities than you had then to acquire a maintenance?

You, who have been raised from the meanest and most obscure employment in society to one of the most conspicuous and brilliant offices, do you feel yourself less disposed to have no equal, than you did formerly to have few masters?

You, who are now come to manhood through a sickly youth, in which you did not expect to live half your days, have you less desire to arrive at a hoary old age, than you had formerly to advance to manhood?

Realize all the fanciful schemes of happiness that revolve in your minds, and you will find, that the good things you acquire will leave you as hungry, and as void, as these do which you actually possess; and that the more you enter into the spirit of this supposition, the more will you be astonished at the exact conformities there are between conditions which at first sight appear to you so extremely different.

III. From all these reflections what consequences shall we draw? That all conditions are absolutely equal? That as they who actually enjoy the most desirable advantages of life, ought to consider them with sovereign contempt, so people who are deprived of them, ought not to take any pains to acquire them, and to better their condition? No, my brethren, God forbid we should preach a morality so austere, and so likely to disgrace religion.

On the one hand, they to whom God has granted the good things of this life ought to know the value of them, and to observe with gratitude the difference which Providence has made between them and others. Worldly prosperity, I grant, is not the most substantial good; however, it is not an imaginary advantage: it is not indeed that permanent good which will continue ours after death; but it is, however, capable of rendering the present state more agreeable.

Do you enjoy liberty? Liberty is a great good: feel the pleasure of liberty. Behold the man who is enclosed in lofty and impenetrable walls; who breathes only an infectious and unwholesome air; who lies on straw in a dungeon, and who, with the utmost attention and pains, can hardly perceive a ray of light, and bless God that you are not in the condition of that man.

Are you rich? Wealth is a great good: enjoy the pleasure of being rich. Behold the man loaded with debts, destitute of friends,

pursued by inexorable creditors; having indeed just enough to keep himself alive to-day, but not knowing how he shall support life to-morrow, and bless God you are not in the condition of that man.

Do you enjoy your health? Health is a great good: relish the pleasure of being well. Observe the man lying on a sick bed, unable to bear up a body loaded with infirmities, not able to move himself without excruciating sensations of pain, crawling towards the grave by the horrible road of the gout or the stone.

Nothing but a fund of stupidity or ingratitude can render us insensible to temporal blessings, when it pleases God to bestow them on us. What! Did you, as soon as you opened your eyes, see yourself crowned with a thousand advantages; did God seem to take pleasure in making your condition a composition of honour, wealth, and pleasure; did you find yourself, without contributing to it the least labour or attention, abundantly supplied with every thing that can render life easy and delicious; and because, carry human felicity to what pitch you will, there is nothing perfect in it, do you give up yourself to grief and melancholy, does a dark and gloomy temper within you triumph over all the motives that ought to inspire you with gratitude and joy?

As they, to whom Providence has granted the comforts of life, ought to know the value of them, and to enjoy them with gratitude, so it is allowable, yea it is the duty of such as are deprived of them to endeavour to acquire them, to meliorate their condition, and to procure in future a condition more happy than that to which they have hitherto been condemned, and which has caused them so many difficulties and tears. Self-love is the most natural and lawful of all our passions. We ought not to neglect to acquire any good, except the possession of it would be incompatible with that of a greater good, and we ought not to consent to suffer any ills, except enduring them would prevent greater ills. But, other things being equal, every one ought to endeavour to procure himself an agreeable condition of life in this world.

Besides the love of our neighbour, the duty so much enforced by our great Lawgiver, the love which our Master requires us to extend as far to our neighbour as to ourselves, this duty engages us to avail ourselves of all the innocent means which are offered to us to acquire the good things of this life. The more riches you have, the more able will you be to assist the indigent. The higher you are elevated in society, the more will you have it in your power to succour the oppressed. The more learning, and knowledge, and accuracy you have, the more will it be in your power to press home the duties of religion, to defend the truth, and to display the beauty and advantage of virtue.

Our design, in restraining your projects, is to engage you patiently to bear the inconveniences of your present condition, when you cannot remedy them; because whatever difference there may seem to be between the most happy and the most miserable mortal in this world, there is much less, all things considered, than our misguided passions imagine.

Our design, in checking the immoderate inclination we have to contrive fanciful schemes of happiness, is to make you enjoy with tranquillity such blessings as you have. Most men render themselves insensible to their present advantages by an extravagant passion for future acquisitions. The avidity, with which they wish to acquire more riches, prevents their enjoying what they actually possess; the avidity with which they desire to obtain a station more elevated in society, prevents their tasting the pleasure of that in which Providence has placed them. In a word, our design is to engage you to proportion the pains you take to obtain worldly advantages to the true value of them.

Above all, the design, the chief design we have in denouncing a vain and unsatisfactory being in this world, is to engage you to seek after a happy futurity in the presence of God; to engage you to expect from the blessings of a future state what you cannot promise yourself in this. And what, my soul, canst thou expect during the short period of this life, if the remainder will resemble the past, if in future years thy condition will resemble that of the former days, if thou must pass through the same vicissitudes, suffer the same maladies, be witness to the same injustice, see the same infidelity, and the same perfidy?

But if all mankind ought to preserve themselves from the disorder of fanciful schemes of future pleasure, they above all are bound to do so, who are arrived at old age, when years accumulated bring us near the infirmities of declining life, or a dying bed. Such a man ought to say to himself, What can I henceforth expect in this world? Should an unheard-of revolution happen in my favour, should the face of the universe be changed, should all the advantages of the world unite, and present themselves to me, what benefit could I derive from them?

What advantage could I derive from a well-furnished table? I, whose palate has lost the faculty of tasting and relishing food? What advantage could I derive from a numerous levee? I, to whom company is become a burden, and who am in a manner a burden to myself? What advantage could I derive from elegant apartments, and extensive landscapes; I, whose eyes are incapable of discerning objects, whose body, almost motionless, is confined to an easy chair, or a sick bed? In one word, what benefit can I reap from a concurrence of all the advantages of life, I, who am within a few steps of the gates of death? Happy! when my life comes to an end, to be able to incorporate my existence with that of the immortal God! Happy! when I feel this earthly tabernacle sink, to be able to exercise that *faith*, which is an "evidence of things not seen!" Happy to ascend to that "city, which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God!" Heb. xi. 1. 10.

May we all, my dear brethren, live, grow old, and die in these sentiments! God grant us the grace. To him to be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON LXI.*

DISGUST WITH LIFE.

ECCLESIASTES ii. 17.

I hated life, because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me.

WERE we to estimate life by the idea which Solomon gives of it in the words of the text, it should seem there was very little wisdom in our congratulating one another, this morning, on beginning a new year. There should seem better reasons for deploring our fate, because we are alive, than for congratulating one another on the happiness of seeing another new year's day. Ye desolate families, in which death has made such cruel breaches! I think, while this day naturally brings to your remembrance those dear parts of yourselves, you ought rather to shed tears of joy than sorrow! And you, "Rachel, weeping for your children," you ought rather "to be comforted for the children" that are, than for those that "are not." It should seem that the benedictions of the servant of God, who preceded us this morning in this pulpit, and to which we are going to join ours, were very unsuitable to the tender affections we owe you, and to which this solemnity adds a new degree of activity and force.

Long may you live, said we this morning to one another; may God bless you, your fellow-citizens, your relations, your friends, and your children, long may they live! Enjoy the blessings of peace, prosperity in commerce, stability in freedom, riches and plenty in abundance! Attain, and, if it be possible, go beyond the usual limits of the life of man, and may every day of that life be distinguished by some new prosperity. These were the benedictions and prayers which our friends uttered to us and we to them. And yet the Wise Man tells us, that riches and plenty, that the best established liberty and the most prosperous trade, that the blessings of peace and all the advantages of this life, are nothing but vanity. He does more, after he had experienced all the pomp of worldly grandeur, and immensity of wealth, the utmost refinement of pleasure, and the most extensive reputation, after he had been the happiest mortal that ever lived upon earth, he tells us in the words of the text, "I hated life, because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me."

What then, must we revoke the congratulations of this morning? Do we come to pray to God to send out his destroying angels to return us that mortality which has been ravaging our towns and provinces? Are we come to collect all our prayers into this one of Jonah, "O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live," chap.

* Preached on the first day of the year 1728.

iv. 3; or, in this of Elijah, "It is enough, now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers!" 1 Kings xix. 4.

It is this contrast of ideas that we will endeavour to reconcile, for in this point of light we are going to consider the words of the text, and to treat of disgust with the world and contempt of life. Happy! if we be able by any observations of ours to abate the asperity of your minds in regard to the hateful things of life, and to engage you to make a holy use of every thing agreeable in it. Happy! if, by turning your attention to the amiable side of life, we may inspire you with gratitude to God for preserving it, in spite of the many perils to which it is exposed; and if, by showing you the other side, we may incline you to quit it with joy, whenever it shall please God to require it. This is the substance of all our acclamations and prayers in your favour to-day. Almighty and most merciful God, condescend to ratify in heaven what we are sincerely endeavouring to effect on earth! Amen.

I suppose it is Solomon himself who speaks the words of my text, and not any one of the interlocutors, whom he introduces in his book. I suppose that he expresses in the words his own sentiments, and not those of any other person; and that he tells us not what he thought while his reason was wandering, and he was pursuing the vanities of the world, but what he thought after his recovery, and when he was under the direction of divine wisdom.

This observation is absolutely necessary for the understanding of the text. The great difficulty of the Book of Ecclesiastes is owing to the great variety of persons who are introduced there, each of whom proposes maxims conformable to his own principles. Is it the same man, who says in one place, "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart. Live joyfully all the days of thy vanity, for that is thy portion in this life, and God now accepteth thy works," chap. ix. 7. 9; and in another place, "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee to judgment?" chap. xi. 9. Is it the same man, who says in one place, "I commended mirth, because a man hath no better thing under the sun than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry," chap. viii. 15; and in another place, "I said of laughter, it is mad; and of mirth, what doth it?" chap. ii. 2. Is it the same man, who says in one place, "The dust shall return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it," chap. xii. 7; and in another place, "The dead have no more a reward, for the memory of them is forgotten: to him that is joined to all the living there is hope, but the dead know not any thing, for a living dog is better than a dead lion?" chap. ix. 4, &c.

Expositors of this book, perhaps, have not always paid a sufficient attention to this variety. Which of us has not, for example, quoted against the doctrine of invocation of saints these words, "The living know that they shall die, but the dead know not any thing; their love, and their hatred is now perished, neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun?" chap. ix. 5, 6.

Yet I think we have sufficient reasons to presume, that the Wise Man puts these words into the mouth of a libertine, so that though they contain a truth, yet they cannot be proposed in proof of a doctrine. I suppose we must entertain the same idea of another passage, which seems to establish one of the finest maxims of morality, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might, for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest," chap. ix. 10. But if you consider, that this is a consequence drawn from the irony just before, "Go, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart," ver. 7, you will suppose, as we do, that it contains a pernicious maxim, like that mentioned by the prophet, "let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die," Isa. xxii. 13.

There are other inspired books, as well as this of Ecclesiastes, subject to the same misinterpretation. Under pretence that the Scripture is divinely inspired, people quote texts indiscriminately. Certainly it is divinely inspired, and for this reason we should always reject such maxims as would tend to defeat the design of it. Without this precaution you may prove by Scripture things the most opposite to the design of Scripture; you may prove that God has violated his promises, because it is said in Scripture, "where is the promise of his coming?" Or you may prove that atheism is preferable to religion, because the Scripture says, "there is no God;" and so by a hundred other passages you may prove a hundred similar absurdities.

But the connexion of our text with preceding and following verses, and its perfect harmony with the design of the Wise Man, which was to decry the world and its pleasures, and by his own experience to undeceive such as made idols of them, confirm, in my opinion, the judgment we have formed of them; the whole authorizes us to consider the words as proceeding from the mouth of Solomon himself, expressive of his own sentiments and not those of others, and what he thought after his reconversion, and not what his opinion was during his dissipation.

I. On this principle, we will first rid the text of several *false meanings*, which it may seem at first sight to countenance; for as there is a disgust with the world, and a contempt of life, which wisdom inspires, so there is a hatred of the world that arises from evil dispositions. We may be disgusted with life from a principle of melancholy—from a principle of misanthropy—from a principle of discontent—and, which is still more singular, we may be disgusted with the world through an excessive esteem for the world, and hate life through a too violent attachment to it.

1. We may hate life because we are *melancholy*. Only he, whose ideas are disconcerted by a dark and gloomy temper, can say fully and without qualification, "I hate life." To attribute such a disposition to the Wise Man is to insult the Holy Spirit who animated him. All the advantages of life, I grant, cannot procure us perfect happiness, yet every one may procure us some satisfaction, transient but real, provided we enjoy each with such moderation as wisdom prescribes. Instead of exclaiming in melan-

choly mood against society, "What friends! What friendships!" Enjoy the innocent pleasures of society, and you will find that they can contribute to suspend your pain, to dissipate your anxieties, and to relieve your wearisome attention to your misfortunes. Instead of exclaiming against fortune, and saying, "Riches and honours, what are they good for?" Enjoy, as far as justice and benevolence will allow, the advantages of fortune, and you will experience that they may procure you some agreeable accommodations, which you are permitted, yea commanded to relish. Instead of exclaiming against reputation, and saying, "What doth it signify to be known and esteemed among mankind?" Enjoy the advantages of reputation, and you will experience some satisfaction in being respected by intelligent persons in society. Though, in general, the world is unjust in estimating ability and virtue, yet there are many rational members of society, who know how to distinguish gold from tinsel, and real ability from parade.

2. Some are disgusted with life from a principle of *misanthropy*. What is a misanthrope, or a hater of mankind? He is a man, who avoids society only to free himself from the trouble of being useful to it. He is a man, who considers his neighbours only on the side of their defects, not knowing the art of combining their virtues with their vices, and of rendering the imperfections of other people tolerable by reflecting on his own. He is a man more employed in finding out and inflicting punishments on the guilty than in devising means to reform them. He is a man, who talks of nothing but banishing and executing; and who, because he thinks his talents are not sufficiently valued and employed by his fellow-citizens, or rather, because they know his foible, and do not choose to be subject to his caprice, talks of quitting cities, towns, and societies, and of living in dens or in deserts. Intercourse with mankind is disagreeable, you say. Very well, I grant it. But do you know what would make it infinitely more disagreeable? I will tell you. It would be, if all the members of society were animated with your spirit. What a society would that be, which should be composed of people without charity, without patience, without condescension!

My text does not inculcate such sentiments as these. The Wise Man had met with a great many disagreeable events in society which had given him a great deal of pain, but, far from being driven out of it, he continued to reside in the world, and to amend and improve it by his wise counsel and good example. Read the Book of Proverbs, and this of Ecclesiastes, and observe how he endeavours to preserve society from damage by exposing the snares into which he himself had fallen. Behold, being converted himself, he endeavours to "strengthen his brethren, and to teach transgressors the ways of God!" How accurately does he describe all conditions of life! With what charity does he condescend, if I may venture to speak so, from the cedars of Lebanon to the hyssop upon the wall, so that there is no profession so mean, nor any man so obscure in his profession, that he does not either direct or improve. Disgust with the world should never prevent our as-

sisting the inhabitants of it, and our contempt of life should always be accompanied with charity for the living.

3. Sometimes a spirit of *discontent* produces disgust with the world, and contempt of life. To hear the people I mean, one would think it was impossible that this world should be governed by a wise Being, because, forsooth, they are doomed with the rest of mankind to live in a valley of trouble. But who art thou, thou miserable man, to conceive ideas so false, and to form opinions so rash! Learn to know thyself, and to do thyself justice! If thou shouldst be required by the rigorous judgment of God to expiate thy crimes, it would not be in the vanity of this world, it would be in the flames of hell! It would not be in the society of men, faithless in trade, inconstant in friendship, insipid in conversation, troublesome in application, perfidious in contracts, it would be in the society of the devil and his angels! It would not be in the narrow compass of this life, the brevity of which may be justly compared to a vapour lost in the air, a flower fading in the sun, a dream vanishing in the morning, it will be in a succession of ages, in the boundless gulfs of eternity.

4. I said finally, my brethren, that we were sometimes disgusted with the world through an *excess of fondness* for the world, and hated life through an over valuation of it. "Oh heart of man, deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked!" Jer. xvii. 9. Who would not think, to hear some men exclaim, "Ah human life, I only wish to free myself from thy connexions, and thou, wicked world, I detest thee!" Who would not think that these people were convinced of the vanity of the world! But deceive yourselves. Man enters the world as an enchanted place. While the charm lasts, the man I speak of is in raptures, and thinks he has found the supreme good. He imagines that riches have no wings, that splendid fortune has no reverse, that the great have no caprice, that friends have no levity, that health and youth are eternal: but as it is not long before he recovers his senses, he becomes disgusted with the world in the same proportion as he had been infatuated with it, and his hatred of life is exactly as extravagant as his love of it had been; that is to say, these sentiments, which seem so just and respectable, do not proceed from serious reflections on the views, which an immortal soul ought to have: that is to say, you would have consented to renounce all hopes of future happiness, and to be for ever separated from God, had not the spring of your life passed away with so much rapidity, had your connexions been more durable, had your interest at court been better supported.

How pitiable is your condition! In it you unite the misfortunes of time with the miseries of eternity. You disclaim both heaven and earth, you are disgusted with the vanity of the one, and you have no taste for the other. A worldly indennifies himself by present enjoyments for the loss of future bliss, of which he has no prospect; and a Christian indennifies himself by enjoying pleasures in prospect for the loss of sensual delights; but you! at what do you aspire? Your condition is the height of misery, as it is the height of absurdity.

It is not in any of these senses that the Wise Man says, "I hated life, because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me." He would have us understand, that the earth has more thorns than flowers—that our condition here, though incomparably better than we deserve, is however inadequate to our just and constitutional desires—that our inconveniences in this life would seem intolerable, unless we were wise enough to direct them to the same end that God proposed by exposing us to suffer them—in a word, that nothing but hope in a future state formed on another plan can render the disorders of this world tolerable. So much may serve to explain the meaning of the Wise Man.

II. Let us now proceed to justify the sense given, and to this I shall devote the remainder of this discourse, and all the moments of attention which we shall take the liberty to require of you.

I will make use of no artifice to obtain my end. I will not affect, in order to detach you from the world, to exhibit only the odious things of the world; nor will I combat an excessive love of life by opposing against it the pains and the miseries of the living; but I mean to attack your idols in their fort, to decry life by showing its most amiable sides, and to endeavour to disgust you with the world by exposing the most desirable objects in it.

The phantoms that seduced Solomon during his dissipation may be reduced to two classes. The first suppose in the dissipated man very little knowledge, and very little taste; and it is astonishing that a man so eminently endowed with knowledge could set his heart upon them. The second may more easily impose on an enlightened and generous mind. In the first class I place riches, grandeur, and voluptuousness, with all their appendages. If these be, as they certainly are, the most common idols of mankind, it is for a reason inglorious to them, it is because most men have very little knowledge and very little taste.

The world has phantoms more specious, life has charms more capable of seducing a generous heart, and of imposing on a liberal mind. I put these into three classes. In the first I put the advantages of science—in the second the pleasures of friendship—in the third the privileges, I mean the temporal privileges of virtue and heroism. I will endeavour to unmask these three figures, and to prove, that the very dispositions which should contribute most to the pleasure of life, mental abilities, tenderness of heart, rectitude and delicacy of conscience, are actually dispositions which contribute most of all to immiter life.

1. If ever possessions could make man happy, Solomon must certainly have been the happiest of mankind. Imagine the most proper and the most effectual means of acquiring knowledge, joined to an avidity to obtain it, both were united in the person of this prince. We individuals, when we have received from Heaven abilities for science, we generally want assistance to cultivate them. What individual is able to send emissaries into distant climes to make observations to perfect geography, physic, astronomy, botany, navigation? An individual, to make collections, to ascertain reports, to

procure materials, must carry on works, which, in a word, more properly belong to the beasts of burden of the learned world than to himself, whose time should be better employed in exercising, and improving his own natural abilities. An individual seldom has it in his power to gain access to the museums of great men, and to procure the productions of their pens, or to consult the oracles that proceed from their mouths. An individual is often condemned to turn the studies that naturally employ his liberal mind into a mercenary trade, the only means of providing bread for himself and his family. In some protestant states youth are but half educated for want of endowments, and people choose rather to pluck the unripe fruits of the finest genius than to furnish him with the means of bringing them to perfection. A king, a rich king like Solomon, is free from all these difficulties. He has all the assistance necessary to the cultivation of his mind, and to the full gratification of his avidity for science. He says, what perhaps you have not sufficiently observed, "I turned myself to behold wisdom," that is, I applied myself to the sciences, and "what can the man do that cometh after the king?" chap. ii. 12. That is, who will ever have such innumerable means of acquiring and perfecting knowledge as those with which royal advantages furnish me?

Accordingly the world was filled with the science of this prince, and his science has given occasion to a great many fabulous histories. To him has been attributed a book entitled the "Contradiction of Solomon," condemned by Pope Gelasius, and other works named "Inchantments, clavicula, necromancy, ideas, neomœnia, letters to king Hiram." Some ancient fathers thought that the pagan philosophers had read his writings, and that Aristotle in particular had taken his "History of animals" from the works of this prince. Josephus says, that he composed a "book of charms" to heal the incurable, and that one Eleazar, a Jew, had found in it a secret, by which he freed a person from possession, a reverie mentioned by Origen. The schoolmen have agitated a great many indiscreet questions concerning the science of Solomon, and have inquired, whether he were more learned than the angels and the Virgin Mary; and they have persuaded themselves not only that he was a great poet, a great physician, and a great astronomer, but also that he understood all the mysteries of the theology of the schools, and was well acquainted with the doctrine of transubstantiation.

We have better evidence of the science of Solomon than these visionaries. The Scripture itself informs us, that God "gave him a wise and an understanding heart, so that there was none like him before, neither after him should any arise like unto him," 1 Kings iii. 12; that he was "wiser," that is a greater philosopher, "than all the children of the east country, and all the Egyptians," chap. iv. 30, 31. By the children of the east we understand the Arabian philosophers, Chaldeans, and the Persians, so famous for their erudition, and particularly for their profound knowledge of astronomy. He was wiser than all, the Egyptians, that is, the most consummate doctors of Egypt, a country famous in the time of Moses

for its literature, called by the pagans the mother of arts, and who boasted that they first of all men knew how to take dimensions of the stars, and to calculate their motions, as Macrobius, Diodorus of Sicily, and many other authors affirm. The Scripture says that Solomon was "wiser than Ethan, Heman, Chalcol, and Darda:" names which the Jews understand in a mystical sense, meaning by Ethan Abraham, by Heman Moses, and Chalcol Joseph. The Scripture says farther, that he composed "three thousand proverbs, and a thousand and five songs; that he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon, even unto the hyssop, that springeth out of the wall, also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes," ver. 32, 33. Some of these works are a part of the canon of Scripture, but the rest are lost.

Now what says this great man concerning science? He acknowledges indeed that it was preferable to ignorance, "the wise man's eyes," says he, "are in his head," that is, a man of education is in possession of some prudential maxims to regulate his life, whereas an illiterate man "walketh in darkness:" but yet says he "it happeneth even to me, as it happeneth to the fool, and why was I then wise?" ver. 15. And again, "the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing; for in much wisdom is much grief, and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow," chap. i. 8. 18. So again, in another place, after he had proposed some rules for the government of life, he adds, "My son be admonished by these, for of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh," chap. xii. 12. I wish I could weigh every expression. Observe however two imperfections of science.

1. Observe first the *little progress* made in science by those who pursue it to the highest pitch. As they advance in this immense field they discover, shall I say new extents, or new abysses, which they can never fathom. The more they nourish themselves with this rich pasture, the more keen do their appetites become. "The eye is never satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing, and of making many books there is no end."

2. Remark next the *little justice* done in the world to such as excel most in science. "He that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow, and it happeneth even to me as it happeneth to a fool." Yes! after you have spent all your youth, after you have impaired your health, after you have spent your fortune to improve your own mind, and to enable you to improve those of other men, "it will happen to you even as it happeneth to a fool." You will be told, that sciences have nothing in them that deserve the attention of a man of quality. A man of mean extraction, who carries himself like a lord, will tell you that a man of birth ought to aspire at something more noble than meditating on questions of law, studying cases of conscience, and explaining holy Scripture. You will be told, that there is not half the knowledge required to sparkle in political bodies, and to decide on a bench the lives, and fortunes, and honours of mankind. Presumptuous youths will judge, and without appeal

condemn your discourses and your publications, and will pronounce with decisive tone *this is not solid, that is superficial!* The superiority of your understanding will raise up against you a world of ignorant people, who will say, that you corrupt the youth, because you would guard them against prejudice; that you stab orthodoxy, because you endeavour to heal the wounds which pedantry and intolerance have given it; that you trouble society, because you endeavour to purify morality, and to engage the great as well as the small, magistrates as well as people, to submit to its holy laws. They will prefer before you, both in the state and in the church, novices who are hardly fit to be your disciples.

Blessed idiots! You, who surrounded with a circle of idiots like yourselves, having first stupified yourselves with your own vanity, are now intoxicated with the incense offered your admirers; you, who, having collected a few bombastic phrases, are spreading the sails of your eloquence, and are bound for the ocean of glory: you, whose sublime nonsense, stale common-places, and pedantic systems, have acquired you such a reputation for learning and erudition as is due only to real merit: your condition seems to me often preferable to that of first-rate geniuses, and most accomplished scholars! Ah! "Wisdom is vanity and vexation of spirit—of making many books there is no end—it happeneth even to me as it happeneth to the fool—there is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool, for all shall be forgotten—therefore I hated life, because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me."

2. The second disposition, which seems as if it would contribute much to the pleasure of life, but which often embitters it, is *tenderness of heart*. Let the sacred names of friendship and tenderness never come out of some mouths; let them never be used by profane people to express certain connexions, which far from having the reality have not even the appearance of rational sensibility! Would you give these names to such vague associations as are formed only because you are a burden to yourselves; to connexions in which the sentiments of the heart have no share, in which nothing is intended except the mutual performance of some capricious customs or the assuaging of some criminal passions, to the impetuosity of which you like brute beasts are given up? Would you give these names to those unpleasant interviews, in which while you visit, you inwardly groan under the necessity of visiting, in which the mouth protests what the heart denies, in which, while you outwardly profess to be affected with the misfortunes of another, you consider them inwardly with indifference and insensibility, and while you congratulate them on the prosperity which Providence bestows, you envy their condition, and sometimes regard it with a malice and mortification you cannot help discovering?

By friendship and tenderness, I mean those affectionate attachments produced by a secret sympathy, which virtue cements, which piety sanctifies, which a mutual vigilance over each other's interests confirms with indissoluble, I had almost said eternal, bonds. I call a friend

an inestimable treasure which might for a while render our abode on earth as happy as that in heaven, did not that wise Providence, that formed us for heaven and not for earth, refuse us the possession of it.

It is clear by the writings of Solomon, and more so by the history of his life, that his heart was very accessible to this kind of pleasure. How often does he write encomiums on faithful friends! "A friend," says he, "loveth at all times, he is a brother born for adversity. A friend sticketh closer than a brother;" Prov. xvii. 17, and xviii. 24. But where is this friend, who sticketh closer than a brother? Where is this friend, who loveth at all times? One would think the Wise Man drew the portrait only to save us the useless labour of inquiring after the original. Perhaps you are incapable of tasting the bitterness of friendship, only because you are incapable of relishing the sweetness of it.

What friends do we make upon earth? At first lively, eager, full of ardour: presently dull, and disgusted through the ease with which they had been gratified. At first soft, gentle, all condescension and compliance: presently masters, imperious tyrants, rigorously exacting as a debt an assiduity which can arise only from inclination, pretending to domineer over our reason, after they have vitiated our taste. At first attentive and teachable, while prejudices conceal their imperfections from us, ready to acquiesce in any thing while our sentiments are conformable to their inclinations: but presently intractable and froward, not knowing how to yield, though we gently point out their frailty, and endeavour to assist them to correct it. At first assiduous, faithful, generous, while fortune smiles on us: but presently, if she betray us, a thousand times more faithless, ungrateful, and perfidious than she. What an airy phantom is human friendship!

I wish, however, through the favour of heaven, that what is only an airy nothing to other men may become a reality in regard to you, and I will take it for granted, that you have found what so many others have sought in vain. Alas! I must, yes, here I must deplore your destiny. Multiplied, so to speak, in the person of that other self, you are going to multiply your troubles. You are going to feel in that other self ills which hitherto you have felt only in yourself. You will be disgraced in his disgraces, sick in his sicknesses. If for a few years you enjoy one another, as if each were a whole world, presently, presently death will cut the bond, presently death will dissolve the tender ties, and separate your entwined hearts. Then you will find yourself in a universal solitude. You will think the whole world is dead. The universe, the whole universe, will seem to you a desert uninhabited, and uninhabitable. Ah! You who experience this, shall I call you to attest these sorrowful truths? Shall I open again wounds which time has hardly closed? Shall I recall those tremulous adieus, those cruel separations, which cost you so many regrets and tears? Shall I expose to view bones, and infection, and putrefaction, the only remains of him who was your support in trouble, your counsel in difficulty, your consolation in adversity?

Ah, charms of friendship, delicious errors, lovely chimeras, you are infinitely more capable of deceiving than of satisfying us, of poisoning life than of sweetening it, and of making us break with the world than of attaching us to it! My soul, wouldst thou form unalterable connexions! Set thy love upon thy treasure, esteem God, obey his holy voice, which from the highest heavens says to thee, "Give me thine heart!" In God thou wilt find a love fixed and faithful, a love beyond the reach of temporal revolutions, which will follow thee, and fill thee with felicity for ever and ever.

3. In fine, I will venture to affirm, that if any thing seems capable to render life agreeable, and if any thing in general renders it disagreeable, it is *rectitude*, and *delicacy of conscience*. I know Solomon seems here to contradict himself, and the author of the Book of Proverbs seems to refute the author of the Book of Ecclesiastes. The author of the Book of Ecclesiastes informs us, that virtue is generally useless, and sometimes hurtful in this world: but according to the author of the Book of Proverbs virtue is most useful in this world. Hear the author of Ecclesiastes. "All things have I seen in the days of my vanity: there is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that longeth his life in his wickedness. All things come alike to all, there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked; 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, chap. vii. 15. ix. 2. Hear the author of the Book of Proverbs. "My son, forget not my law: but let thy heart keep my commandments; for length of days, and long life, and peace shall they add to thee. Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck, write them upon the table of thine heart. So shalt thou find favour, and good understanding in the sight of God and man. Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies; and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared with her," chap. iii. 1—3. 13—15.

How shall we reconcile these things? To say, as some do, that the author of Proverbs speaks of the spiritual rewards of virtue, and the author of Ecclesiastes of the temporal state of it, is to cut the knot instead of untying it. Of many solutions, which we have no time now to examine, there is one that bids fair to remove the difficulty; that is, that when the author of the Book of Proverbs makes temporal advantages the rewards of virtue, he speaks of some rare periods of society, whereas the author of Ecclesiastes describes the common general state of things. Perhaps the former refers to the happy time, in which the example of the piety of David being yet recent, and the prosperity of his successor not having then infected either the heart of the king or the morals of his subjects, reputation, riches, and honours, were bestowed on good men: but the second, probably, speaks of what came to pass soon after. In

the first period life was amiable, and living in the world delicious: but of the second the Wise Man says, "I hated life because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me."

To which of the two periods does the age in which we live belong? Judge by the description given by the preacher as he calls himself.

Then mankind were ungrateful, the public did not remember the benefits conferred on them by individuals, and their services were unrewarded. "There was a little city besieged by a great king, who built great bulwarks against it, and there was found in it a poor wise man, who by his wisdom delivered the city, yet no man remembered that same poor man," chap. ix. 14, 15.

Then courtiers, mean and ungrateful, basely forsook their old master, and paid their court to the heir apparent. "I saw all the living under the sun walking after the child, who shall stand up next instead of the king,"* chap. iv. 15.

Then strong oppressed the weak. "I considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun, and behold, the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforters, and on the side of their oppressors there was power, but they had no comforter."

Then the courts of justice were corrupt. "I saw the place of judgment, that wickedness was there" . . . chap. iii. 16. We will not finish this disagreeable picture. "I hated life, because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me."

Such is the idea the Wise Man gives us of the world. Yet these vain and precarious objects, this world so proper to inspire a rational mind with disgust, this life so proper to excite hatred in such as know what is worthy of esteem, this is that which has always fascinated, and which yet continues to fascinate the bulk of mankind.

This it was that infatuated the inhabitants of the old world, who, even after God had pronounced this dreadful decree, "My spirit shall not always strive with man, for he is flesh, and after a hundred and twenty years he shall be no more,"† forgot themselves in the pursuit of present pleasure, "They were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that the flood came, and took them all away," Matt. xxiv. 38, 39.

This was what bewitched the whole heathen world, who lived "without hope, and without God in the world," Eph. ii. 12.

This was what enchanted that highly favoured nation, which God distinguished from the rest of the world, and to which he gave his laws, and intrusted his prophecies, yet they "forsook the fountain of living waters, and

hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water," Jer. ii. 13.

This was what influenced Christians, more inexcusable in this respect than Jews and Pagans, because their religion breathes nothing but disgust with the world, and alienation from the idols of life: and yet they are as much in love with worldly splendour, as eager in pursuit of wealth, as much intoxicated with diversions, gaming, amusements, and dissipations, as ever Jews and Pagans could possibly be.

This was the charm that operated on your ancestors; on those who governed the state before you, magistrates: on those who ascended this pulpit before you, ministers: on those who attended the worship of God in this place before you, Christian people: all these, except a few, followed the multitude, ran, with the world, to the same excess of riot, and made the world their god, just as we all, except a few, yet make the world our god, yet follow the multitude, yet run with the wicked, to the same excess of riot.

God, in order to undeceive mankind, and to dissolve the charms that fascinated their eyes, often showed them the world in its true light. He often added extraordinary ills to the ordinary calamities of life: he made winds his angels, and flaming fires his ministers," Ps. civ. 4; he sent war, mortality, flaming eruptions, pestilence, and earthquakes: in a word, he often visited them, as he yet visits us, and with the same design. To them he says, as he yet says to us, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. Vanity of vanities, all is vanity. Fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man," 1 John ii. 15; Eccles. i. 2, and xiii. 13. All this was useless, just as it is now. Then mankind made a god of the world, and so they continue to do.

My brethren, taste is not subject to argument, and if life seems to you supremely amiable in spite of all the imperfections and sins that embitter it to you, in vain do I stand here describing it to you. However, condescend at least to see whither every living thing is tending; and allow me to perform the duty of this day, which requires me to treat of the dying and the dead. A modern author has published a book with this singular title, "Subterranean Rome," a title full of instruction and truth, a title that may serve to teach that living haughty city, that there is another Rome dead and buried, a natural image of what the present Rome must shortly be. Such an object I present to you. I present you your republic, not the republic you see composed of living magistrates, generals, and heads of families; this is superficial, the surface of your republic: but I would fix your eyes on an interior subterranean republic. There is a state under your feet. Go down, go into the cells under the earth. Lift up the lids of the coffins. What do you see there, what have you found there? My God! What inhabitants! What citizens! What a republic!

This is not all. Go farther. Carry your eyes beyond these caverns. Exercise that faith which gives substance to things not seen. Think of the souls which once animated this

* The sense given to this passage by our author is agreeable both to the French version, and to the original. *J' ai vu tous les vivans qui marchent sous le soleil apres l'enfant, qui est la seconde personne qui doit etre en la place du roi.* Per puerum secundum intellige, regis filium et heredem, quod a rege secundus est, ac post eum regnaturus. Poli. Synops. in loc.

† Gen. vi. 3. The sense given by Mr. Saurin is that of many commentators, and seems preferable to our English text, which is obscure. *Accipiunt de spatio penitentiae isti etati concessio, &c.*

dust, and ashes, and bones. Where are they? Some are in a state of felicity, others in depths of misery. Some in the bosom of God, others in prison with devils. Some drinking of rivers of pleasures for evermore, others having their portion in the lake of fire, the smoke rising up for ever and ever, Ps. xxxvi. 8, and xvi. 11; and Rev. xix. 3. To say all in one word, some for abandoning themselves to the world are suffering such punishments as the world inflicts on its slaves: and others for devoting themselves to God, are receiving such rewards as God bestows on his servants. May this contrast penetrate, affect, and transform you all! And thou, great God, give weight to our exhortations, in order to give success to our benedictions!

I gladly embrace the opportunity of assisting at this solemnity, of coming to you, my dear brethren, at this auspicious season, and of preaching to you, now that it is allowable to open the bottom of a heart always full of most respectful affection for this city and this church.* Receive my good wishes as affectionately as they are dictated.

Magistrates, to whom Providence has committed the reins of government, you are above our benediction. But we are ministers of a Master who governs all mankind, and from that source of splendour, magnificence, and wealth, we derive the benedictions, which we diffuse on your august heads. May God inspire you with that elevation of mind, that magnanimity, and holy ambition, which impel magistrates, with whom he has intrusted the sword of justice, to found all their deliberations and decrees on equity! May God inspire you with such charity, condescension, and affability, as may blend the parent with the master! May God inspire you with such humility and self-denial as incline Christian magistrates to lay their power at the feet of the great Supreme, and to place their glory in rendering to God a faithful account of their administration! Great will that account be. You are, to a certain degree, responsible both for the temporal and eternal happiness of this people. The eternal happiness of a people often depends on the conduct of their governors, on the care they take to restrain licentiousness, to suppress scandalous books, to make solemn festivals observed, to procure wise, zealous, and faithful ministers for the church. Magistrates, who enter into these noble designs, have a right to expect from God all the assistance necessary to effect them. To thee, Almighty God, we address our prayers for such assistance for these illustrious persons! O that our petitions may enter heaven, and our prayers be heard and answered!

Ministers, my dear coadjutors in the great work of salvation, successors of the apostles in the work of the ministry "for the edifying of the body of Christ!" Eph. iv. 12, God has set narrow limits to what the world calls our preferment and fortune. The religion we profess does not allow us to aspire after such high-sounding titles, eminent posts, and splendid equipages, as confound the minister of temporal kings with the ministers of that Jesus whose "kingdom is not of this world:" but what we

lose in regard to the glittering advantages of the world, we gain in regard to real and substantial advantages; if we ourselves understand that religion which we teach others, and if we feel the spirit of that calling, with which God has honoured us. May God grant, may the God who has honoured us, grant us such knowledge and virtue as are essential to the worthy discharge of our duty! May he bestow all that intrepidity, which is always necessary to resist the enemies of our holy reformation, and sometimes those, who under the name of reformed, endeavour to counteract and destroy it! May he support us under the perpetual contradictions we meet with in the course of our ministry, and invigorate us with the hopes of those high degrees in glory, which await such as "turn many to righteousness, who shall shine as the stars for ever and ever!" Dan. xii. 3.

Merchants, you are the pillars of this republic, and you are the means of our enjoying prosperity and plenty. May God continue to bless your commerce! May he cause winds and waves, nature, and every element, to unite in your favour! Above all, may God teach you the holy skill of placing your "heart where your treasure is;" of making yourselves friends of the "mammon of unrighteousness," Matt. vi. 21; Luke xvi. 9; of sanctifying your prosperity by your charity, especially on such a day as this, in which we should make conscience of paying a homage of love to a "God who is love," and whose goodness has brought us to see this day.

Fathers and mothers of families, with whom I have the honour and happiness of joining myself, may God help us to consider our children not merely as formed for this world, but as intelligent and immortal beings made for eternity! May God grant, we may be infinitely more desirous to see them happy in heaven than prosperous on earth! May God continue these children, so necessary to the pleasure of our lives, to our last moments! God grant, if we be required to give them up to the grave, we may have all the submission that is necessary to sustain such violent shocks.

My brethren, this article cuts the thread of my discourse. May God answer all the prayers I have uttered, and that far greater number which I have suppressed! Amen.

SERMON LXII.

THE PASSIONS.

·1 PETER ii. 2.

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

THE words you have heard, my brethren, offer four subjects of meditation to your minds. First, the nature of the passions—secondly, the disorders of them—thirdly, the remedies to be applied—and lastly, the motives that engage us to subdue them. In the first place we will give you a general idea of what the apostle calls "fleshly lusts," or in modern style the

* Of Rotterdam.

passions. We will examine secondly, *the war* which they wage "against the soul." Our third part will inform you of the means of *abstaining* from these fleshly lusts. And in the last place we will endeavour to make you feel the power of this motive, "as strangers and pilgrims," and to press home this exhortation of the apostle, "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul."

I. In order to understand the nature of the passions, we will explain the subject by a few preliminary remarks.

1. An intelligent being ought to love every thing that can elevate, perpetuate, and make him happy; and to avoid whatever can degrade, confine, and render him miserable. This, far from being a human depravity, is a perfection of nature. Man has it in common with celestial intelligences, and with God himself. This reflection removes a false sense, which the language of St. Peter may seem at first to convey, as if the apostle meant by eradicating "fleshly lusts" to destroy the true interests of man. The most ancient enemies of the Christian religion loaded it with this reproach, because they did not understand it; and some superficial people, who know no more of religion than the surface, pretend to render it odious by the same means. Under pretence that the Christian religion forbids ambition, they say it degrades man, and under pretence that it forbids misguided self-love, they say it makes man miserable. A gross error! A false idea of Christianity! If the gospel humbles, it is to elevate us; if it forbids a self-love ill-directed, it is in order to conduct us to substantial happiness. By "fleshly lusts," St. Peter does not mean such desires of the heart as put us on aspiring after real happiness and true glory.

2. An intelligent being united to a body, and lodged, if I may speak so, in a portion of matter under this law, that according to the divers motions of this matter he shall receive sensations of pleasure or pain, must naturally love to excite within himself sensations of pleasure, and to avoid painful feelings. This is agreeable to the institution of the Creator. He intends, for reasons of adorable wisdom, to preserve a society of mankind for several ages on earth. To accomplish this design, he has so ordered it, that what contributes to the support of the body shall give the soul pleasure, and that which would dissolve it would give pain, so that by these means we may preserve ourselves. Aliments are agreeable; the dissolution of the parts of our bodies is painful; love, hatred, and anger, properly understood, and exercised to a certain degree, are natural and fit. The stoics, who annihilated the passions, did not know man, and the schoolmen, who to comfort people under the gout or the stone, told them that a rational man ought not to pay any regard to what passed in his body, never made many disciples among wise men. This observation affords us a second clew to the meaning of the apostle: at least it gives us a second precaution to avoid an error. By "fleshly lusts" he does not mean a natural inclination to preserve the body and the ease of life; he allows love, hatred, and anger, to a certain degree, and as far as the exercise of them does not

prejudice a greater interest. Observe well this last expression, as far as may be without prejudice to a greater interest. The truth of our second reflection depends on this restriction.

3. A being composed of two substances, one of which is more excellent than the other; a being placed between two interests, one of which is greater than the other, ought, when these two interests clash, to prefer the more noble before the less noble, the greater interest before the less. This third principle is a third clew to what St. Peter calls "lusts," or passions. Man has two substances, and two interests. As far as he can without prejudicing his eternal interest he ought to endeavour to promote his temporal interest: but when the two clash he ought to sacrifice the less to the greater. "Fleshly lusts" is put for what is irregular and depraved in our desires, and what makes us prefer the body before the soul, a temporal before an eternal interest. That this is the meaning of the apostle is clear from his calling these passions or "lusts fleshly." What is the meaning of this word? The Scripture generally uses the word in two senses. Sometimes it is literally and properly put for flesh, and sometimes it signifies sin. St. Peter calls the passions "fleshly" in both these senses; in the first, because some come from the body, as voluptuousness, anger, drunkenness; and in the second, because they spring from our depravity. Hence the apostle Paul puts among the works of the flesh both those which have their seat in the body, and those which have in a manner no connexion with it. "Now the works of the flesh are these, adultery, lasciviousness, idolatry, heresies, envyings." According to this the "works of the flesh" are not only such as are seated in the flesh (for envy and heresy cannot be of this sort,) but all depraved dispositions.

This is a general idea of the passions: but as it is vague and obscure, we will endeavour to explain it more distinctly, and with this view we will show—first what the passions do in the mind—next what they do in the senses—thirdly, what they are in the imagination—and lastly, what they are in the heart. Four portraits of the passions, four explications of the condition of man. In order to connect the matter more closely, as we show you what "fleshly lusts" are in these four views, we will endeavour to convince you that in these four respects they "war against the soul." The second part of our discourse therefore, which was to treat of the disorders of the passions, will be included in the first, which explains their nature.

1. The passions produce in the *mind* a strong attention to whatever can justify and gratify them. The most odious objects may be so placed as to appear agreeable, and the most lovely objects so as to appear odious. There is no absurdity so palpable but it may be made to appear likely; and there is no truth so clear but it may be made to appear doubtful. A passionate man fixes all the attention of his mind on such sides of objects as favour his passion, and this is the source of innumerable false judgments, of which we are every day witnesses and authors.

If you observe all the passions, you will find

they have all this character. What is vengeance in the mind of a vindictive man? It is a fixed attention to all the favourable lights in which vengeance may be considered; it is a continual study to avoid every odious light in which the subject may be placed. On the one side there is a certain deity in the world, who has made revenge a law. This deity is worldly honour, and at the bar of this judge to forget injuries is mean, and to pardon them cowardice. On the other side vengeance disturbs society, usurps the office of a magistrate, and violates the precepts of religion. A dispassionate man, examining without prejudice this question, Ought I to revenge the injury I have received? would weigh all these motives, consider each apart, and all together, and would determine to act according as the most just and weighty reasons should determine him: but a revengeful man considers none but the first, he pays no attention to the last; he always exclaims my honour, my honour; he never says my religion and my salvation.

What is hatred? It is a close attention to a man's imperfections. Is any man free? Is any man so imperfect as to have nothing good in him? Is there nothing to compensate his defects? This man is not handsome, but he is wise: his genius is not lively, but his heart is sincere: he cannot assist you with money, but he can give you much good advice, supported by an excellent example: he is not either prince, king, or emperor, but he is a man, a Christian, a believer, and in all these respects he deserves esteem. The passionate man turns away his eyes from all these advantageous sides, and attends only to the rest. Is it astonishing that he hates a person, in whom he sees nothing but imperfection? Thus a counsellor opens and sets forth his cause with such artifice that law seems to be clearly on his side; he forgets one fact, suppresses one circumstance, omits to draw one inference, which being brought forward to view entirely change the nature of the subject, and his client loses his cause. In the same manner, a defender of a false religion always revolves in his mind the arguments that seem to establish it, and never recollects those which subvert it. He will curtail a sentence, cut off what goes before, leave out what follows, and retain only such detached expressions as seem to countenance his error, but which in connexion with the rest would strip it of all probability. What is still more singular is, that love to true religion, that love, which, under the direction of reason, opens a wide field of argument and evidence, engages us in this sort of false judging, when we give ourselves up to it through passion or prejudice.

This is what the passions do in the mind, and it is easy to comprehend the reason St. Peter had to say in this view, "fleshly lusts war against the soul." Certainly one of the noblest advantages of a man is to reason, to examine proofs and weigh motives, to consider an object on every side, to combine the various arguments that are alleged either for or against a proposition, in order on these grounds to regulate our ideas and opinions, our hatred and our love. The passionate man renounces this advantage, he never reasons in a passion, his

mind is limited, his soul is in chains, his "fleshly passions war against his soul."

Having examined the passions in the mind, let us consider them in the senses. To comprehend this, recollect what we just now said, that the passions owe their origin to the Creator, who instituted them for the purpose of preserving us. When an object would injure health or life, it is necessary to our safety, that there should be an emotion in our senses to affect a quick escape from the danger; fear does this. A man struck with the idea of sudden danger has a rapidity which he could not have in a tranquil state, or during a cool trial of his power. It is necessary, when an enemy approaches to destroy us, that our senses should so move as to animate us with a power of resistance. Anger does this, for it is a collection of spirits . . . but allow me to borrow here the words of a modern philosopher, who has admirably expressed the motions excited by the passions in our bodies. "Before the sight of an object of passion," says he, "the spirits were diffused through all the body to preserve every part alike, but on the appearance of this new object the whole system is shaken; the greater part of the animal spirits rush into all the exterior parts of the body, in order to put it into a condition proper to produce such motions as are necessary to acquire the good, or to avoid the evil now present. If it happen that the power of man is unequal to his wants, these same spirits distribute themselves so as to make him utter mechanically certain words and cries, and so as to spread over his countenance and over the rest of his body an air capable of agitating others with the same passion with which he himself is moved. For as men and other animals are united together by eyes and ears, when any one is agitated he necessarily shakes all others that see and hear him, and naturally produces painful feelings in their imaginations, which interest them in his relief. The rest of the spirits rush violently into the heart, the lungs, the liver, and the other vitals, in order to lay all these parts under contribution, and hastily to derive from them as quick as possible the spirits necessary for the preservation of the body in these extraordinary efforts."* Such are the movements excited by the passions in the senses, and all these to a certain degree are necessary for the preservation of our bodies, and are the institutions of our Creator: but three things are necessary to preserve order in these emotions. First, they must never be excited in the body without the direction of the will and the reason. Secondly, they must always be proportional, I mean, the emotion of fear, for example, must never be, except in sight of objects capable of hurting us; the emotion of anger must never be, except in sight of an enemy, who actually has both the will and the power of injuring our well-being. And thirdly, they must always stop when and where we will they should. When the passions subvert this order, they violate three wise institutes of our Creator.

The emotions excited by the passions in our senses are not free. An angry man is carried

* Malebranche, Recherche de la verite l. 5. c. 3.

beyond himself in spite of himself. A voluptuous man receives a sensible impression from an exterior object, and in spite of all the dictates of reason throws himself into a flaming fire that consumes him.

The emotions excited by the passions in our senses are not *proportional*; I mean, that a timorous man, for example, turns as pale as the sight of a fanciful as of a real danger; he sometimes fears a phantom and a substance alike. A man "whose god is his belly," feels his appetite as much excited by a dish fatal to his health as by one necessary to support his strength, and to keep him alive.

The emotions excited by the passions in our senses do not obey the orders of our *will*. The movement is an overflow of spirits which no reflections can restrain. It is not a gentle fire to give the blood a warmth necessary to its circulation; it is a volcano pouring out its flame all liquid and destructive on every side. It is not a gentle stream, purling in its proper bed, meandering through the fields, and moistening, refreshing, and invigorating them as it goes: but it is a rapid flood, breaking down all its banks, carrying every where mire and mud, sweeping away the harvest, subverting hills and trees, and carrying away every thing on all sides that oppose its passage. This is what the passions do in the senses, and do you not conceive, my brethren, that in this second respect they "war against the soul?"

They "war against the soul" by the disorders they introduce into that body, which they ought to preserve. They dissipate the spirits, weaken the memory, wear out the brain. Behold those trembling hands, those discoloured eyes, that body bent and bowed down to the ground; these are the effects of violent passions. When the body is in such a state, it is easy to conceive, that the soul suffers with it. The union between the two is so close that the alteration of the one necessarily alters the other. When the capacity of the soul is absorbed by painful sensations, we are incapable of attending to truth. If the spirits, necessary to support us in meditation, be dissipated, we can no longer meditate. If the brain, which must be of a certain consistence to receive impressions of objects, has lost that consistence, it can recover it no more.

They "war against the soul" by disconcerting the whole economy of man, and by making him consider such sensations of pleasure as Providence gave him only for the sake of engaging him to preserve his body as a sort of supreme good, worthy of all his care and attention for its own sake.

They "war against the soul" because they reduce it to a state of slavery to the body, over which it ought to rule. Is any thing more unworthy of an immortal soul than to follow no other rule of judging than an agitation of the organs of the body, the heat of the blood, the motion of animal spirits? And does not this daily happen to a passionate man? A man, who reasons fairly when his senses are tranquil, does he not reason like an idiot when his senses are agitated? Cool and dispassionate, he thinks, he ought to eat and drink only what is necessary to support his health and his life, at most to "receive with thanksgiving" such innocent

pleasures as religion allows him to enjoy: but when his senses are agitated, his taste becomes dainty, and he thinks he may glut himself with food, drown himself in wine, and give himself up without reserve to all the excesses of voluptuousness. When his senses were cool and tranquil, he thought it sufficient to oppose precautions of prudence against the designs of an enemy to his injury: but when his senses are agitated, he thinks, he ought to attack him, fall on him, stab him, kill him. When he was cool, he was free, he was a sovereign: but now that his senses are agitated, he is a subject, he is a slave. Base submission! Unworthy slavery! We blush for human nature when we see it in such bondage. Behold that man, he has as many virtues, perhaps, more than most men. Examine him on the article of good breeding. He perfectly understands, and scrupulously observes all the laws of it. Examine him on the point of disinterestedness. He abounds in it, and to see the manner in which he gives, you would say, he thought he increased his fortune by bestowing it in acts of benevolence. Examine him concerning religion. He respects the majesty of it, he always pronounces the name of God with veneration, he never thinks of his works without admiration, or his attributes without reverence or fear. Place this man at a gaming table, put the dice or the cards in his hand, and you will know him no more; he loses all self-possession, he forgets politeness, disinterestedness, and religion, he insults his fellow-creatures, and blasphemes his God. His soul teems with avarice, his body is distorted, his thoughts are troubled, his temper is changed, his countenance turns pale, his eyes sparkle, his mouth foams, his spirits are in a flame, he is another man, no, it is not a man, it is a wild beast, it is a devil.

We never give ourselves up thus to our senses without feeling some pleasure, and what is very dreadful, this pleasure abides in the memory, makes deep traces in the brain, in a word, imprints itself on the imagination: and this leads us to our third article, in which we are to consider what the passions do in the imagination.

If the senses were excited to act only by the presence of objects; if the soul were agitated only by the action of the senses, one single mean would suffice to guard us from irregular passions; that would be to flee from the object that excites them; but the passions produce other disorders, they leave deep impressions on the *imagination*. When we give ourselves up to the senses, we feel pleasure, this pleasure strikes the imagination, and the imagination thus struck with the pleasure it has found, recollects it, and solicits the passionate man to return to objects that made him so happy.

Thus old men have sometimes miserable remains of a passion, which seems to suppose a certain constitution, and which should seem to be extinct, as the constitution implied is no more: but the recollection that such and such objects had been the cause of such and such pleasures is dear to their souls; they love to remember them, they make them a part of all their conversations; they drew flattering portraits, and by recounting their past pleasures indemnify themselves for the prohibition, un-

der which old age has laid them. For the same reason it is, that a worldling, who has plunged himself into all the dissipations of life, finds it so difficult to renounce the world when he comes to die. Indeed a body borne down with illness, a nature almost extinct, senses half dead, seem improper habitations of love to sensual pleasure; and yet imagination struck with past pleasure tells this skeleton, that the world is amiable, that always when he went into it he enjoyed a real pleasure, and that, on the contrary, always when he performed religious exercises he felt pain; and this lively impression gives such a man a present aversion to religion; it incessantly turns his mind towards the objects of which death is about to deprive him, so that, without a miracle of grace, he can never look towards the objects of religion with desire and pleasure.

We go farther. We affirm, that the disorders of the passions in the imagination far exceed those in the senses; the action of the senses is limited: but that of the imagination is boundless, so that the difference is almost as great as that between finite and infinite, if you will pardon the expression. A man, who actually tastes pleasure in debauchery, feels this pleasure, but he does not persuade himself that he feels it more than he does: but a man, who indulges his fancy, forms most extravagant ideas, for imagination magnifies some objects, creates others, accumulates phantom upon phantom, and fills up a vast space with ideal joys, which have no originals in nature. Hence it comes that we are more pleased with imaginary ideas, than with the actual enjoyment of what we imagine, because imagination having made boundless promises, it gladdens the soul with the hope of more to supply the want of what present objects fail of producing.

O deplorable state of man! The littleness of his mind will not allow him to contemplate any object but that of his passion, while it is present to his senses; it will not allow him then to recollect the motives, the great motives, that should impel him to his duty: and when the object is absent, not being able to offer it to his senses, he presents it again to his imagination clothed with new and foreign charms, deceitful ideas of which make up for its absence, and excite in him a love more violent than that of actual possession, when he felt at least the folly and vanity of it. O horrid war of the passions *against the soul!* Shut the door of your closets against the enchanted object, it will enter with you. Try to get rid of it by traversing plains, and fields, and whole countries; cleave the waves of the sea, fly on the wings of the wind, and try to put between yourself and your enchantress the deep, the rolling ocean, she will travel with you, sail with you, every where haunt you, because wherever you go you will carry yourself, and within you, deep in your imagination, the bewitching image impressed.

Let us consider, in fine, the passions in the heart, and the disorders they cause there.—What can fill the heart of man? A prophet has answered this question, and has included all morality in one point, "my chief good is to draw near to God," Ps. lxxiii. 28; but as God does not commune with us immediately, while

we are in this world, but imparts felicity by means of creatures, he has given these creatures two characters, which being well examined by a reasonable man, conduct him to the Creator, but which turn the passionate man aside. On the one hand, creatures render us happy to a certain degree, this is their first character: on the other, they leave a void in the soul, which they are incapable of filling, this is their second character. This is the design of God, and this design the passions oppose. Let us hear a reasonable man draw conclusions, and let us observe what opposite conclusions a passionate man draws.

The reasonable man says, creatures leave a void in my soul, which they are incapable of filling: but what effect should this produce in my heart, and what end had God in setting bounds so strait to that power of making me happy, which he communicated to them? It was to reclaim me to himself, to persuade me that he only can make me happy; it was to make me say to myself, my desires are eternal, whatever is not eternal is unequal to my desires; my passions are infinite, whatever is not infinite is beneath my passions, and God only can satisfy them.

A passionate man, from the void he finds in the creatures, draws conclusions directly opposite. Each creature in particular is incapable of making me happy: but could I unite them all, could I, so to speak, extract the substantial from all, certainly nothing would be wanting to my happiness. In this miserable supposition he becomes full of perturbation, he launches out, he collects, he accumulates. It is not enough to acquire conveniences, he must have superfluities. It is not enough that my name be known in my family, and among my acquaintance, it must be spread over the whole city, the province, the kingdom, the four parts of the globe. Every clime illuminated by the sun shall know that I exist, and that I have a superior genius. It is not enough to conquer some hearts, I will subdue all, and display the astonishing art of uniting all voices in my favour; men divided in opinion about every thing else shall agree in one point, that is, to celebrate my praise. It is not enough to have many inferiors, I must have no master, no equal, I must be a universal monarch, and subdue the whole world; and when I shall have accomplished these vast designs, I will seek other creatures to subdue, and more worlds to conquer. Thus the passions disconcert the plan of God! Such are the conclusions of a heart infatuated with passion!

The disciple of reason says, creatures contribute to render me happy to a certain degree: but this power is not their own. Gross, sensible, material beings cannot contribute to the happiness of a spiritual creature. If creatures can augment my happiness, it is because God has lent them a power natural only to himself. God is then the source of felicity, and all I see elsewhere is only an emanation of his essence: but if the streams be so pure, what is the fountain! If effects be so noble, what is the cause! If rays be so luminous, what is the source of light from which they proceed!

The conclusions of an impassioned man are

directly opposite. Says he, creatures render me happy to a certain degree, therefore they are the cause of my happiness, they deserve all my efforts, they shall be my god. Thus the passionate man renders to his aliments, his gold, his silver, his equipage, his horses, the most noble act of adoration. For what is the most noble act of adoration? Is it to build temples? To erect altars? To kill victims? To sacrifice burnt-offerings? To burn incense? No. It is that inclination of our heart to union with God, that aspiring to possess him, that love, that effusion of soul, which makes us exclaim, "My chief good is to draw near to God." This homage the man of passion renders to the object of his passions, "his god is his belly," his "covetousness his idolatry;" and this is what "fleshly lusts" become in the heart. They remove us from God, and, by removing us from him, deprive us of all the good that proceeds from a union with the supreme good, and thus make war with every part of ourselves, and with every moment of our duration.

War against our reason, for instead of deriving, by virtue of a union to God, assistance necessary to the practice of what reason approves, and what grace only renders practicable, we are given up to our evil dispositions, and compelled by our passions to do what our own reason abhors.

War against the regulation of life, for instead of putting on by virtue of union to God, the "easy yoke," and taking up the "light burden" which religion imposes, we become slaves of envy, vengeance and ambition; we are weighed down with a yoke of iron, which we have no power to get rid of, even though we groan under its intolerable weightiness.

War against conscience, for instead of being justified by virtue of a union with God, and having "peace with him through our Lord Jesus Christ," Rom. v. 1, and feeling that heaven begun, "joy unspeakable and full of glory." 1 Pet. i. 8, by following our passions we become a prey to distracting fear, troubles without end, cutting remorse, and awful earnestness of eternal misery.

War on a dying bed, for whereas by being united to God our death-bed would have become a field of triumph, where the Prince of life, the Conqueror of death would have made us share his victory, by abandoning ourselves to our passions, we see nothing in a dying hour but an awful futurity, a frowning governor, the bare idea of which alarms, terrifies, and drives us to despair.

III. We have seen the nature and the disorders of the passions, now let us examine what remedies we ought to apply. In order to prevent and correct the disorders, which the passions produce in the mind, we must observe the following rules.

1. *We must avoid precipitance, and suspend our judgment.* It does not depend on us to have clear ideas of all things: but we have power to suspend our judgment till we obtain evidence of the nature of the object before us. This is one of the greatest advantages of an intelligent being. A celebrated divine has such a high idea of this that he maintains this hyperbolic thesis, that "always when we

mistake, even in things indifferent in themselves, we sin, because then we abuse our reason, the use of which consists in never determining without evidence."* Though we suppose this divine has exceeded the matter, yet it is certain, that a wise man can never take too much pains to form a habit of not judging a point, not considering it as useful or advantageous till after he has examined it on every side. "Let a man," says a philosopher of great name, "let a man only pass one year in the world, hearing all they say, and believing nothing, entering every moment into himself, and suspending his judgment till truth and evidence appear, and I will esteem him more learned than Aristotle, wiser than Socrates, and a greater man than Plato."†

2. A man must reform even his education. In every family the minds of children are turned to a certain point. Every family has its prejudice, I had almost said its absurdity; and hence it comes to pass that people despise the profession they do not exercise. Hear the merchant, he will tell you that nothing so much deserves the attention of mankind as trade, as acquiring money by every created thing, as knowing the value of this, and the worth of that, as taxing, so to speak, all the works of art, and all the productions of nature. Hear the man of learning, he will tell you, that the perfection of man consists in literature, that there is a difference as essential between a scholar and a man of no literature, as between a rational creature and a brute. Hear the soldier, he will tell you that the man of science is a pedant who ought to be confined to the dirt and darkness of the schools, that the merchant is the most sordid part of society, and that nothing is so noble as the profession of arms. One would think, to hear him talk, that the sword by his side is a patent for pre-eminence, and that mankind have no need of any people, who cannot rout an army, cut through a squadron, or scale a wall. Hear him who has got the disease of quality; he will tell you that other men are nothing but reptiles beneath his feet, that human blood, stained every where else, is pure only in his veins. That nobility serves for every thing, for genius, and education, and fortune, and sometimes even for common sense and good faith. Hear the peasant, he will tell you that a nobleman is an enthusiast for appropriating to himself the virtues of his ancestors, and for pretending to find in old quaint names, and in worm-eaten papers, advantages which belong only to real and actual abilities. As I said before, each family has its prejudice, every profession has its folly, all proceeding from this principle, because we consider objects only in one point of view. To correct ourselves on this article, we must go to the source, examine how our minds were directed in our childhood; in a word, we must review and reform even our education.

3. In fine, we must, as well as we can, choose a friend wise enough to know truth, and generous enough to impart it to others; a man who will show us an object on every side, when we are inclined to consider it only on one. I

* Elie. Saurin. Reflex. sur la conscienc. sect. 2.

† Malebranche.

say as well as you can, for to give this rule is to suppose two things, both sometimes alike impracticable; the one, that such a man can be found, and the other, that he will be heard with deference. When we are so happy as to find this inestimable treasure, we have found a remedy of marvellous efficacy against the disorders which the passions produce in the mind. Let us make the trial. Suppose a faithful friend should address one of you in this manner. Heaven has united in your favour the most happy circumstances. The blood of the greatest heroes animates you, and your name alone is an encomium. Besides this you have an affluent fortune, and Providence has given you abundance to support your dignity, and to discharge every thing that your splendid station requires. You have also a fine and acute genius, and your natural talents are cultivated by an excellent education. Your health seems free from the infirmities of life, and if any man may hope for a long duration here, you are the man who may expect it. With all these noble advantages you may aspire at any thing. But one thing is wanting. You are dazzled with your own splendour, and your feeble eyes are almost put out with the brilliancy of your condition. Your imagination struck with the idea of the prince whom you have the honour to serve, makes you consider yourself as a kind of royal personage. You have formed your family on the plan of the court. You are proud, arrogant, haughty. Your seat resembles a tribunal, and all your expressions are sentences from which it is a crime to appeal. As you will never suffer yourself to be contradicted, you seem to be applauded; but a sacrifice is made to your vanity and not to your merit, and people bow not to your reason but to your tyranny. As they fear you avail yourself of your credit to brave others, each endeavours to oppose you, and to throw down in your absence the altar he had erected in your presence, and on which no incense sincerely offered burns, except that which you yourself put there.

So much for irregular passions in the mind. Let us now lay down a few rules for the government of the senses.

Before we proceed, we cannot help deploring the misery of a man who is impelled by the disorders of his senses, and the heat of his constitution, to criminal passions. Such a man often deserves pity more than indignation. A bad constitution is sometimes compatible with a good heart. We cannot think without trembling of an ungrateful man, a cheat, a traitor, an assassin; for their crimes always suppose liberty of mind and consent of will: but a man driven from the post of duty by the heat of his blood, by an overflow of humours, by the fermentation and flame of his spirits, often sins by constraint, and so to speak, protests against his crime even while he commits it. Hence we often see angry people become full of love and pity, always inclined to forgive, or always ready to ask pardon; while others cold, calm, tranquil, revolve eternal hatreds in their souls, and leave them for an inheritance to their children.

However, though the irregularity of the senses diminishes the atrociousness of the crime,

yet it cannot excuse those who do not make continual efforts to correct it. To acknowledge that we are constitutionally inclined to violate the laws of God, and to live quietly in practices directed by constitutional heat, is to have the interior tainted. It is an evidence that the malady which at first attacked only the exterior of the man, has communicated itself to all the frame, and infected the vitals. We oppose this against the frivolous excuses of some sinners, who, while they abandon themselves like brute beasts to the most guilty passions, lay all the blame on the misfortune of their constitution. They say their will has no part in their excesses—they cannot change their constitution—and God cannot justly blame them for irregularities, which proceeded from the natural union of the soul with the body. Indeed they prove by their talk, that they would be very sorry not to have a constitution to serve for an apology for sin, and to cover the licentiousness of casting off an obligation, which the law of God, according to them, requires of none but such as have received from nature the power of discharging it. If these maxims be admitted, what becomes of the morality of Jesus Christ? What become of the commands concerning mortification and repentance? But people who talk thus, intend less to correct their faults than to palliate them; and this discourse is intended only for such as are willing to apply means to free themselves from the dominion of irregular passions.

Certainly the best advice that can be given to a man whose constitution inclines him to sin, is, that he avoid opportunities, and flee from such objects as affect and disconcert him. It does not depend on you to be unconcerned in sight of an object fatal to your innocence: but it does depend on you to keep out of the way of seeing it. It does not depend on you to be animated at the sight of a gaming table: but it does depend on you to avoid such whimsical places, where sharpening goes for merit. Let us not be presumptuous. Let us make diffidence a principle of virtue. Let us remember St. Peter, he was fired with zeal, he thought every thing possible to his love, his presumption was the cause of his fall, and many by following his example have yielded to temptation, and have found the truth of an apocryphal maxim, "he that loveth danger shall perish therein," *Eccles. iii. 26.*

After all, that virtue which owes its firmness only to the want of an opportunity for vice is very feeble, and it argues very little attainment only to be able to resist our passions in the absence of temptation. I recollect a maxim of St. Paul, "I wrote unto you not to company with fornicators," but I did not mean that you should have no conversation "with fornicators of this world, for then must ye needs go out of the world," *1 Cor. v. 9, 10.* Literally, to avoid all objects dangerous to our passions, "we must go out of the world." Are there no remedies adapted to the necessity we are under of living among mankind? Is there no such thing as correcting, with the assistance of grace, the irregularities of our constitution, and freeing ourselves from its dominion, so that we may be able, if not to seek our

temptations for the sake of the glory of subduing them, at least to resist them, and not suffer them to conquer us, when in spite of all our caution they will attack us? Three remedies are necessary to our success in this painful undertaking; to suspend acts—to flee idleness—to mortify sense.

We must *suspend acts*. Let us form a just idea of temperament or constitution. It consists in one of these two things, or in both together; in a disposition of organs in the nature of animal spirits. For example, a man is angry when the organs which serve that passion, are more accessible than others, and when his animal spirits are easily heated. Hence it necessarily follows, that two things must be done to correct constitutional anger; the one, the disposition of the organs must be changed; and the other, the nature of the spirits must be changed, so that on the one hand, the spirits no longer finding these organs disposed to give them passage, and on the other hand the spirits having lost a facility of taking fire, there will be within the man none of the revolutions of sense, which he could not resist when they were excited.

A suspension of acts changes the disposition of the organs. The more the spirits enter into these organs, the more easy is the access, and the propensity insurmountable; the more acts of anger there are, the more incorrigible will anger become; because the more acts of anger there are, the more accessible will the organs of anger be, so that the animal spirits will naturally fall there by their own motion. The spirits then must be restrained. The bias they have to the ways to which they have been habituated by the practice of sin must be turned, and we must always remember a truth often inculcated, that is, that the more acts of sin we commit the more difficult to correct will habits of sin become; but that when by taking pains with ourselves, we have turned the course of the spirits, they will take different ways, and this is done by suspending the acts.

It is not impossible to change even the nature of our animal spirits. This is done by suspending what contributed to nourish them in a state of disorder. What contributes to the nature of spirits? Diet, exercise, air, the whole course of life we live. It is very difficult in a discourse like this, to give a full catalogue of remedies proper to regulate the animal spirits and the humours of the body. I believe it would be dangerous to many people. Some men are so made, that reflections too accurate on this article would be more likely to increase their vices than to diminish them. However, there is not one person willing to turn his attention to this subject who is not able to become a preacher to himself. Let a man enter into himself, let him survey the history of his excesses, let him examine all circumstances, let him recollect what passed within him on such and such occasions, let him closely consider what moved and agitated him, and he will learn more by such a meditation, than all sermons and casuistical books can teach him.

The second remedy is to *avoid idleness*. What is idleness? It is that situation of soul, in which no effort is made to direct the course

of the spirits this way rather than that. What must happen then? We have supposed, that some organs of a man constitutionally irregular are more accessible than others. When we are idle, and make no efforts to direct the animal spirits, they naturally take the easiest way, and consequently direct their own course to those organs which passion has made easy of access. To avoid this disorder, we must be employed, and always employed. This rule is neither impracticable, nor difficult. We do not mean, that the soul should be always on the stretch in meditation or prayer. An innocent recreation, an easy conversation, agreeable exercise, may have each its place in occupations of this kind. For these reasons we applaud those, who make such maxims parts of the education of youth, as either to teach them an art, or employ them in some bodily exercise. Not that we propose this maxim as it is received in some families, where they think all the merit of a young gentleman consists in hunting, riding, or some exercise of that kind; and that of a young lady, in distinguishing herself in dancing, music, or needle-work. We mean, that these employments should be subordinate to others more serious, and more worthy of an immortal soul, that they should serve only for relaxation, so that by thus taking part in the innocent pleasures of the world, we may be better prepared to avoid the guilty pursuits of it.

The third remedy is *mortification of the senses*, a remedy which St. Paul always used, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection," 1 Cor. ix. 27. Few people have such sound notions. Some casuists have stretched the subject beyond its due bounds so as to establish this principle, that sinful man can enjoy no pleasure without a crime, because sin having been his delight, pain ought to be for ever his lot. This principle may perhaps be probably considered in regard to unregenerate men: but it cannot be admitted in regard to true Christians. Accordingly, we place among those who have unsound notions of mortification, all such as make it consist in vain practices, useless in themselves, and having no relation to the principal design of religion, "bodily exercises profiting little:" they are "commandments of men," in the language of Scripture.

But if some having entertained extravagant notions of mortification, others have restrained the subject too much. Under pretence that the religion of Jesus Christ is spiritual, they have neglected the study and practice of evangelical morality: but we have heard the example of St. Paul, and it is our duty to imitate it. We must "keep under the body," and "bring it into subjection," the senses must be bridled by violence, innocent things must often be refused them, in order to obtain the mastery when they require unlawful things; we must fast, we must avoid ease, because it tends to effeminacy. All this is difficult, I grant: but if the undertaking be hazardous, success will be glorious.* Thirty, forty years, employed in reforming an irregular constitution, ought not to be regretted. What a glory to have subdued the senses! What a glory

* See a beautiful passage of Plato in his eighth book De Legibus.

to have restored the soul to its primitive superiority, to have crucified the "body of sin," to lead it in triumph, and to destroy, that is to *annihilate it*, according to an expression of Scripture, and so to approach those pure spirits, in whom the motions of matter can make no alteration!

The disorders produced by the passions in the imagination, and against which also we ought to furnish you with some remedies, are like those complicated disorders, which require opposite remedies, because they are the effect of opposite causes, so that the means employed to diminish one part not unfrequently increase another. It should seem at first, that the best remedy which can be applied to disorders introduced by the passions into the imagination, is well to consider the nature of the objects of the passions, and thoroughly to know the world: and yet on the other hand, it may truly be said, that the most certain way of succeeding would be to know nothing at all about the world. If you know the pleasures of the world, if you know by experience the pleasure of gratifying a passion, you will fall into the misfortune we wish you to avoid; you will receive bad impressions; you will acquire dangerous recollections, and a seducing memory will be a new occasion of sin: but if you do not know the pleasures of the world, you will be likely to form ideas too flattering of it, you will create images more beautiful than the originals themselves, and by the immense value you set upon the victim, when you are just going to offer it up perhaps you will retreat, and not make the sacrifice. Hence we often see persons whom the superstition or avarice of their families has in childhood confined in a nunnery (suppose it were allowable in other cases, yet in this case done prematurely,) I say, these persons not knowing the world, wish for its pleasures with more ardour than if they had actually experienced them. So they who have never been in company with the great, generally imagine that their society is full of charms, that all is pleasure in their company, and that a circle of rich and fashionable people sitting in an elegant apartment is far more lively and animated than one composed of people of inferior rank, and middling fortune. Hence also it is, that they, who, after having lived a dissipated life, have the rare happiness of renouncing it, do so with more sincerity than others, who never knew the vanity of such a life by experience. So very different are the remedies for disorders of the imagination.

But as in complicated disorders, to which we have compared them, a wise physician chiefly attends to the most dangerous complaint, and distributes his remedies so as to counteract those which are less fatal, we will observe the same method on this occasion. Doubtless the most dangerous way to obtain a contempt for the pleasures of the world, is to get an experimental knowledge of them, in order to detach ourselves more easily from them by the thorough sense we have of their vanity. We hazard a fall by approaching too near, and such very often is the ascendancy of the world over us, that we cannot detach ourselves from it though we are disgusted with it. Let us endeavour then to preserve our imagination pure;

let us abstain from pleasures to preclude the possibility of remembering them; let retirement, and, if it be practicable, perpetual privacy, from the moment we enter into the world to the day we quit it, save us from all bad impressions, so that we may never know the effects which worldly objects would produce in our passions. This method, sure and effectual, is useless and impracticable in regard to such as have received bad impressions on their imagination. People of this character ought to pursue the second method we mentioned, that is to profit by their losses, and derive wisdom from their errors. When you recollect sin, you may remember the folly and pain of it. Let the courtier whose imagination is yet full of the vain glory of a splendid court, remember the intrigues he has known there, the craft, the injustice, the treachery, the dark and dismal plans that are formed and executed there.

I would advise such a man, when his passions solicit him to sin, to call in the aid of some other idea to strike and affect his imagination. Let him make choice of that out of the truths of religion which seems most likely to impress his mind, and let him learn the art of instantly opposing impression against impression, and image against image; for example, let him often fix his attention on death, judgment, and hell; let him often say to himself, I must die soon, I must stand before a severe tribunal, and appear in the presence of an impartial judge; let him go down in thought into that gulf, where the wicked expiate in eternal torments their momentary pleasures; let him think he hears the sound of the piercing cries of the victims whom divine justice sacrifices in hell; let him often weigh in his mind the "chains of darkness" that load miserable creatures in hell; let him often approach the fire that consumes them; let him, so to speak, scent the smoke that rises up for ever and ever; let him often think of eternity, and place himself in that awful moment, in which "the angel will lift up his hand to heaven, and swear by him that liveth for ever and ever, that there shall be time no longer," Rev. x. 5, 6; and let the numerous reflections furnished by all these subjects be kept as corps de reserve, always ready to fly to his aid, when the enemy approaches to attack him.

In fine, to heal the disorders which the passions produce in the heart, two things must be done. First, the vanity of all the creatures must be observed; and this will free us from the desire of possessing and collecting the whole in order to fill up the void which single enjoyments leave. Secondly, we must ascend from creatures to the Creator, in order to get rid of the folly of attributing to the world the perfection and sufficiency of God.

Let us free our hearts from an avidity for new pleasures by comprehending all creatures in our catalogue of vanities. I allow, inconsistency, and love of novelty are in some sense rational. It is natural for a being exposed to trouble to choose to change his condition, and as that in which he is yields certain trouble, to try whether another will not be something easier. It is natural to a man who has found nothing but imperfect pleasure in former enjoyments, to desire new objects. The most noble souls, the greatest geniuses, the largest hearts

have often the most inconstancy and love of novelty, because the extent of their capacity and the space of their wishes make them feel more than other men, the diminutiveness and incompetency of all creatures. But the misfortune is, man cannot change his situation without entering into another almost like that from which he came. Let us persuade ourselves that there is nothing substantial in creatures, that all conditions, besides characters of vanity common to all human things, have some imperfections peculiar to themselves. If you rise out of obscurity, you will not have the troubles of obscurity, but you will have those of conspicuous stations; you will make talk for every body, you will be exposed to envy, you will be responsible to each individual for your conduct. If you quit solitude, you will not have the troubles of solitude, but you will have those of society; you will live under restraint, you will lose your liberty, inestimable liberty, the greatest treasure of mankind, you will have to bear with the faults of all people connected with you. If heaven gives you a family, you will not have the troubles of such as have none, but you will have others necessarily resulting from domestic connexions; you will multiply your miseries by the number of your children, you will fear for their fortune, you will be in pain about their health, and you will tremble for fear of their death. My brethren, I repeat it again, there is nothing substantial in this life. Every condition has difficulties of its own as well as the common inanity of all human things. If, in some sense, nothing ought to surprise us less than the inconstancy of mankind and their love of novelty, in another view, nothing ought to astonish us more, at least there is nothing more weak and senseless. A man who thinks to remedy the vanity of earthly things by running from one object to another, is like him, who, in order to determine whether there be in a great heap of stones any one capable of nourishing him, should resolve to taste them all one after another. Let us shorten our labour. Let us put all creatures into one class. Let us cry, vanity in all. If we determine to pursue new objects, let us choose such as are capable of satisfying us. Let us not seek them here below. They are not to be found in this old world, which God has cursed. They are in the "new heavens, and the new earth," which religion promises. To comprehend all creatures in a catalogue of vanities is an excellent rule to heal the heart of the disorders of passion.

Next we must frequently ascend from creatures to the Creator, and cease to consider them as the supreme good. We intend here a devotion of all times, places, and circumstances; for, my brethren, one great source of depravity in the most eminent saints is to restrain the spirit of religion to certain times, places, and circumstances. There is an art of glorifying God by exercising religion every where. "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God," 1 Cor. x. 13. Do you enjoy the pleasures of sense? Say to yourself, God is the author of this pleasure. The nourishment I derive from my food is not necessarily produced by aliments, they have no natural power to move my nerves, God has communicated it to them; there is no necessary connexion

between the motions of my senses and agreeable sensations in my soul, it is God who has established the union between motion and sensation. The particles emitted by this flower could not necessarily move the nerves of my smell, it is God who has established this law; the motion of my smelling nerves cannot naturally excite a sensation of agreeable odour in my soul, it is God who has established this union; and so of the rest. God is supreme happiness, the source from which all the charms of creatures proceed. He is the light of the sun, the flavour of food, the fragrance of odours, the harmony of sounds, he is whatever is capable of producing real pleasure, because he eminently possesses all felicity, and because all kinds of felicity flow from him as their spring. Because we love pleasure we ought to love God, from whom pleasure proceeds; because we love pleasure we ought to abstain from it, when God prohibits it, because he is infinitely able to indemnify us for all the sacrifices we make to his orders. To ascend from creatures to the Creator is the last remedy we prescribe for the disorders of the passions. Great duties they are: but they are founded on strong motives.

Of these St. Peter mentions one of singular efficacy, that is, that we are "strangers and pilgrims" upon earth. "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." The believers to whom the apostle wrote this epistle, were "strangers and pilgrims" in three senses—as exiles—as Christians—and as mortals.

1. As *exiles*. This epistle is addressed to such strangers as were scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, and Bithynia. But who were these strangers? Commentators are divided. Some think they were Jews who had been carried out of their country in divers revolutions under Tiglath Pileser, Salmaneser, Nebuchadnezzar, and Ptolemy. Others think they were the Jewish Christians who fled on account of the martyrdom of Stephen. Certain it is these Christians were *strangers* and probably exiles for religion. Now people of this character have special motives to govern their passions.

Strangers are generally very little beloved in the place of their exile. Although rational people treat them with hospitality; though nature inspires some with respect for the wretched of every character; though piety animates some with veneration for people firm in their religious sentiments; yet, it must be allowed, the bulk of the people usually see them with other eyes; they envy them the air they breathe, and the earth they walk on; they consider them as so many usurpers of their rights; and they think, that as much as exiles partake of the benefits of government, and the liberty of trade, so much they retrench from the portion of the natives.

Besides, the people commonly judge of merit by fortune, and as fortune and banishment seldom go together, popular prejudice seldom runs high in favour of exiles. Jealousy views them with a suspicious eye, malice imputes crimes to them, injustice accuses them for public calamities we will not enlarge. Let an inviolable fidelity to the state, an unsuspected love to government, an unreserved conformity

to religion, silence accusation, and compel, so to speak, an esteem that is not natural and free. Moreover, religious exiles have given up a great deal for conscience, and they must choose either to lose the reward of their former labours, or to persevere. A man who has only taken a few easy steps in religion, if he let loose his passions, may be supposed rational in this, his life is all of a piece. He considers present interest as the supreme good, and he employs himself wholly in advancing his present interest, he lays down a principle, he infers a consequence, and he makes sin produce all possible advantage. An abominable principle certainly, but a uniform train of principle and consequence; a fatal advantage in a future state, but a real advantage in the present: but such a *stranger* as we have described, a man banished his country for religion, if he continues to gratify fleshly passions, is a contradictory creature, a sort of idiot, who is at one and the same time a martyr to vice and a martyr to virtue. He has the fatal secret of rendering both time and eternity wretched, and arming against himself heaven and earth, God and Satan, paradise and hell. On the one hand, for the sake of religion he quits every thing dear, and renounces the pleasure of his native soil, the society of his friends, family connexions, and every prospect of preferment and fortune; thus he is a martyr for virtue, by this he renders the present life inconvenient, and arms against himself the world, Satan, and hell. On the other hand, he stabs the practical part of religion, violates all the sacred laws of austerity, retirement, humility, patience, and love, all which religion most earnestly recommends; by so doing he becomes a martyr for sin, renders futurity miserable, and arms against himself God, heaven, and eternity. The same God who forbade superstition and idolatry, enjoined all the virtues we have enumerated, and prohibited every opposite vice. If men be determined to be damned, better go the broad than the narrow way. Who but a madman would attempt to go to hell by encountering the difficulties that lie in the way to heaven!

2. The believers to whom Peter wrote were strangers as *Christians*, and therefore strangers because believers. What is the fundamental maxim of the Christian religion? Jesus Christ told Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world," John xviii. 36. This is the maxim of a Christian, the first great leading principle, "his kingdom is not of this world;" his happiness and misery, his elevation and depression, depend on nothing in this world.

The first principle is the ground of the apostle's exhortation. The passions destroy this maxim by supposing the world capable of making us happy or miserable. Revenge supposes our honour to depend on the world, on the opinion of those idiots who have determined that a man of honour ought to revenge an affront. Ambition supposes our elevation to depend on the world, that is, on the dignities which ambitious men idolize. Avarice supposes our riches depend on this world, on gold, silver, and estates.

These are not the ideas of a Christian. His honour is not of this world, it depends on the ideas of God, who is a just dispenser of glory. His elevation is not of this world, it depends on

thrones and crowns which God prepares. His riches are not of this world, they depend on treasures in heaven, where "thieves do not break through and steal," Matt. vi. 20. It is allowable for a man educated in these great principles, but whose infirmity prevents his always thinking on them; it is indeed allowable for a man, who cannot always bend his mind to reflection, meditation, and elevation above the world; it is indeed allowable for such a man sometimes to unbend his mind, to amuse himself with cultivating a tulip, or embellishing his head with a crown: but that this tulip, that this crown, should seriously occupy such a man; that they should take up the principal attention of a Christian, who has such refined ideas and such glorious hopes, this, this is entirely incompatible.

3. In fine, we are strangers and pilgrims by necessity of nature as mortal men. If this life were eternal, it would be a question whether it were more advantageous for man to gratify his passions than to subdue them; whether the tranquillity, the equanimity, the calm of a man perfectly free, and entirely master of himself, would not be preferable to the troubles, conflicts, and turbulence, of a man in bondage to his passions. Passing this question, we will grant, that were this life eternal, prudence and self-love, well understood, would require some indulgence of passion. In this case there would be an immense distance between the rich and the poor, and riches should be acquired; there would be an immense distance between the high and the low, and elevation should be sought; there would be an immense distance between him who mortified his senses, and him who gratified them, and sensual pleasures would be requisite.

But death, death renders all these things alike; at least, it makes so little difference between the one and the other, that it is hardly discernible. The most sensible motive therefore to abate the passions, is death. The tomb is the best course of morality. Study avarice in the coffin of a miser; this is the man who accumulated heap upon heap, riches upon riches, see a few boards enclose him, and a few square inches of earth contain him. Study ambition in the grave of that enterprising man; see his noble designs, his extensive projects, his boundless expedients are all shattered and sunk in this fatal gulf of human projects. Approach the tomb of the proud man, and there investigate pride; see the mouth that pronounced lofty expressions, condemned to eternal silence, the piercing eyes that convulsed the world with fear, covered with a midnight bloom, the formidable arm, that distributed the destinies of mankind, without motion and life. Go to the tomb of the nobleman, and there study quality; behold his magnificent titles, his royal ancestors, his flattering inscriptions, his learned genealogies, are all gone, or going to be lost with himself in the same dust. Study voluptuousness at the grave of the voluptuous; see, his senses are destroyed, his organs broken to pieces, his bones scattered at the grave's mouth, and the whole temple of sensual pleasure subverted from its foundations.

Here we finish this discourse. There is a

great difference between this and other subjects of discussion. When we treat of a point of doctrine, it is sufficient that you hear it, and remember the consequences drawn from it. When we explain a difficult text, it is enough that you understand it and recollect it. When we press home a particular duty of morality, it is sufficient that you apply it to the particular circumstance to which it belongs.

But what regards the passions is of universal and perpetual use. We always carry the principles of these passions within us, and we should always have assistance at hand to subdue them. Always surrounded with objects of our passions, we should always be guarded against them. We should remember these things, when we see the benefits of fortune, to free ourselves from an immoderate attachment to them; before human grandeur to despise it; before sensual objects to subdue them; before our enemy, to forgive him; before friends, children, and families, to hold ourselves disengaged from them. We should always examine in what part of ourselves the passions hold their throne, whether in the mind, the senses, or the imagination, or the heart. We should always examine whether they have depraved the heart, defiled the imagination, perverted the senses, or blinded the mind. We should ever remember, that we are strangers upon earth, that to this our condition calls us, our religion invites us, and our nature compels us.

But alas! It is this, it is this general influence, which these exhortations ought to have over our lives, that makes us fear we have addressed them to you in vain. When we treat of a point of doctrine, we may persuade ourselves it has been understood. When we explain a difficult text, we flatter ourselves we have thrown some light upon it. When we urge a moral duty, we hope the next occasion will bring it to your memory: and yet how often have we deceived ourselves on these articles! How often have our hopes been vain! How often have you sent us empty away, even though we demanded so little! What will be done to-day? Who that knows a little of mankind, can flatter himself that a discourse intended, in regard to a great number, to change all, to reform all, to renew all, will be directed to its true design!

But, O God, there yet remains one resource, it is thy grace, it is thine aid, grace that we have a thousand times turned into lasciviousness, and which we have a thousand times rejected; yet after all assisting grace, which we most humbly venture to implore. When we approach the enemy, we earnestly beseech thee, "teach our hands to war, and our fingers to fight!" When we did attack a town, we fervently besought thee to render it accessible to us! Our prayers entered heaven, our enemies fled before us, thou didst bring us into the strong city, and didst lead us into Edom, Ps. lx. 9. The walls of many a Jericho fell at the sound of our trumpets, at the sight of thine ark, and the approach of thy priest: but the old man is an enemy far more formidable than the best disciplined armies, and it is harder to conquer the passions than to beat down the walls of a city! O help us to subdue this old man, as thou hast assisted us to overcome

other enemies! Enable us to triumph over our passions as thou hast enabled us to succeed in levelling the walls of a city! Stretch out thy holy arm in our favour, in this church, as in the field of battle! So be the protector both of the state and the church, crown our efforts with such success, that we may offer the most noble songs of praise to thy glory. Amen.

SERMON LXIII.*

TRANSIENT DEVOTIONS.

HOSEA vi. 4.

O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? For your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away.

THE church has seldom seen happier days than those described in the nineteenth chapter of Exodus. God had never diffused his benedictions on a people in a richer abundance. Never had a people gratitude more lively, piety more fervent. The Red Sea had been passed, Pharaoh and his insolent court were buried in the waves, access to the land of promise was opened, Moses had been admitted on the holy mountain to derive felicity from God the source, and sent to distribute it amongst his countrymen; to these choice favours promises of new and greater blessings were yet added, and God said, "ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me, above all people, although the earth be mine," ver. 4, 5. The people were deeply affected with this collection of miracles. Each individual entered into the same views, and seemed animated with the same passion, all hearts were united, and one voice expressed the sense of all the tribes of Israel, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do," ver. 8. But this devotion had one great defect, it lasted only forty days. In forty days the deliverance out of Egypt, the catastrophe of Pharaoh, the passage through the sea, the articles of the covenant; in forty days vows, promises, oaths, all were effaced from the heart and forgotten. Moses was absent, the lightning did not glitter, the thunder claps did not roar, and the Jews "made a calf in Horeb, worshipped that molten image, and changed their glorious God into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass," Ps. cxi. 19, 20. It was this that drew upon Moses this cutting reproof from God, *Go*, said he to Moses, to that Moses always fervent for the salvation of his people, always ready to plead for them, "go, get thee down, for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. They have quickly turned aside out of the way which I commanded them," Exod. xxxii. 7, 8. They

* Preached the first Lord's day of the year 1710. The Lord's Supper day.

have quickly turned aside, this is the great defect of their devotion, this is that which renders all devotion incomplete.

Do you know this portrait, my brethren? Has this history nothing in it like yours? Are any days more solemn than such as we observe in our present circumstances? Did God ever draw near to us with more favours than he has this day? Did we ever approach him with more fervour? On the one hand, the beginning of another year recalls to mind the serious and alarming discourses, which the ministers of Jesus Christ addressed to us on the last anniversary, the many strokes given, to whom? To the enemies of God? Alas! To the state and the church! Many cut off in the field of battle, many others carried away in the ordinary and inevitable course of things, many perils, in one word, with which we were threatened, but which thy mercy, O God, has freed us from! On the other hand this sacred table, these august symbols, these earnest of our eternal felicity, all these objects, do they not render this day one of the most singular in our lives?

If heaven has thus heard the earth (we are happy to acknowledge it, my brethren, and we eagerly embrace this opportunity of publishing your praise) the earth has heard the heaven. To judge by appearance, you have answered our wishes, and exceeded our hopes. You were exhorted to prepare for the Lord's supper, you did prepare for it. You were called to public worship, you came. You were exhorted to attend to the word of God, you did attend to it. You were required to form resolutions of a holy life, you made these resolutions. It seemed, while we saw you come with united ardour this morning to the table of Jesus Christ, it seemed as if we heard you say, with the Israelites of old, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do."

But we declare, my brethren, a cloud comes over the bright scene of this solemnity. I fear, shall I say the forty? alas, I fear the four succeeding days! These doors will be shut, this table will be removed, the voice of the servants of God will cease to sound in your ears, and I fear the Lord will say of you, "they have quickly turned aside out of the way which I commanded them."

Let us not content ourselves with foreseeing this evil, let us endeavour to prevent it. This is the design of the present discourse, in which we will treat of transient devotions. To you, in the name of God, we address the words, the tender words, which will occasion more reflections than they may seem at first to do, but which no reflections can exhaust, "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? For your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away."

O Almighty God! We humbly beseech thee, enable us in the offerings we make to thee to resemble thee in the favours which thou bestowest upon us! Thy gifts to us are *without repentance*, thy covenant with us contains this clause, "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. I have sworn that I will not be wroth with thee!" O that our of-

ferings to thee may be *without repentance!* O that we may be able to reply, "the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my fidelity shall never depart from thee, neither shall the dedication which I have made of myself to thee, ever be removed! I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments." Amen.

"O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee?" Ephraim, Judah, are terms of the text that have very little need of explication. You know that the people of God were united in one state till the time of Jeroboam, when he rent apart from Rehoboam the son of Solomon, thus two kingdoms were constituted, that of Judah and that of Israel. Jerusalem was the capital city of Judah, and of Israel Samaria was the metropolis, and it is sometimes called Ephraim in Scripture. By *Judah* and *Ephraim* the prophet then means both these kingdoms. This wants no proof, and if there be any thing worth remarking on this occasion, it is that most interpreters, who are often the echoes of one another, describe the ministry of Hosea as directed only to the kingdom of Israel, whereas it is clear by the text, and by several other passages, that it was addressed both to Israel and Judah.

But of all unlucky conjectures, I question whether there be one more so than that of some divines, who think our text prophetic. In their opinion the *goodness* mentioned in the text is the mercy of God displayed in the gospel. The *dew* signifies Jesus Christ. The morning, "thy goodness is like the morning dew," intends the covenant of grace. As every one proposes his opinion under some appearance of evidence, it is said in favour of this, that the expression, thy *goodness*, does not signify the goodness of the people, but that which is manifested to the people, and in proof of this the idiom of the Hebrew tongue is alleged, with divers passages that justify this tour of expression, as this, "my people are bent to their backsliding," that is to backsliding from me. The *dew*, say they, signifies the Messiah, for he is promised under that emblem in many passages of Scripture. They add farther, the *morning* signifies the new dispensation of the gospel, which is often announced under this idea by the prophets, and all this text, "thy goodness is as the early dew which goeth away," opens a wonderful contrast between the law and the gospel. The law was like a storm of hail destroying the fruits of the earth, but the gospel is a dew that makes every thing fruitful. The law was a dark night, but the gospel was a fine day; "thy goodness is like the morning dew which goeth away," that is to say, which cometh. Here are many good truths out of place. *Thy goodness* may signify, for any thing we know, goodness exercised towards thee; the Messiah is represented as a *dew*; the gospel economy is promised under the emblem of the *morning*; all this is true, but all this is not the sense of the text. The word *goodness*, which is the first mistake of the exposition just now given, may be understood of piety in general. It has that meaning in many passages of Scripture. The substantive derived from it is usually put for pious persons, and

according to a celebrated critic, it is from the word *hasidim*, the pious, that the word *Essenes* is derived, a name given to the whole sect among the Jews, because they professed a more eminent piety than others. A "goodness like the morning dew" is a seeming piety, "which goeth away," that is of a short duration, and all these words, "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? For your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away," are a reproof from God to his people for the unsteadiness of their devotions. In this light we will consider the text, and show you first the nature—and secondly the unprofitableness of transient devotions.

I. Let us first inquire the *nature* of the piety in question. What is this *goodness* or piety, that "is as a morning cloud, and goeth away as the early dew?" We do not understand by this piety either those deceitful appearances of hypocrites, who conceal their profane and irreligious hearts under the cover of ardour and religion, or the disposition of those Christians, who fall through their own frailty from high degrees of pious zeal, and experience emotions of sin after they have felt exercises of grace. The devotion we mean to describe goes farther than the first: but it does not go so far as the last.

The transient devotion, of which we speak, is not hypocrisy. Hypocrisy cannot suspend the strokes of divine justice one single moment, and it is more likely to inflame than to extinguish the righteous indignation of God. It is not to hypocrites that God addresses this tender language, "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee?" Their sentence is declared, their punishment is ready. "Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophecy of you, saying, this people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Wo unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. The portion of hypocrites shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth," Matt. xv. 7; xxiii. 31, and xxiv. 51.

Nor is the piety we mean to describe that of the weak and revolting believer. How imperfect soever this piety may be, yet it is real. It is certainly a very mortifying consideration to a believer that he should be at any time hemmed in, confined, and clogged, in his devotional exercises. In some golden days of his life, forgetting the world, and wholly employed about heavenly things, how happy was he, how delicious his enjoyments, when he surmounted sense and sin, ascended to God like Moses formerly on the holy mount, and there conversed with his heavenly Father concerning religion, salvation, and eternity! O how richly did he then think himself indemnified for the loss of time in worldly pursuits by pouring his complaints into the bosom of God, by opening all his heart, by saying to him with inspired men, "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee! it is good for me to draw near to God! My soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips!" I say, it is a very mortifying thing to him, after such elevations in the enjoyment of such magnificent objects, to be obliged through

the frailty of his nature to go down again into the world, and to employ himself about what? A suit of clothes, a menial servant, a nothing! Above all, it is very mortifying to him, after he has tasted pleasure so pure, to feel himself disposed to sin! But after all, this piety, though very imperfect, is genuine and true. It should humble us, but it should not destroy us, and we should be animated with a spirit too rigid, were we to confound this piety with that, which "is as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that goeth away."

The piety we speak of lies between these two dispositions. As I said before, it does not go so far in religion as the second, but it does go beyond the first. It is sincere, in that it is superior to hypocrisy; but it is unfruitful, and in that respect it is inferior to the piety of the weak and revolting Christian. It is sufficient to discover sin, but not to correct it; sufficient to produce sincere resolutions, but not to keep them: it softens the heart, but it does not renew it; it excites grief, but it does not eradicate evil dispositions. It is a piety of times, opportunities, and circumstances, diversified a thousand ways, the effect of innumerable causes, and, to be more particular, it usually owes its origin to public calamities, or to solemn festivals, or to the approach of death: but it expires as soon as the causes are removed.

1. By piety, "like the early dew that goeth away," we mean that which is usually excited by *public calamities*. When a state prospers, when its commerce flourishes, when its armies are victorious, it acquires weight and consequence in the world. Prosperity is usually productive of crimes. Conscience falls asleep during a tumult of passions, as depravity continues security increases, the patience of God becomes weary, and he punishes either by taking away prosperity, or by threatening to take it away. The terrible messengers of divine justice open their commission. The *winds* which he makes *his angels*, begin to utter their voices: *flames of fire*, constituted *his ministers*, display their frightful light. Pestilence, war, famine, executioners of the decrees of heaven, prepare to discharge their dreadful office. One messenger called *death*, and another called *hell*, receive their bloody commission, "to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, the fourth part of the earth," Rev. vi. 8. Each individual sees his own doom in the public decree. "Capernaum exalted to heaven is going to be thrust down to hell," Luke x. 15. Jonah walks about Nineveh, and makes the walks echo with this alarming proclamation, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown. Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown," chap. iii. 4. Or, to lay aside borrowed names, and to make our portrait like the original, your ministers free from their natural timidity or indolence, despising those petty tyrants, or shall I rather say those diminutive insects, who amidst a free people would have us the only slaves; who while all kinds of vices have free course would have the *word of God bound*, and would reduce the exercise of the reform ministry to a state more mean and pusillanimous than that of court bishops, or the chaplains of kings; I say, your ministers have made you hear their voice, they have

gone back to your origin, and laid before you the cruel edicts, the sanguinary proscriptions, the barbarous executions, the heaps of mangled carcases, which were, if I may so speak, the first foundations of this republic. From what you were then they have proceeded to what you are now; they have represented to you the end proposed by the Supreme Being in distinguishing you by so many merciful advantages; they have told you it was to engage you to inform idolatrous nations of the truth, to nourish and favour it in cruel and persecuting countries, to support it at home, and so to cast out profaneness, infidelity, and atheism. They have repeatedly urged you to come to a settlement of accounts on these subjects, and they have delivered in against you such an interrogatory as this; are the "hands which hang down, and the feeble knees lifted up?" Does superstition cover the truth in any places of your government? Is the affliction of Joseph neglected? Does irreligion insolently lift its head among you, and is it protected by such as are bound to suppress it? They have shown you the Deity ready to punish an obstinate perseverance in sin, and, if you will forgive the expression, they have preached, illuminated by lightning, and their exhortations have been enforced by thunder. Then every one was struck, all hearts were united, every one ran to the "breach, to turn away the wrath of God, lest he should destroy us all," Ps. cvi. 23. The magistrate came down from his tribunal, the merchant quitted his commerce, the mechanic laid aside his work, yea the very libertine suspended his pleasures; vows, prayers, solemn protestations, tears, relents, promises, sincere promises, nothing was wanting to your devotions. Then the angels rejoiced, a compassionate God smiled, the corn revived, war was hushed, and was dying away; but along with the first tide of prosperity came rolling back the former depravity, the same indifference to truth, the same negligence of religion, the same infidelity, the same profanity. This is the first kind of that piety, which is "as the early dew that goeth away." Let us study ourselves in the image of the Jews described in the context. "Come," say they, when the prophet had predicted the Babylonish captivity to Judah, and the carrying away into Assyria to the ten tribes, "come, and let us return unto the Lord, for he hath torn, and he will heal us, he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two or three days he will revive us, and we shall live in his sight," ver. 12. "After they had rest, they did evil again before thee" (these are the words of Nehemiah,) "therefore thou didst leave them in the hand of their enemies. When they returned, and cried unto thee, thou heardest them from heaven, and many times didst thou deliver them, according to thy mercies. O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as the morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away," chap. ix. 28.

2. In a second class of transient devotions we place that which *religious solemnities* produce. Providence always watching for our salvation, has established in the church not only an ordinary ministry to cultivate our piety, but some extraordinary periods proper to in-

vigorate and bring it to maturity, thus proportioning itself to our frailty. How considerable soever the truths of religion are, it is certain they lose their importance by our hearing them always proposed in the same circumstances, and the same points of light. There are some days which put on I know not what of the extraordinary, and put in motion, so to speak, the first great powers of religion. To this our festivals are directed, and this is one of the principal uses of the Lord's Supper. Were this ordinance not appointed with this view as some affirm, had not God annexed some peculiar benediction to it, yet it would be a weak pretence to keep from the Lord's table, and the use generally granted would always be a sufficient reason to induce those to frequent it who have their salvation at heart. But however this may be, it is certain that such days occasion the sort of devotion we are describing; and usually produce a piety "like the morning cloud, and the early dew that goeth away."

We do not intend here to describe a kind of Christians too odious to be put even into this vicious class. For, my brethren, we have a very singular sort of people among us, who, though they live in the practice of all worldly licentiousness, will frequent the Lord's table, in spite of all the pains we take to show their unworthiness, and to keep them away. They will pass through a kind of preparation, and for this purpose they retrench a little portion of time from their course of licentiousness, set out, however, with so much accurate calculation that it is easy to see they consider devotion more in the light of a disagreeable task than in that of a holy enjoyment. They suspend their habits of sin the whole day before, and all the live long day after the communion. In this interval they receive the Lord's Supper, all the while determining to return to their old course of life. What devotion! in which the soul burns with love to worldly pleasure, while it affects to play off the treacherous part of love to religion and God! A devotion that disputes with Jesus Christ a right to three days, gives them up with regret and constraint, and keeps all along murmuring at the genius of a religion, which puts the poor insulted soul on the rack, and forces it to live three whole days without gaming and debauchery! A devotion deep in the plot of Judas to betray the Saviour at his own table! These people need not be characterized. We never administer the Lord's Supper without protesting against them; we never say any thing to them but "Wo, wo be to you;" and though, through a discipline of too much lenity, they escape excommunication, yet never can they escape the anathemas, which God in his word denounces against unworthy communicants.

We mean here people of another character. It is he among Christians who does not live in the practice of all sins, but who does reserve some, and some of those which, says the gospel, they who commit "shall not inherit the kingdom of God," 1 Cor. vi. 10. This man does not with a brutal madness commit such crimes as harden him beyond reflection and remorse, but he has a sincere desire to a certain degree to correct himself. He takes time enough to

prepare himself for the Lord's Supper, and then he examines his conscience, meditates on the great truths of religion, the justice of its laws, the holiness of every part, and the rich present which God bestowed on the church in the person of his own Son. He is affected with these objects, he applies these truths to himself, he promises God to reform: but, in a few days after the communion, he not only falls into one or two vicious actions, but he gives himself up to a vicious habit, and persists in it till the next communion, when he goes over again the same excesses of devotion, which end again in the same vices, and so his whole life is a continual round of sin and repentance, repentance and sin. This is a second sort of people whose devotions are transient.

3. But, of all devotions of this kind, that which needs describing the most, because it comes nearest to true piety, and is most likely to be confounded with it, is that which is excited by the "fear of death," and which vanishes as soon as the fear subsides.

The most emphatical, the most urgent, and the most pathetic of all preachers is death. What can be said in this pulpit which death does not say with tenfold force? What truth can we explain, which death does not explain with more evidence? Do we treat of the vanity of the world? So does death; but with much more power. The impenetrable veils which it throws over all terrestrial objects, the midnight darkness in which it involves them, the irrevocable orders it gives us to depart, the insurmountable power it employs to tear us away, represent the vanity of the world better than the most pathetic sermons. Do we speak of the horrors of sin? Death treats of this subject more fully and forcibly than we; the pains it brings, the marks it makes upon us while we are dying, the grave, to which it turns our eyes as our habitation after death, represent the horror of sin more than the most affecting discourses. Do we speak of the value of divine mercy? Death excels in setting this forth too; hell opening under us, executioners of divine vengeance ranging themselves round our bed, the sharp instruments held over us, represent the mercy of God more fully than the most touching discourses. No sermons like these! When then a sickness supposed to be mortal attacks a man, who has knowledge and sentiment enough to render him accessible to motives and reflections, but who has not either respect enough for holiness, or love enough for God thoroughly to attach himself to virtue, then rises this "morning cloud, this early dew that goeth away."

I appeal to many of you. Recall, each of you, that memorable day of your life, in which sudden fear, dangerous symptoms, exquisite pain, a pale physician, and, more than all that, a universal faintness and imbecility of your faculties seemed to condemn you to a hasty death. Remember the prudence you have had, at least appeared to have, to make salvation your only care, banishing all company, forbidding your own children to approach, and conversing with your pastor alone. Remember the docility with which, renouncing all reluctance to speak of your own faults, and all desire to hear of those of other people, you re-

spectfully attended to every thing we took the liberty to say, we entered on the mortifying subject, you submitted to the most humbling and circumstantial detail, you yourself filled up the list with articles unknown to us. Recollect the sighs you uttered, the tears you shed, the reproofs you gave yourself, yea, the odious names by which you described yourself. Remember the vows, the resolutions, the promises you made. What are become of all these fine projects of conversion and repentance, which should have had an influence over all your life? The degree of your piety was regulated by the degree of your malady. Devotion rose and fell with your pulse. Your zeal kept time with your fever, and as the one decreased the other died away, and the recovery of your health was the resurrection of sin. This man, this praying man, this holy soul, then full of pious ejaculations and meditations, is now brimful of the world. You are the original of the portrait in the text, and your piety is "as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that goeth away."

II. We have seen the nature, now let us attend to the *insufficiency* of this kind of devotion. Let us endeavour in this second part of our discourse to feel the energy of this reproof, "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away."

1. On a day like this, in which we have partaken of what is most tender in religion, and in which we ought to yield to the soft feelings which religion is so fit to excite, let us advert to a singular kind of argument proposed in the text against transient devotions, that is, an argument of *sentiment and love*.

Certainly all the images which it pleases God to use in Scripture to make himself known to us, those taken from our infirmities, our passions, our hatred, or our love, all are too imperfect to represent a God, whose elevation above man renders it impossible to describe him by any thing human. However, all these images have a bottom of truth, a real meaning agreeable to the nature of God, and proportioned to his eminent and infinite excellence.

God represents himself here under the image of a prince who had formed an intimate connexion with one of his subjects. The subject seems deeply sensible of the honour done him. The prince signifies his esteem by a profusion of favours. The subject abuses them. The prince reprehends him. The subject is insensible and hard. To reproofs threatenings are added, and threatenings are succeeded by a suspension of favours. The subject seems moved, affected, changed. The prince receives the penitent with open arms, and crowns his reformation with a double effusion of bountiful donations. The ungrateful subject abuses them again. The prince reproves him again, threatens him again, and again suspends his liberality. To avert the same evil the selfish ingrate makes use of the former method, avails himself of the influence which the esteem of the prince gives him, and again he obtains forgiveness. The prince loves this violence: but the perfidious subject knowing his goodness returns to his ungrateful behaviour as often as his bountiful lord

yields to his own inclination to mercy and esteem, and thus becomes equally barbarous, whether he seems affected with the benevolence of his prince, or whether he seems to despise it. For, my brethren, it is much less difficult to separate one's self wholly from a faithless friend, than to conduct one's self properly to one who is faithless only by fits. These equivocal reformations, these appearances of esteem, are much more cruel than total ingratitude, and open avowed hatred. In an entire rupture the mind is presently at a point: but in such imperfect connexions as these a thousand opposite thoughts produce a violent conflict in the mind. Shall I countenance ingratitude, shall I discourage repentance? I repeat it again, though this image is infinitely beneath the majesty of God, yet it is that which he has thought proper to employ. "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away." O Ephraim, O Judah, why do you rend my heart asunder by turns with your virtue and your vice? Why not allow me either to give myself entirely to you, or to detach myself entirely from you? Why do you not suffer me to give a free choice either to my esteem or to my displeasure? Why do you not allow me to glorify myself by your repentance, or by your ruin? Your devotions hold my hand: your crimes inflame my anger. Shall I destroy a people appealing to my clemency? Shall I protect a people trampling upon my laws? "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away."

2. Consider secondly, the injustice of these devotions. Though they are vain, yet people expect God to reward them. Hear these words, "they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness;" but, "say they, wherefore have we fasted, and thou seest not? Wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge," Isa. lviii.

2, 3. Though these complaints were unjust, yet, what is very remarkable, God sometimes paid attention to them; for though he sees the bottom of men's hearts, and distinguishes real from apparent piety, yet he has so much love for repentance, that he sometimes rewards the bare appearance of it. See how he conducts himself in regard to Ahab. Ahab was a wicked king. God denounced judgments against him, and was about to inflict them. Ahab tore his garments, covered himself with sackcloth and ashes, and lay in the dust. What said God to Elijah? "Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? Because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil," 1 Kings xxi. 29. Not bring the evil! Why, has Ahab prohibited idolatry? Has he restored Naboth's vineyard? Has he renounced his treaties with the enemies of God? No. Yet "Ahab humbleth himself, and because he humbleth himself I will not bring the evil." So true it is, that God sometimes rewards a mere shadow of repentance.

The Jews knew this condescension of God, and they insulted it in the most odious manner. "Come, let us return unto the Lord, for he hath torn, and he will heal us, he hath smitten and

he will bind us up. After two days will he revive us, in the third day he will raise us up;" and when he has "raised us up," and re-established us, we will follow our former course of life. When the tempest is over, we will again blaspheme the Creator of storms. Is not this the very summit of injustice!

3. There is, let us observe, a manifest contradiction between these two periods of life, between that of our devotion and that of our sin. What destroys one, necessarily subverts both; and a reasonable man acting consistently ought to choose, either to have no periods of devotion, or to perpetuate them. Yes, we should choose either a real inward piety to influence our practice, or none of the superficial sentiments that produce a profession of it. We should choose either to act openly like an unmoveable philosopher, or shall I rather say a brute beast, when we seem to be upon the verge of the grave, or that the piety excited then should continue as long as we live in case of recovery. There is a palpable contradiction in having both these dispositions. When the state is in danger, and a solemn fast is kept, what is supposed? That there is a just God governing the universe, dispensing good and evil, sooner or later destroying rebellious nations, and exercising a justice more or less severe according to the duration of his patience. If we believe all this, we should endeavour to regulate the state by these principles, and if we do not believe it, we should not humble ourselves, and fast, and "bow down our heads like a bulrush." What is supposed by the prayers, and tears, and protestations we bring to the table of Jesus Christ? That God loves us, that he has so loved us as to give us his Son, that a Christian ought to return Jesus Christ love for love, and life for life. If we believe this, we ought to be always faithful to God, and if we do not believe it, we ought not to communicate, to pray, to weep, to promise. What is supposed by all the appearance of devotion we have in sickness? That the soul is immortal, that there is a future state, that an eternity of happiness or misery awaits us. If we believe this, we ought to regulate our actions by these truths, and if we do not believe it, if the soul be not immortal, if heaven and hell be phantoms, we ought not to put on an appearance of religion in prospect of death. But such is our littleness, when we lose sight of a thing, we think it ceases to be. When we find the art of forgetting truth, it should seem truth is no more. When we cease thinking of our judge, it seems to us there is no judge. We resemble children who shut their eyes to hide themselves from the sight of their nurses.

4. Every part of devotion supposes some action of life, so that if there be no such action the whole value of devotion ceases. We hear a sermon, in this sermon we are taught some truth of religion which has a close and inseparable connexion with our moral conduct. We are told that a judge must be upright, a friend disinterested, a depository faithful. We do well to be attentive to this sermon: but after we have heard it, we violate all the rules, if we be corrupt judges, ungrateful friends, faithless depositaries; and if because we have heard our duty we think ourselves discharged from the necessity of doing it, do we not pervert the

order and destination of this discourse? We receive the Lord's Supper, there we go to confirm our faith, to detach ourselves from the world, to prepare ourselves for a future state. We do well to receive the Lord's Supper: but if after we have received it we become lax in believing, fastened to the world, and without thought of a future state, and if we neglect these duties, under pretence that we took steps relative to these duties, do we not pervert the Lord's Supper? This reasoning is so clear, that it seems needless to pretend to elucidate it. Yet many people reason in this manner, I have been to a place of worship, I have heard a sermon, I have received the communion, and now I may give a loose to my passions: but it is because you have been to a place of worship, it is because you have heard a sermon, and received the communion, it is on account of this, that you ought wholly to employ yourself about that work, to promote which all these devotions were appointed.

5. Transient devotions are *inconsistent with the general design of religion*. This design is to reform man, to renew him, to transform him into the likeness of glorified saints, to render him like God. But how does a rapid torrent of devotion attended with no moral rectitude contribute to this end? If while I fast I eradicate the world from my heart, if while I acknowledge the enormity of my past life I endeavour to reform it, if while I give mortal blows to the old man I form the new man in my heart, and if I thus build the edifice of grace, where once the temple of depravity stood, then I direct a fast day towards the great end of religion. But what says God of another kind of fasting? "Is it such a fast that I have chosen, that a man should afflict his soul for a day? Is it to bow down the head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord? Isa. lviii. 5. And what says God of exterior devotions in general? "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord. I am full of burnt-offerings and incense. Your new moons I cannot away with. Who hath required this at your hand? chap. i. 11. The answer seems ready. Didst not thou, Lord, establish this worship, order an elegant temple to be built, and command the Jews to go up to Jerusalem? Sabbaths, solemn assemblies, new moons, do they not owe their origin to thee? No: when they are destitute of love and obedience, "I hate new moons and Sabbaths, and solemn assemblies I cannot away with." In like manner, of all devotions of every kind, when they are not attended with uniform moral obedience, we say, and in particular of the Lord's Supper we say, "I am weary" of your preparations, "I am full" of momentary devotions, and your pretended holy resolutions "I cannot away with." "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away."

6. Transient devotions must *render promises of grace to you doubtful*, even supposing you should ever, after a thousand revolutions of transient piety, be in possession of true and real religion. What think you of this question? A

man who has spent his life in sin is taken extremely ill. His illness, a review of his life, and a fear of death, rouse his conscience. He sends for a minister, he opens to him all his heart, he confesses his sins, he weeps, he groans, he protests ten thousand times that he hates his past life, and that he is determined to reform. He persuades himself, and all about him, that he is really converted. The minister promises him peace, and displays before him all the comfortable declarations, which it has pleased God to bestow in the gospel. The sick man recovers his health, returns to the world, forgets all his designs of conversion and repentance, and pursues his former course of intrigue, and passion, and arrogance. He falls sick a second time, sends a second time for his minister, and again he opens his heart, accuses himself, sheds floods of tears, and once more vows amendment and conversion. The minister on the same principle as before encourages him to hope again. He recovers again, and perjures himself again, as he did the first time. A third time his illness returns, and he takes the same steps, and would embrace the same promises, if they could be addressed to him. Now we ask, how a minister ought to conduct himself to such a man? What think you of this question? You know our commission, it is to preach peace to such as return to God with sincerity and good faith. The marks of sincerity and good faith are good works, and where circumstances render good works impossible, protestations and promises are to be admitted as evidences of sincerity and good faith. These evidences have been deceitful in the man we speak of. His transition from promising to violating was as quick as that from violating to promising. Have we any right to suppose the penitent knows his heart better this third time than he did the first and second? How should we be able to determine his state, how can we address to him any other than doubtful promises, since God, in some sort, adopts such sentiments in the text? "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud that goeth away."

7. Consider finally, the *imprudence* of a man who divides his life in this manner into periods of devotion and periods of sin. It seems at first to be the height of wisdom to find the unheard-of art of uniting the reward of virtue, with the pleasure of vice. On the one side, by devoting only a few moments to religion he spares himself the pains which they experience who make conscience of giving themselves entirely up to it: and by suspending only for a little while the exercise of his passions, he enjoys the pleasure of hoping fully to gratify them. On the other side, he quiets the storms of divine justice that threaten his rebellion, and thus obtains by devotions of a moment a protection, which others devote a whole life to acquire. Let us undeceive ourselves. A heart divided in this manner cannot be happy. The chief cause of the difficulties we meet with in the way of salvation is owing to our partial walking, and to the fluctuation of the soul between religion and the world. The world combats religion, religion combats the world. The divided heart is the field of battle where this

violent combat is fought. To desire to enjoy the pleasures of both virtue and sin is to enjoy neither, and to partake of the inconveniences of both. To be at a point, to take a part, and to take the wise part, is the source of true peace and solid felicity.

Besides, this state of suspension which God assumes in the text is violent, and cannot last long. Like motives of patience do not concur at all times: witness the kingdom of Judah mentioned in the text, which was at length given up to the fury of the Chaldeans; witness this Ephraim, I mean the kingdom of the ten tribes, concerning whose destiny the prophet seems in the text to waver; however, at length God determined their dispersion, and the tribes were confounded with those idolatrous and wicked people, whose immorality and idolatry they had too exactly copied. All the help of history, and all the penetration of historians are necessary to discover any trace of these people: if indeed the penetration of historians and travellers have discovered any thing about them.

But why go back to remote periods of the world to prove a truth which our own eyes now behold in abundance of bloody demonstrations? If there ever were a year from the foundation of the world, if there has ever been a year proper to prove these terrible truths, it is that which lately came to an end. The dreadful events that distinguished it, and of which we were if not the victims, at least the witnesses, are too recent and too well known, to need description. This year will be proposed to the most distant posterity as one of the most alarming periods of divine vengeance. Future preachers will quote it as St. Jude formerly did the subversion of Sodom, and the universal deluge. They will tell your posterity, that in the year one thousand seven hundred and nine the patience of God, weary with Europe, enveloped in one general sentence friend and foe, almost the whole of that beautiful part of the world. They will say that all the scourges of heaven in concert were let loose to destroy guilty nations. They will lead their auditors over the vast kingdoms of the north, and show them the Borysthenes stained with blood, contagion flying rapidly as on the wings of the winds, from city to city, from province to province, from kingdom to kingdom, ravaging in one week so many thousand persons, in the next so many thousand more. They will tell them of the kingdoms which were claimed by two princes, and by lively images of the cruel barbarities practised there, they will render it doubtful whether it were a desire of conquering or depopulating these kingdoms that directed the arms of these rivals. They will represent that theatre of blood in Flanders,* and describe in glowing colours troops on both sides animated with equal fury, some to defend posts which seemed to need no defence but themselves, others to force intrenchments

* Our author refers to the battle of Malplaquet, fought September the 11th, 1709, between the French army consisting of one hundred and twenty thousand men commanded by Marshal Villars, and the confederate army consisting of nearly an equal number under the command of the Duke of Marlborough. The confederate army obtained the victory at the price of twenty thousand of their best troops.

which nature and art seemed to have rendered impregnable. They will describe both armies animated with a fury unknown before, disputing in carnage and blood with efforts unparalleled both for the greatness of the slaughter, and the glory of the victory. They will represent the most fruitful kingdom of Europe under all the misery of scarcity, in this more cruel than famine, it inflicts a more slow and lingering death. They will speak of the labourers howling for bread in the public roads; and will tell of "a sudden ferocity next to madness possessing multitudes, men seizing public convoys, snatching the bread from one another's hands, decency, fidelity, and religion being dead."*

So many victims sacrificed to divine vengeance, my brethren, so many plagues wasting Europe, so many shocks of the earth, above all, so great a share as our crimes had in kindling the anger of God, should seem to shake the foundations of this state, and to convulse and kill the greatest part of this auditory. Yet this state still subsists, thanks to thine infinite mercy my God, the state yet subsists, and though afflicted, distressed, and weary with a long and cruel war, it subsists as rich and as splendid as any country in the world. These hearers too, yet subsist, thanks to thy mercy my God, our eyes behold them, and by a kind of miracle they have been preserved to the beginning of another year. Preserved did I say? They have been crowned. And how does this year begin, this year which we never expected to see, after a year distinguished by the three great evils, pestilence, famine, and war, how does it begin with us? It begins with the smiles of heaven, with a participation of what is most august in religion, with the descent of the Holy Spirit into our hearts, with the renewing of our covenant with God, and, if I may be allowed to say so, it begins with an acknowledgment on God's part, that his love will not allow of our destruction, how much soever we deserve to be destroyed. "O Ephraim, how shall I give thee up? O Israel, how shall I deliver thee up? How shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together." Ah! why must a joy so pure be mixed with a just fear that you will abuse his goodness? Why, across such a multitude of benefits must we be constrained to look at vengeance behind? O republic! nourished by heaven, "upon which the eyes of the Lord thy God are always fixed, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year," Deut. xi. 12; why must we be driven to-day to utter unpleasant omens, along with the most affectionate benedictions? And you believers who hear us, why, now that we wish you a happy new year, must we be obliged to foretell an unhappy one?

For what security have we that this year will be more holy than the last? have we any certainty that this communion will be more effectual than others? What security have we that the resolutions of this day will have more influence over our lives than all before? Can we be sure that the devotion of this day will

* Flechier's pastoral letter.

not be "as a morning cloud, and as the early dew that goeth away?" And consequently what security have we that this will not be the last year of this republic, the last communion, the last invitation of mercy that will ever be given to all this assembly?

Ah, my brethren, my dear brethren, behold the God who *heweth us by his prophets*, behold him who has *slain men by the words of his mouth*, behold him, who in the presence of his angels waiting in this assembly, behold him once more saying to you, "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as the morning cloud, that goeth away!"

There are two great motives among many others, which chiefly urge your conversion to-day: your receiving the Lord's Supper this morning, and the uncertainty of living all this year.

This morning you received the Lord's Supper, and with it peace of conscience, inward consolation, ineffable pleasure, "joy unspeakable and full of glory," if indeed you did feel this, and if these are not in regard to you sounds without meaning. What! shall four days, shall four days efface all these impressions? What! shall a worldly society, will a sensual temptation, can a profane raillery bring you to violate all your resolutions, and to be guilty of perjury towards God? Do not fall into the puerility mentioned a little while ago, do not think the great truths you have felt to-day will cease to be, because you cease to think of them. Jesus died for you, Jesus gave himself for you, Jesus demands your heart, Jesus promises you an eternity of happiness; this is true to-day, this will be true to-morrow and all next week, during all your temptations and pleasures; and what, pray, can the world offer you in lieu of the heaven that came into your conscience? what to supply the place of that Redeemer, who this morning gave himself to you in a manner so affectionate?

To this first motive add the other, the vanity of life, a vanity described by the renewing of the year. I am aware how feeble this motive is to many of us. The past insures us for the future, and because we have never died, it seems to us as if we never should die.

My brethren, you compel us to-day to set before you the most mournful images, which can possibly strike your eyes. You oblige us to open wounds beginning to heal, and to anticipate the sorrows of the present year; but what can be done? If we cannot detach men from the world, we must tear them away by force.

Did we deceive you last year when we told you, that many who were present in this place on new year's day, would not live through the year? Has not the event fully verified the sad prediction? Answer me, ye disconsolate widows, who saw your husbands, objects of the purest and tenderest love, expire in your arms. Answer me, ye children in mourning, who followed your parents to the grave. How many afflicted Jacobs are weeping for the loss of a mother? How many Davids are saying in the bitterness of their heart, "O my son Absalom, O Absalom, my son, my son. Would God I had died for thee!" How many "Benonis, sons of sorrow," born at the "departing of the soul"

of their parents? How many Marthas and Marys, bedewing the grave of a brother with their tears, a brother dead four days, and by this time infectious? How many plaintive voices are heard in Rama? How many Rachels weeping and refusing to be comforted, because their "children are not?"

Having considered the last year, turn your attention to this, which we are now beginning. If, instead of such vague discourses as we address to you, God should this moment give us light into futurity, a sight of his book of decrees, a foreknowledge of the destiny of all our hearers, and impel us to inform each of you how this new revolution would interest you, what cries would be heard in this auditory! There you would see that haughty man, full-blown with vanity, confounded in the same dust with the meanest of mankind. Here you would see this voluptuous woman who refuses nothing to her senses, lying on a sick-bed, expiring in agony between the pain of a mortal malady and the just fear of falling into the hands of an angry God. Yonder you would behold that officer now crowned with laurels, and about to reap a new harvest of glory in the next campaign, covered with tragical dust, weltering in his own blood, and finding a grave where his imagination appointed victory to meet him. In all parts of this auditory, on the right hand, on the left, before, behind, by your side, in your own pew, I should show you carcases, and probably he who hears us with the most indifference, and who secretly despises such as tremble at our preaching, would himself serve to prove the truth we are delivering, and occupy the first place in this fatal list.

My brethren, Providence has not honoured us with any new revelations, we have not a spirit of prophecy: but you have eyes, you have a memory, you have reason, and you are certain death will sacrifice many of you in the course of this year. On whom will the tempest fall? Who will first verify our predictions? You cannot tell; and on this ground you will brave death, on this you build castles of vanity, which attach you to the world.

My brethren, establish your tranquillity and happiness on foundations more firm and solid. If you be affected with the motives set before you this day, and now resolve to labour in the work of your salvation, only you fear the weakness of your resolutions, we will give you one more lesson easy and practicable, that is, that every day of this year you retire one quarter of an hour and think of death. There put on in thought your shroud, lie down in your coffin, light your funeral tapers. There, observe your family weeping, your physician aghast, your long and melancholy train. There consider your friends, your children, your titles, your treasures removed for ever. There strike your imagination with the salutary ideas of books opened, thrones prepared, actions weighed in just balances. There lose yourself in the dark economy of a future state.

Having heard our exhortations, receive our benedictions. First, I turn myself toward the walls of that palace, where laws of equity, the glory and felicity of these provinces, are made; where the important questions which influence religion and the state, and shake all Europe,

are agitated. Ye protectors of the church, our masters and sovereigns, may God confirm the power that you possess with so much glory! May God continue in your hands the reins of this republic which you hold with so much moderation and wisdom! God grant you may first share the prosperity and glory which you diffuse among all this people! Under your administration God grant religion may flourish, justice and peace flow over the whole world, the Belgic name be respected, and the nation victorious, and after you have been elevated to the pinnacle of terrestrial grandeur, may God elevate you to everlasting glory!

I turn myself also to you, illustrious personages, who represent in these provinces the chief heads of the Christian world, and who in a manner exhibit in this assembly princes, electors, republics, and monarchs, may God open his richest treasures in favour of those sacred persons who are gods upon earth, and whose august characters you bear to enable them to support sovereign power with dignity! God grant they may always have such ministers as you, who understand how to make supreme authority both respected and feared! God grant a confederacy formed for the security of all nations and people may be continued! And that my wishes may be more worthy of the majesty of this place, and the holiness of my ministry, I pray God to unite you not only by the same temporal interest but by the same religion; may you have the same God for your Father, the same Jesus for your Redeemer, the same spirit for your guide, the same glory for your hope! I own at the sight of these lords of the universe, to whom I have the honour to address myself, I feel my insignificance, and I had suppressed all these wishes in my heart, had I not known that I speak the sense of all this assembly, the benedictions of all the church, and the congratulations of the state.

You also we bless, Levites holy to the Lord, ambassadors of the King of kings, ministers of the new covenant, who have written on your foreheads "holiness to the Lord," and on your breasts "the names of the children of Israel;" and you, elders and deacons of this church, who are as it were associated with us in the work of the ministry, may God animate you with the zeal of his house! God grant you may always take for your model the "chief Shepherd and Bishop of our souls!" God grant after you have "preached to others, you may not be cast away!" May you "turn many to righteousness," and afterward "shine as the stars for ever and ever!"

Receive our benediction, fathers and mothers of families, happy to see yourselves born again in the persons of your children, happier still to bring those into the "assembly of the first-born," whom you have brought into this valley of trouble! God grant your houses may be sanctuaries, and your children offerings to the "Father of spirits," the "God of the spirits of all flesh!"

Accept our good wishes, officers and soldiers, you, who after so many battles are going to war again, you, who after escaping so many dangers are entering on a new march of perils: may the God of battles fight incessantly for you! May victory constantly follow your

steps! While you subdue your enemies may you experience this maxim of the Wise Man, "he that ruleth his spirit is better than he that taketh a city."

Young people, receive our blessing: may you ever be preserved from the contagion of the world you are entering! May you devote the inestimable days you enjoy to your salvation! Now may you "remember your Creator in the days of your youth!"

Receive our good wishes, old people, who have already one foot in the grave, let us rather say, who have already "your heart in heaven where your treasure is:" May you find your "inward man renewed day by day, as your outward man perisheth!" May you feel your soul strengthened as your bodies decay, and when your house of clay falls may the gates of heaven open to you!

Desolate countries, to you also we extend our good wishes and prayers. You have been many years the unhappy theatre of the most bloody war that ever was. May the "sword of the Lord drunk with blood," retire into its "scabbard, rest and be still!" May the destroying angel who ravages your fields, cease to execute his commission! May your "swords be beaten into ploughshares, and your spears into pruning-hooks," and may the dew of heaven succeed the shower of blood that for so many years has been falling upon you.

Are our benedictions exhausted? Alas! on this joyful day can we forget our griefs? Ye happy inhabitants of these provinces, so often troubled with a recital of our afflictions, we rejoice in your prosperity, will you refuse to compassionate our misfortunes? And you, "firebrands plucked out of the burning," sad and venerable ruins of our unhappy churches, my dear brethren, whom the misfortunes of the times have cast on this shore, can we forget the miserable remnants of ourselves? O ye groaning captives, ye weeping priests, ye sighing virgins, ye festivals profaned, ye ways of Zion mourning, ye untrodden paths, ye sad complaints, move, O move all this assembly. "O Jerusalem, if I forget thee, let my right hand forget her cunning. Not remember thee! let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy! O Jerusalem, peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sake, I will now say peace be within thee!" May God be moved, if not with the ardour of our prayers, yet with the excess of our afflictions; if not with our misfortunes, yet with the desolation of his sanctuaries, if not with the bodies we carry all about the world, yet with the souls that are torn from us!

And thou dreadful prince, whom I once honoured as my king, and whom I yet respect as a scourge in the hand of Almighty God, thou also shall have a part in my good wishes. These provinces which thou threatenest, but which the arm of the Lord protects; this country which thou fillest with refugees, but fugitives animated with love; these walls which contain a thousand martyrs of thy making, but whom religion renders victorious, all these yet resound benedictions in thy favour. God grant the fatal bandage that hides the truth from thine eyes may fall off! May God forget the

rivers of blood, with which thou hast deluged the earth, and which thy reign has caused to be shed! May God blot out of his book the injuries which thou hast done us, and while he rewards the sufferers, may he pardon those who exposed us to suffer! O may God, who has made thee to us, and to the whole church, a minister of his judgments, make thee a dispenser of his favours, an administrator of his mercy!

I return to you, my brethren, I include you all in my benedictions. May God pour out his Holy Spirit upon all this assembly! God grant this year may be to us all an acceptable year, a preparation for eternity! "Drop down ye heavens from above, let the skies pour down righteousness, let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation."

It is not enough to wish for these blessings, they must be procured, and we must derive them from the source. It is not sufficient that a frail man utters benedictions in your favour, we must *pray* for a ratification of them by the *happy God*. We must go to the throne of God himself, wrestle with him, earnestly beseech him with prayers and tears, and "not let him go except he bless us." Magistrates, people, soldiers, citizens, pastors, flock, come let us bow our knees before the Monarch of the world: and you *birds of prey*, devouring cares, worldly anxieties, be gone, and interrupt not our sacrifice.

SERMON LXIV.

THE DIFFERENT METHODS OF PREACHERS.

1 CORINTHIANS iii. 11—15.

Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones; wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide, which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burnt, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire.

Had rules of preaching sermons no connexion with those of hearing them, we would not have treated of this text in this place. Satisfied with meditating on it in the study, we would have chosen a subject in which you would have been more directly interested. But what doctrine can we preach to you, which does not engage you to some dispositions, that cannot be neglected without hazarding the great salvation, for the sake of which you assemble in this holy place? Are we such enemies to truth, or do we so ill understand it, as to teach you a doctrine contrary to that, which the Holy Spirit has laid down in Scripture? If so, you should remember the saying of an apostle, and, animated with a holy indignation, should exclaim, "Though you, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto us than that which we have received, let him be

accursed!" Gal. i. 8, 9. Do we always keep in sight while we are working in the building of the church, "the pattern showed to us in the mount?" Heb. viii. 5. You ought to be attentive, diligent, and teachable. Do we make an odious mixture of truth and error, "Christ and Belial, light and darkness; you ought to exercise your senses to discern good from evil. It is this inseparable connexion of your duty with ours, which determined me to explain the text. It directly regards the various methods of the preachers of the gospel: but as the terms are metaphorical and obscure, it will be necessary to develop the meaning of the apostle in the following manner.

First, we will examine what gave occasion for the words—next, we will observe the design of the apostle in writing them—in the third place, we will explain the several figures made use of—and lastly, we will apply the subject to practice.

I. The *occasion* of the text will appear by a little attention to the connexion in which it stands. St. Paul had been endeavouring to put an end to the divisions of the church at Corinth, and to destroy the party-spirit of the Corinthians. Ought we to be astonished, that churches are so little unanimous now, when we see diversity often among apostles and primitive Christians? If peace, left by Jesus Christ as an inheritance to his apostles, could not be maintained in churches gathered by these blessed men, where must we look for it? Perhaps, division was partly owing to the imprudence of some preachers in their primitive churches: but certainly their hearers had a chief hand in fomenting them. The teachers had different gifts, and their hearers divided into parties under their ministry. It is always allowable to distinguish men, who have received great talents from God, from such as have received abilities not so great; but these Corinthian Christians affected to exalt those of their ministers, who they thought, were men of the most eminent abilities, to the depression and discouragement of the rest, and under pretence of paying homage to God the giver of these talents, they very indiscreetly idolized the men who had received them. Moreover, they made as many different religions, as God had given different commissions, and different abilities to ministers to execute them. Each party at Corinth chose out of these pretended religions, that which appeared most conformable to its prejudices. The converted Pagans were for St. Paul, to whom the conversion of the gentiles had been committed, and who had brought them to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and they said, for our parts, "we are of Paul." Such as had a taste for eloquence were for Apollos, who was an "eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures," and they said, "we are of Apollos." The converted Jews were for Peter, who discovered a great deal of moderation towards their ceremonies, and who had even "compelled the gentiles to live as the Jews did," that is to mix the simple worship of the New Testament with the ceremonial observances of the law, and they said, as for us, "we are of Cephas." And those Jews, who obstinately continued the ceremony of circumcision, pretended that they had no need

of the authority either of Paul, or of Apollos, or of Cephas, for the example of Jesus Christ, who had himself been circumcised, was sufficient for them, and for their parts, they were "of Christ."

St. Paul tells these Corinthians, that, as long as they should continue in this disposition, he should consider them as novices in the Christian religion, able at most only to understand the first principles, not to comprehend the whole design. He tells them, that there were in this religion "treasures of wisdom and knowledge," but into which men could never enter, who mixed their passions with truths intended to mortify them; and that this defect in them prevented him from attempting to lay before them these riches. "I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal, for whereas there is among you envying and strife and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men," 1 Cor. iii. 1-3, that is, as men of the world?

Having reprov'd the folly, and repeated the descriptive censure, he leads them to the true motive that should induce them to avoid it. Although, as if he had said, the talents of your ministers are not all equal, yet they all received them from the same source, that is, from the grace of God; and how amply soever any of them may be endowed with abilities, they can have no success, except the same grace bestows it. "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, as the Lord gave to every man," ver. 5, that is, as the blessing of God accompanied their ministry? "I have planted, Apollos watered: but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase," ver. 8. A great lesson for those to whom God has given gifts to preach the gospel! A fine example of humility, which they ought always to have before their eyes! And what were the gifts, with which God enriched the first heralds of the gospel? What is a little vivacity of imagination, a little grace of elocution, a little reading, a little justness of reasoning? What are these talents in comparison with the gifts of men, who spoke several foreign languages, who understood all mysteries, who altered the laws of nature, who were dispensers of the divine power, who raised the dead, who slew the wicked with the breath of their lips, who struck dead at their feet Ananias and Sapphira, and to say more still, who were immediately conducted by the spirit of God in their ministry? Yet behold the man, who was first in this class of extraordinary men, behold this chosen vessel, behold the man who could say, "I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles," 2 Cor. xi. 5, behold him, doing homage for all his own talents, and all those of his colleagues, to that grace, from which they came, and which blessed the administration of them. "Who is Paul? Who is Apollos? He that planteth is nothing, he that watereth is nothing, but God that giveth the increase."

II. It was to be feared (we proceed to the design of the text,) it was to be feared, that under pretence that all the ministers of the gospel were united in one point of equality, under pretence that none of them were any more than servants of God, and canals by which he communicated himself to the church; I say it was hazardous, and much to be suspected, whether teachers themselves would not abuse this equality by applying what the apostle meant only of the abilities of preachers, to the very doctrines themselves which they taught.

If this were doubtful in regard to the preachers, it was no less so in regard to the hearers. People have, I think, a natural bias to superstition. They easily show that respect, which is due only to the character of a minister of the living God, to all that put it on, even to such as use it only for the perverting of the gospel, yea to those who endeavour to subvert it entirely. Because we ought not to hear the gospel in a spirit of chicanery and sophistry, it is supposed we ought to lay aside a spirit of discernment. Hence this way of speaking, so superstitious, and at the same time so common among us, that is, that whatever difference there may be in preachers, yet they all preach the word of God. But it is not impossible, that from a text which is the word of God, explications may be given, which are only the word of man. Not impossible, did I say! I believe it seldom, if ever happens, that two ministers treat of one subject without at least one of them mixing with the word of God some expressions which are only the word of man. Why? Because the conformity of their sentiments can never be so perfect, but they will differ on some questions. Now, of two men, one of whom takes the affirmative side of a question, and the other the negative, one of them must of necessity, in this respect, preach the word of God, and the other the word of man. You should not, therefore, pay a superstitious attention to our discourses.—You should not, under pretence that all your ministers thus preach the word of God, confound the word of God with the word of man. Whatever patience you may be obliged to have with our imperfections, you ought not equally to esteem two discourses, the greatest part of one of which you call, and have reason to call, the word of God, and the greatest part of the other the word of man.

The design of St. Paul in our text is to rectify our judgment on this subject. For this purpose he divides preachers into three classes. The first are such as preach the word of man, not only different from the word of God, but directly in opposition to it. The second preach the pure word of God without human mixtures. The third do indeed make the word of God the ground of their preaching, but mix with it the explications and traditions of men. The apostle characterizes these three kinds of preachers, informs us of their destination, and what account God will require of their ministry.

1. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid." This is directed against such ministers as preach the word of man in direct opposition to the word of God, or the doctrine

of Jesus Christ. What will be the destination of such ministers? St. Paul tells us by affirming, "no man can preach, no man can lay any other foundation than that is laid." No man can! Not that this can never happen. Alas! This has too often happened; witness many communities, which under the Christian name subvert all the foundations of the Christian religion. But *no man* can do so without rendering himself guilty of the greatest crime, and exposing himself to the greatest punishment.

2. "If any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones." These are ministers, who preach the pure word of God. They not only retain all the fundamental points of the Christian religion; in opposition to the former who subvert them: but they explain these truths so as to affirm nothing inconsistent with them. All the inferences they draw from these great principles naturally proceed from them, and their whole doctrine is agreeable to the foundation on which it is built. On this account it is compared to "gold, silver, and precious stones." What shall be the destiny of these ministers in the great day of judgment, when their doctrine shall be examined? They "shall receive a reward." They shall share the glorious promises made to faithful ministers of religion.

3. "If any man build upon this foundation, wood, hay, stubble." These are ministers who really make the word of God the ground of their preaching: but who mix the word of man with it, and disfigure it with their fanciful sophistry. When the doctrine of these ministers shall be examined in the great day of judgment, what shall their destiny be? "They themselves shall be saved," because they have taught nothing directly contrary to the essential truths of Christianity: but they shall have no reward for exercising a ministry, in which they rendered the word of God of less effect by mixing with it the traditions of men, and they shall be "saved, yet so as by fire," that is, with difficulty, because their preaching occupied the time and attention of their hearers, in a manner unworthy of the disciples of Jesus Christ.

This is, my brethren, a general view of the design of our text: but this is not sufficient to give an exact knowledge of it. In a discourse intended to prevent, or to eradicate a certain kind of superstition, nothing ought to be proposed that is likely to cherish it. You should not be required to believe any thing without the most full and convincing evidence. Having therefore shown you the general design of the text, we will proceed to our third article, and explain the several metaphors made use of in it.

III. Although all these figurative expressions are selected with caution, and very bold, yet they are not all alike obscure to you. Which of you is such a novice, I do not say only in the style of the inspired authors, as not to know the idea affixed to the term *foundation*? In architecture they call those massy stones laid in the earth, and on which the whole building rests, foundations; and thus in moral things, particularly in sciences, founda-

tions signify some propositions, without which all the rest that make the body cannot subsist.

The foundation is Jesus Christ. These terms are to be understood in this place, as in many others, of the Christian religion, which is called Jesus Christ, not merely because Jesus Christ taught it to the world, but because his history, that is, his sufferings, his death, and his resurrection, are the principal subjects. In this sense, the apostle says, "he determined not to know any thing among" the Corinthians "save Jesus Christ and him crucified," that is, the Christian religion, of which the crucifixion of Christ is a principal article.

The other emblems, "wood, hay, stubble; gold, silver, precious stones," seem evidently to convey the ideas which we just now affixed to them. As St. Paul here represents the doctrine of preachers under the similitude of an edifice, it is natural to suppose, that "wood, hay, and stubble," especially when they are opposed to "gold, silver, and precious stones," should mean doctrines less considerable, either because they are uncertain, or unimportant.

For the same reason, "gold, silver, precious stones," signify in the edifice of the church, or in the system of preachers, such doctrines as are excellent, sublime, demonstrable. In this sense the prophet Isaiah, describing the glory of the church under the government of the Messiah, says, "behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones," chap. liv. 11, 12, and, by way of explaining this metaphorical language, he adds in the very next words, "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children."

There is a little more difficulty, at least there are many more opinions on the meaning of those words, "Every man's work shall be made manifest, for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire, and the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is." Without detailing, and refuting erroneous opinions on these words, let it suffice that we point out the true sense. By the "day" we understand the final judgment. This day is called in many passages of Scripture the day "of the Lord," the "day," or *that* day by excellence. Thus the apostle, "Jesus Christ shall confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord," chap. i. 8. Thus, also, speaking of the temporal punishment of the incestuous person, he says, "deliver such a one unto Satan, for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus," chap. v. 5. So again, "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. In that day "every man's work shall be revealed," or "made manifest by fire." It is not astonishing, that fire should be joined here with the day of judgment. The Scripture teaches us in more than one place, that the terrible day of judgment will verify in the most dreadful of all senses this declaration, "God maketh winds his angels," and "flam

ing fire his ministers.* Hence the psalmist says, "the mighty God, even the Lord hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof. A fire shall devour before him," Ps. l. 1. Agreeably to which our apostle says, "the Lord Jesus, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe, shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God," 2 Thes. vii. 10. 8. Though all these passages cast light on the text, yet strictly speaking, I think the apostle presents the fire of the day of judgment here under an idea somewhat different from that given in all these passages. In these, fire is represented as punishing only the wicked, the righteous do not feel the action of it: but here in the text it is described as alike kindled for the righteous and the wicked; at least it is said that the works of both shall be "revealed by fire." Now we should be obliged to have recourse to some subterfuge to make sense of the text, if we understood the apostle speaking of the fire of *hell*. How can the works of the righteous and the wicked be equally *manifested* by the fire of *hell*?

I think a much more simple and natural exposition may be given of the words of the text. The chief design of a day of judgment is to examine the actions of men, and to distinguish bad actions from good, and good from better. This is an idea contained in a thousand passages of Scripture, and it would be useless to prove it. Now the apostle, in order to make us understand that the evidence shall be complete, represents it under the similitude of the most perfect and best known trials among men, of which that of metal by fire certainly excels in its kind. Hence it is, that the sacred writers have chosen this to explain the trials which God makes his children go through in this world. I select only one passage out of a great number, "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearance of Jesus Christ," 1 Pet. i. 7. The *trial* of your faith is a remarkable word in the original. Good Greek authors use it for the trial of metals in the fire. Isocrates uses the term exactly as St. Peter does,

* Psalm civ. 4. The English version is—*Who maketh his angels spirits: his ministers a flaming fire*. Mr. Saurin understands the words, as above, expressive of the divine influence over the power of nature, and reads, *who maketh winds and fires, literally, his instruments, or figuratively, his messengers*. This is perfectly agreeable—first, to the original terms—secondly, to the context, who walketh upon the wings of the wind—who maketh clouds his chariot—who sitteth on waters—whose canopy is the heavens. Whose clothing is light. This whole psalm, the most sublime of all essays on nature, makes all parts of the universe particles of one body of majestic size, and exact symmetry, of which the Psalmist's God, JEHOVAH, is the soul; the earth, the deep, mountains, valleys, beasts, fowls, grass, herbs, oil, wine, man, and all his movements, the skill that builds, and sails a ship, and the sensations that make *leviathan* play, all these, all the parts and powers of nature, are formed, animated, and directed by God. Thirdly, this sense is agreeable to other passages of Scripture—the Lord rained fire, Gen. xiv. 24. The Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind, Exod. xiv. 21. Fire and hail, snow and vapour, stormy wind, fulfilling his word, Ps. cxlviii. 8.

we try gold in the fire. I return to the text, which I left only for the sake of explaining it the better. St. Paul here represents the day of judgment as a time of the most exact and severe trials of the actions of men, and particularly of the doctrines of ministers of the gospel. For this purpose he compares the trial with that of metals by fire. Says he, the different doctrines of ministers of the gospel shall then be put into a crucible that they may be fully known, as by the same process pure gold is separated and distinguished from foreign matter mixed with it: "Every man's work shall be made manifest, for the day," that is, the day of judgment, "shall declare it," because it shall be "revealed by fire," that is, the day of judgment like "fire," applied to metals "shall try every man's work, of what sort it is."

The apostle, pursuing the same metaphor, adds, "If any man's work abide, which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward," that is, if the doctrine which a minister of the gospel shall have taught, and built on "the foundation that is laid," if this doctrine shall abide the trial of the day of judgment, as gold abides that of fire, the preacher shall receive a reward: but if his doctrine *burn*, if it will not abide this trial, if it be like the foreign matter mixed with gold, and which burns when gold is tried with fire, then the preacher will lose the honour and pleasure of his work, he will have no reward for his ministerial services: but as to himself, perhaps he may be saved, however, he will be saved with difficulty, "he will be saved as by fire." Why may he be saved? Because his doctrine did not go to the subversion of the principal truths of the Christian religion. Why will he be saved with difficulty? Because his doctrine was inconsistent with the dignity of Christianity. Why is the salvation of such a man uncertain? Because it is possible, that the motives which induced him to preach such a doctrine, and to prefer it before what St. Paul compares to "gold and precious stones," may have been so detestable as to deserve all the punishments denounced against such as shall have subverted the foundation of the gospel. If you doubt whether the sense we have given to this metaphorical expression, "saved as by fire," be just, we beg leave to observe in three words that it is well founded.

First, the sense given is not forced, for nothing is more natural than to express a great difficulty by similitudes taken from difficult things, thus we say a man escaped from shipwreck, to describe a man who has escaped from any great danger: and the same idea is expressed with equal aptness, when we say a man freed from some great danger has escaped the fire.

Secondly, the metaphor is not only just but beautiful in itself, but it is common in profane writers. In this manner Æmilius Paulus, to show that he had hardly escaped the rage of the populace during his first consulship, says, that he escaped a popular *conflagration*, in which he was half burnt. In like manner Cicero, speaking of the miseries of life, says, that it would be better not to be born, but that if we have the misfortune to be born, the most

advantageous thing is to die soon, and to flee from the hands of fortune as from a *conflagration*.

Thirdly, the metaphor in the text is common in other parts of Scripture, as in Amos, "I have overthrowed some of you, as God overthrowed Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning," chap. iv. 11. The apostle Jude adopts the same figure, and says, "save others with fear, pulling them out of the fire," ver. 13.

By establishing the true sense of the text on solid grounds, I think we have sufficiently refuted all erroneous opinions concerning it, and yet there are two, which for different reasons I cannot help mentioning.

The first is the opinion of those, who think the apostle meant by the *fire* in the text the destruction of Jerusalem. This opinion has an air of probability, yet I do not think it certain. The time of the destruction of Jerusalem is often called in Scripture, as well as the time of the final judgment, *that day*, the day of the Lord, and the calamities of the day are represented under the idea of fire, and literally speaking, fire did make sad ravages in Jerusalem and in the temple. However there is a deal of perplexity in the paraphrase given of the text by such as are of this opinion. This is it, exactly as we have transcribed it from a celebrated scholar. "The fire of the destruction of Jerusalem will prove whether the doctrines of your teachers be those of the gospel, or whether they be foreign notions. He whose doctrine will abide this trial, shall receive a reward: but he whose doctrine will not abide it, will lose the fruit of his ministerial labours."

We said this opinion was probable: but we cannot say so with the least shadow of truth of the opinion of some of the church of Rome, who pretended that the apostle speaks here of the fire of purgatory.

Because, suppose purgatory were taught in other passages of Scripture, which we are very far from granting, great violence must be done to this text to find the doctrine here; for on supposition the apostle speaks of purgatory, what do these words mean? The fire of purgatory shall try the doctrines of the ministers of the gospel, so that substantial doctrines, and vain doctrines shall be alike tried by this fire!

Because St. Paul says here of this fire things directly opposite to the idea which the church of Rome forms of purgatory. They exempt saints of the first order, and in this class St. Paul certainly holds one of the most eminent places: but our apostle, far from thinking himself safe from such a "trial by fire" as he speaks of in the text, expressly says, "every man's work" shall be tried, that is the work of ministers who shall have built on the foundation "gold, silver, precious stones," shall be tried, as well as that of other ministers, who shall have built on the foundation "wood and stubble."

But the chief reason for our rejecting the comment of the church of Rome is the nature of the doctrine itself, in proof of which they bring the text. A heterodox doctrine, which enervates the great sacrifice that Jesus Christ offered on the cross for the sins of mankind; a doctrine directly opposite to a great number of

passages of Scripture, which tell us that "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, that "he that believeth is passed from death unto life," that when "the righteous dieth, he is taken from the evil to come, and shall enter into peace," Rom. viii. 1; John v. 24; and Isa. lvii. 1, 2. A doctrine founded on a thousand visions and fabulous tales, more fit for times of pagan darkness than days of evangelical light; a sordid doctrine that evidently owes its being to that base interest, which it nourishes with profusion, luxury, and extravagance; a barbarous doctrine, which produces in a dying man a dreadful expectation of passing from the agonies of dying to whole ages of greater agony in flames of fire.

IV. Let us now proceed to examine with what eye we ought to consider the three sorts of preachers, of which the apostle speaks, and so *apply* the subject to *practice*. The first are such as "lay another foundation" besides that which is laid. The second are those who "build on the foundation," laid by the master-builder, "wood, hay, and stubble." The third are such as *build* on the same foundation "gold, silver, and precious stones."

Thanks be to God we have no other concern with the first of these articles except that which compassion obliges us to take for the wickedness of such teachers, and the blindness of their hearers!

What a strange condition is that of a man who employs his study, his reading, his meditation, his labours, his public and private discourses to subvert the foundations of that edifice which Jesus Christ came to erect among mankind, and which he has cemented with his blood! What a doctrine is that of a man, who presumes to call himself a guide of conscience, a pastor of a flock, an interpreter of Scripture, and who gives only false directions, who poisons the souls committed to his care, and darkens and tortures the word of God! Jesus Christ, to confound the glosses of the false teachers of his time, said, "ye have heard that it was said by them of old time" so and so: "but I say unto you" otherwise. The teachers, of whom I speak, use another language, and they say, you have heard that it was said by Jesus Christ, so and so: but I say to you otherwise. You have heard that it was said by Jesus Christ, "Search the Scriptures:" but I say to you, that the Scriptures are dangerous, and that only one order of men ought to see them. You have heard, that it has been said in the inspired writings, "prove all things:" but I say unto you, it is not for you to examine, but to submit. You have heard that it has been said by Jesus Christ, that "the rulers over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, but it shall not be so among you." But I say unto you, that the pontiff has a right to domineer not only over the Gentiles, but even over those who rule them. You have heard that it has been said, "blessed are the dead which die in the Lord," that the soul of Lazarus "was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom:" but I, I say unto you, that the dead pass from the miseries of this life, only into incomparably greater miseries in the flames of purgatory.

If this disposition be deplorable considered in itself, it becomes much more so by attending

to the motives that produce it. Sometimes it is ignorance, which makes people sincerely crawl in the thickest darkness, amidst the finest opportunities of obtaining light. Sometimes it is obstinacy, which impels people to maintain, for ever to maintain, what they have once affirmed. Sometimes it is pride, that will not acknowledge a mistake. Sometimes it is interest, which fixes them in a communion that opens a path to riches and grandeurs, benefices and mitres, an archiepiscopal throne and a triple crown. Always, it is negligence of the great salvation, which deserves all our pains, vigilance the most exact, and sacrifices the most difficult.

My brethren, let us acknowledge the favour conferred on us by Providence in delivering us from these errors. Let us bless the happy days of the Reformation, in which our societies were built on the foundation laid by Jesus Christ and his apostles. Let us never dishonour it by an irregular life. Let us never regret the sacrifices we have made to it. Let us be always ready to make more. We have already, many of us, given up our establishments, our fortunes, and our country; let us give up our passions, and, if it be requisite, our lives. Let us endeavour to perpetuate and extend it, let us defend it by our prayers, as well as by our labour and vigilance. Let us pray to God for this poor people, from whose eyes a fatal bandage hides the light of truth. Let us pray for such of our brethren as know it, but have not courage to profess it. Let us pray for those poor children, who seem as if they must receive it with their first nourishment, because their parents know it: but who do not yet know it, and who perhaps, alas! will never know it. If our incessant prayers for them continue to be rejected; if our future efforts to move in their favour the compassion of a merciful God, be without success, as our former efforts have been; if our future tears, like our former sorrows, be in vain, yet we will exclaim, "O Lord, how long! O wall of the daughter of Zion, let tears run down like a river day and night, give thyself no rest, let not the apple of thine eye cease! O ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth," Rev. vi. 10; Lament. ii. 18; and Isa. lviii. 6, 7.

It is not the limit prescribed to this sermon, that forbids my detailing the two remaining articles: but a reason of another kind. I fear, should I characterize the two kinds of doctrines, which are both built on the foundation, but which, however, are not of equal value, I myself should lay another foundation. The religion of Jesus Christ is founded on love. Jesus Christ is love. The virtue which he most of all recommended to his disciples, is love.

I appeal here to those, who have some ideas of remnants of divisions yet amongst us. How can I, without rekindling a fire hid under embers, and which we have done all in our power entirely to extinguish, show the vanity of different classes of divers doctrines of *wood, hay, and stubble?*

In a first class, it would be necessary to expose a ministry spent in questions of mere

curiosity, and to contrast it with that which is employed only to give that clear knowledge, and full demonstration of the great truths of religion of which they are capable.

In the second class, it would be necessary to contrast discourses of simple speculation tending only to exercise the mind with such practical discourses as tend to sanctify the heart, to regulate the life, to render the child obedient to his parent, and the parent kind and equitable to his child, the subject submissive to the laws of his rulers, and the ruler attentive to the happiness of the subjects, the rich charitable, and the poor humble and patient.

In the third class, I should be obliged to consider some productions of disordered minds, fancies attributed to the Spirit of God, charging religion with the tinsel of the marvellous, more proper to divert children than to satisfy inquisitive minds, and to contrast these with the productions of men who never set a step without the light of the gospel in their hands and infallible truth for their guide.

In a fourth class, we ought to contrast those miserable sophisms which pretend to support truth with the arms of error, and include without scruple whatever favours, and whatever seems to favour the cause to be maintained, with clear ideas, close reasonings, and natural conclusions, such as a preacher brings, who knows how to weigh in a just balance truth and falsehood, probability and proof, conjecture and demonstration.

In the fifth class, I should have to lay open the superficial ideas, sometimes low and vulgar, of a man without either elevation or penetration, and to contrast them with the discourses of such happy geniuses as soar up to God, even to the inaccessible God.

All these dissimilitudes it would be my duty to show: but I will not proceed, and I make a sacrifice to charity of all the details which the subject would bear. I will not even describe the miseries which are denounced against such as build hay and stubble on the foundation of the gospel, nor the unhappiness of those, who shall be found at last to have preferred such doctrines before the "gold, silver, and precious stones," of which the apostle speaks. Let them weigh this expression of the holy man, "he shall be saved, yet so as by fire." Let the first think of the account they must give of their ministry, and the second of the use they have made of their time, and of their superstitious docility.

I would rather offer you objects more attracting, and urge motives more tender. We told you at the beginning of this discourse that your duties, Christian people, have a close connexion with ours, and we may add, our destination is closely connected with yours.

What will be the destiny of such as shall have built on the foundations of Christianity "gold, silver, and precious stones?" What will be the destiny of those, who shall have exercised such a ministry? What will be the destiny of such as have incorporated themselves with it? Ah! my brethren, I place my happiness and glory in not being able fully to answer this question. I congratulate myself for not being able to find images lively enough to represent the pomp, with which I hope, my

most beloved auditors, you will one day be adorned. Yet I love to contemplate that great day, in which the work of faithful ministers, and faithful Christians will be made manifest by fire. I love to fill my mind with the day, in which God will "come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe," 2 Thess. i. 10; when he shall call to the heavens "from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people," Ps. l. 4, saying, "Gather my saints together unto me, those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice," ver. 5. I love to satiate my soul with ideas of the redeemed of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, in company with ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands of angels, Rev. v. 9. 11. At the head of this august body I see three chiefs.

The first is "Jesus Christ, the author and finisher of our faith," Heb. xii. 2. I see this divine leader presenting himself before his father with his wounds, his cross, and his blood, and saying, "Father, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was," John xvii. 4, 5. Having glorified the head, glorify the members, save my people. Then will the eternal Father crown such just and holy petitions with success. Then will be accomplished in regard to Jesus Christ this magnificent promise, "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. Such as oppose thine empire govern, "with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel:" but enter thou unto thy kingdom with thy subjects, thy saints, thy well beloved, and share with them thy glorious inheritance.

The second leaders are prophets, evangelists, and apostles, appearing before God with the conquests they made, the nations they converted, the persecutions they endured for the love of God and his gospel. Then will the promises made to these holy men be accomplished, "they that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever. When the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel," Daniel xii. 4; Matt. xix. 28.

The third will be such ministers as have been "followers of the apostles even as they also were of Christ." I think I see these ministers humbled for their faults, convinced of their frailty, imploring the divine mercy for the blemishes of their ministry: but yet with that humble confidence which the compassion of God allows, and saying, behold us, the doctrine we have preached, the minds we have informed, the wanderers we have reclaimed, and with the hearts which we have had the honour of animating with thy love. What, in that great day, what will be your destiny, Christian people? Will yours be the hearts which we shall have animated with divine love, or those from which we never could banish the love of the world? Shall you be among the backsliders whom we shall have reclaimed, or among such as shall have persisted in sin? Shall yours be the minds we have enlightened,

or among those who shall have lain in darkness and ignorance?

Ah! My brethren, the first of our wishes, the most affectionate of our prayers, our secret meditations, our public discourses, whatever we undertake, whatever we are, we consecrate to prepare you for that great day. "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? Ye are our glory and our joy," 1 Thess. ii. 19, 20. To God be honour and praise for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON LXV.

THE DEEP THINGS OF GOD.

ROMANS xi. 3.

O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

ONE of the principal causes of the depravity of mankind is, that they form mean ideas of God. The idea of the God we adore, and the notion of the morality we ought to practise, are two things closely connected together. If we consider God as a being elevated, great and sublime, our morality will be great, sublime, and elevated too. If, on the contrary, we consider God as a being whose designs are narrow, whose power is limited, and whose plans are partial, we shall practise a morality adapted to such an imaginary God.

My brethren, there are two very different ways of forming this sublime idea, which has such an influence over religion and morality.

The magnificence of God may be understood by what is known of God, by the things that are made, by the brilliancy of the sun, by the extent of the firmament, and by all the various creatures which we behold; and judging of the workman by the work, we shall exclaim in sight of so many wonderful works, "O Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! Thou hast set thy glory above the heavens. When I 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?" Rom. i. 19, 20; Ps. lvi. 1, &c.

But there is another way to know the magnificence of God, a way less accessible indeed, but more noble, and even more plain to the man, the eyes of whose understanding are enlightened, Eph. i. 18, that is, to judge of God, not by the things that are seen, but by the things that are not seen, not by what we know, but by what we do not know. In this sublime way the soul loses itself in a depth of divine magnificence, like the seraphims, covers its face before the majesty of God, and exclaims with the prophet, "verily thou art a God that hidest thyself," Isa. xlv. 15. "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us, and to our children for ever," Deut. xxxii. 29. It is on this obscure side, that we propose to show you the Deity to-day.

Darkness will serve us for light, and the im-

penetrable depth of his decrees will fill our minds with sound and practical knowledge. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

In order to enter into the mind of the apostle, it is necessary to observe the subject to which he applies the text, and never to lose sight of the design of this whole epistle. The apostle chiefly proposes to counteract a scandalous schism in the church of Rome. This church was composed of two sorts of Christians, some converts from Judaism, others from Paganism. The Jews considered the Gentiles with contempt, as they always had been accustomed to consider foreigners. For their parts, they thought they had a natural right to all the benefits of the Messiah, because, being born Jews, they were the legitimate heirs of Abraham, to whom the promise was made, whereas the Gentiles partook of these benefits only by mere favour. St. Paul attacks this prejudice, proves that Jews and Gentiles, being all alike *under sin*, had all an equal need of a covenant of grace; that both derived their calling from the mercy of God; that no one was rejected as a Gentile, or admitted as a Jew: but that they only should share the salvation published by the Messiah who had been elected in the eternal decrees of God. The Jews could not relish such humbling ideas, nor accommodate this doctrine to the prerogatives of their nation; and much less could they admit the system of the apostle on predestination. St. Paul employs the chapter from which we have taken our text, and the two chapters before to remove their difficulties. He turns himself, so to speak, on every side to elucidate the subject. He reasons, proves, argues; but after he has heaped proofs upon proofs, reasonings upon reasonings, and solutions upon solutions, he acknowledges, in the words of the text, that he glories in falling beneath his subject. In some sense he classes himself with the most ignorant of his readers, allows that he has not received a sufficient measure of the Spirit of God to enable him to fathom such depths, and he exclaims on the brink of this great profound, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" The apostle therefore wrote these words of the "deep things of God" chiefly with a view to the conduct of God with regard to such as he appoints to glory, and such as he leaves in perdition. I grant, were this text to be accurately discussed, it ought to be considered in regard to these events, and these doctrines; but nothing hinders our examining it in a more extensive view. The apostle lays down a general maxim, and takes occasion from a particular subject to establish a universal truth, that is, that such is the magnificence of God that it absorbs all our thought, and that to attempt to reduce the conduct of God to a level with our frail reason is to be guilty of extreme rashness.

This is what we will endeavour to prove. Come, Christians, follow us, and learn to know yourselves, and to feel your insignificance. We are going, by showing you the Deity in

four different views, to open to you four great depths, and to give you four reasons for exclaiming with the apostle, "O the depth!"

The four ways in which God reveals himself to man, are four manners to display his perfections, and at the same time they are four abysses in which our imperfect reason is lost. These ways are—first, an idea of the Deity—secondly, of nature—thirdly, of Providence—and fourthly, of revelation; four ways, if I may venture to speak thus, all shining with light, and yet all covered with adorable darkness.

1. The first mirror in which we contemplate God, and at the same time the first abyss in which our imperfect reason is lost, is the idea we have of the *divine perfections*. This is a path leading to God, a mirror of the Deity. To prove this, it is not necessary to examine how we came by this idea, whether it be natural or acquired, whether we derive it from our parents or our tutors, whether the Creator has immediately engraven it on the mind, or whether we ourselves have formed it by a chain of principles and consequences; a question much agitated in the schools, sometimes settled, and sometimes controverted, and on which both sides affirm many clear and substantial, though opposite propositions. Of myself, I am always fully persuaded that I have an idea of a Being supremely excellent, and one of whose perfections I am not able to omit without destroying the essence of the Supreme Being to whom it belongs. I know too that there must be somewhere without me an object answering to my idea; for as I think, and as I know I am not the author of the faculty that thinks within me, I am obliged to conclude that a foreign cause has produced it. If this foreign cause is a being that derives its existence from another foreign cause, I am necessarily obliged to proceed from one step to another, and to go on till I find a self-existent being, and this self-existent being is the infinite Being. I have then an idea of the infinite Being. This idea is not a phantom of my creation, it is the portrait of an original that exists independently of my reflections. This is the first way to the Creator; this is the first mirror of his perfections.

O how long, how infinitely extended is this way! How impossible for the mind to pervade a distance so immense! How obscure is this mirror! How is my soul dismayed when I attempt to sail in this immeasurable ocean! An infamous man, who lived in the beginning of the last century, a man who conceived the most abominable design that ever was, who formed with eleven persons of his own cast a college of infidelity, from whence he might send his emissaries into all the world to rase out of every mind the opinion of the existence of a God, this man took a very singular method to prove that there was no God, that was to state the general idea of God. He thought, to define was to destroy it, and that to say what God is, was the best way to disprove his existence. "God," said that impious man, "God is a being who exists through infinite ages, and yet is not capable of past or to come, he fills all without being in any place, he is fixed without situation, he pervades all without motion, he is good without quality, great without quantity, universal without parts, moving all things

without being moved himself, his will constitutes his power, and his power is confounded with his will, without all, within all, beyond all, before all, and after all.*

But though it be absurd to argue against the existence of God from the eminence of his perfections, yet it is the wisdom of man to derive from this subject inferences humbling to his proud and infatuated reason. We detest the design of the writer just now mentioned, but we approve of a part of the definition which our atheist gives of God. Far from pretending that such a definition degrades the object of our worship from his supreme rank in the scale of beings, it inclines us to pay him the most profound homage of which creatures are capable, and to lay down our feeble reason before his infinite excellence.

Yes, "God is a being who exists through infinite ages; and yet is not capable of past or to come." The vast number of ages which the rapidity of time has carried away, are as present to him as this very indivisible moment, and the most distant futurity does not conceal any remote event from his eyes. He unites in one single instant, the past, the present, and all periods to come. He is by excellence, "I am that I am." He loses nothing by ages spent, he acquires nothing by succession. Yes, "God fills all without being in any place. Ascend up into heaven, he is there. Make your bed in hell, behold he is there. Take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost part of the sea, even there shall his hand lead you. Say, surely the darkness shall cover me, even the night shall be light about you," Ps. cxxxix. 8, &c. Yet he has no place, and the quality by which our bodies are enclosed in these walls, and adjusted with the particles of air that surround us, cannot agree with his spirituality. "God pervades all without motion." The quickness of lightning, which in an instant passes from east to west, cannot equal the rapidity with which his intelligence ascends to the highest heavens, descends to the deepest abysses, and visits in a moment all parts of the universe. Yet he is immovable, and does not quit one place to be present in another, but abides with his disciples on earth, while he is in heaven, in the centre of felicity and glory. "His will constitutes his power, and his power does not differ from his

will." All creatures in the universe owe their existence to a single act of his will, and a thousand new worlds wait only for such an act to spring from nothing and to shine with glory. "God is above all," all being subject to his power. "Within all," all being an emanation of his will. "Before all, after all." Stretch thine imagination, frail but haughty creature, try the utmost efforts of thy genius, elevate thy meditations, collect thy thoughts, see whether thou canst attain to comprehend an existence without beginning, a duration without succession, a presence without circumference, an immobility without place, and agility without motion, and many other attributes which the mind can conceive, but which language is too imperfect to express. See, weigh, calculate, "It is as high as heaven, what canst thou do? Deeper than hell, what canst thou know? Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" Job ix. 7, 8. Let us then exclaim on the border of this abyss, "O the depth!"

II. The second way that leads us to the Creator, and at the same time the second abyss in which our reason is lost, is the works of nature. The study of nature is easy, and all the works of nature have a bright and luminous side. In the style of a prophet, "the heavens have a voice, which declare the glory of God;" and, as an apostle expresses it, "creation is a visible image of the invisible things of God;" yet there is also a dark obscure side. What a prodigious variety of creatures are there beyond the sphere of our senses! How many thousands, how many "ten thousand times ten thousand spirits called angels, archangels, cherubim, seraphim, thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers," of all which we know not either the properties, the operations, the number, or the employment! What a prodigious multitude of stars and suns, and revolving worlds, in comparison of which our earth is nothing but a point, and of all which we know neither the variety, the glory, nor the appointment! How many things are there on earth, plants, minerals, and animals, into the nature and use of which the industry of man could never penetrate! Why so much treasure hid in the depths of the sea? Why such vast countries, such impenetrable forests, and such uninhabited climes as have never been surveyed, and the whole of which perhaps will never be discovered? What is the use of some insects, and some monsters, which seem to be a burden to nature, and made only to disfigure it? Why does the Creator deprive man of many rich productions that would be of the greatest advantage to him, while he abandons them to beasts of the field or fishes of the sea, which derive no benefit from them? Whence came rivers, fountains, winds, and tempests, the power of the loadstone, and the ebbing and flowing of the tides? Philosopher! reply, or rather avow your ignorance, and acknowledge how deep the ways of your Creator are.

But it is but little to humble man to detect his ignorance on these subjects. It is not astonishing that he should err in paths so sublime, and it is more glorious to him to have attempted these impracticable roads, than shame-

* The book from which our author quoted the above passage, is entitled *Ampitheatrum aeternae providentiae—adversus atheos*, &c. Lyons. 1615. 8vo. The author Vanini was a Neapolitan; born in 1585. He was educated at Rome, and ordained a priest at Padua. He travelled into many countries, and was persecuted in most. In 1614 he was imprisoned in England for forty-nine days. After his enlargement he became a monk in Guienne. From the convent he was banished for his immorality. He found, however, powerful patrons. Mareschal Bassompierre made him his chaplain, and his famous *Ampitheatre* was approved by four persons, a doctor of divinity, the vicar general of Lyons, the king's proctor, and the lieutenant general of Lyons, in which they affirm, "that having read the book, there was nothing in it contrary to the Roman Catholic faith," one example of the ignorance or carelessness, with which licensers of the press discharge their office, and consequently one argument among thousands for the freedom of the press. This unfortunate man was condemned at Thoulouse to be burnt to death, which sentence was executed Feb. 19, 1619. The execution of this cruel sentence, cast into logical form, runs thus: Vanini denied the being of a God—the parliament of Thoulouse burnt Vanini—therefore there is a God.

ful to have done so without success. There are other objects more proper to humble human reason. Objects in appearance less subject to difficulty absorb the mind of man, whenever he attempts thoroughly to investigate them. Let him consider himself, and he will lose himself in meditating on his own essence. What is man? What is that soul which thinks and reflects? What constitutes the union of a spirit with a portion of matter? What is that matter to which a spirit is united? So many questions, so many abysses, so many unfathomable depths in the ways of the Creator.

What is the *soul* of man? In what does its essence consist? Is it the power of displaying his faculties? But then this consequence would follow, that a soul may have the essence of a soul, without having ever thought, reasoned, or reflected, provided it has the power of doing so. Is it the act of thinking? But then it would follow, that a spirit, when it ceases to think, ceases to be a spirit, which seems contrary to experience. What then is a soul? Is it a collection of successive thoughts? But how can such and such thoughts, not one of which apart is essential to a soul, constitute the essence of it when they are joined together? Is it something distinct from all these? Give us, if it be possible, a clear idea of this subject. What is a soul? Is it a substance immaterial, indivisible, different from body, and which cannot be enveloped in its ruins? Certainly: but when we give you this notion, we rather tell you what the soul is not, than what it is. You will say, you remove false notions, but you give us no true and positive ideas; you tell us indeed that spirit is not body, but you do not explain what spirit is, and we demand an idea clear, real, and adequate.

As I confound myself by considering the nature of my soul, so I am perplexed again when I examine the union of this soul with this body. Let us be informed, by what miracle a substance without extension and without parts, can be united to a substance material and extended? What connexion is there between willing to move and motion? What relation has a trace on the brain to an idea of the mind? How does the soul go in search of ideas before ideas present themselves? If ideas present themselves, what occasion for search? To have recourse to the power of God is wise, I grant, if we avail ourselves of this answer to avoid our ignorance; but if we use it to cover that, if we pretend to explain every thing by saying God is omnipotent, and can do all these things, we certainly deceive ourselves. It is to say, I know nothing, in philosophical terms, and when, it should seem, we affect to say, I perfectly understand it.

In fine, I demand an explication of the human body. What am I saying? the human body! I take the smallest particle of it; I take only one atom, one little grain of dust, and I give it to be examined by all the schools, and all the universities in the world. This atom has extent, it may be divided, it is capable of motion, it reflects light, and every one of these properties furnishes a thousand and a thousand questions, which the greatest philosophers can never answer.

My brethren, when we are in the schools,

when we occupy the chair of a professor, when we make it a law to answer every question, it is easy to talk, and, as the Wise Man expresses it, to "find a great deal to say."* There is an art, which is called *maintaining* a thesis, and this art is very properly named, for it does not consist in weighing and solving difficulties, or in acknowledging our ignorance; but in persisting to affirm our own position, and obstinately to defend it. But when we retire to our studies, coolly meditate, and endeavour to satisfy ourselves, if we have any accuracy of thought, we reason in another manner. Every sincere and ingenuous man must acknowledge that solidity, weight, light, and extent, are subjects, on which many very curious, and very finely imagined things have been said, but which to this day leave the mind almost in as much uncertainty as before. Thus the sublime genius, this author of so many volumes, this consummate philosopher cannot explain what a grain of dust is, so that one atom, one single atom, is a rock fatal to all his philosophy, against it all his science is dashed, shipwrecked, and lost.

Let us conclude that nature, this mirror descriptive of God, is dark and obscure. This is emphatically expressed by two inspired writers, the apostle Paul and holy Job. The first says, "God hath made all nations of men, of the earth, the appointed seasons, and the bounds of men's habitation, that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him and find him," Acts xvii. 26. 29. "This is both a passable road to God, and an unfathomable abyss." "That they might seek the Lord;" this is a way leading to God. "That they might find him by feeling after him;" this is the abyss. In like manner Job describes in lively colours the multitude and variety of the works of the Creator, and finishes by acknowledging, that all we know is nothing in comparison of what we are ignorant of. "He stretched out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing. 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. By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens, his hand hath formed the crooked serpent." Yet "these are only part of his ways." Job xxvi. 7, &c. Weigh these expressions well. This firmament, this earth, these waters, these pillars of heaven, this boundless space, the sun with its light, heaven with its stars, the earth with its plants, the sea with its fish, these, "lo, these are only parts of his ways, but how little a portion is heard of him!" The glorious extent of his power who can understand! Let us then, placed as we are on the borders of the works of nature, humbly exclaim, "O the depth!"

III. *Providence* is the third path to God, and affords us new motives to adore his perfections: but which also confounds the mind, and makes

* Eccl. vii. 29. The English translation of this text is, man has sought out many inventions. The French Bible reads, *Ont cherche beaucoup de descours*, that is, mankind has found out a great many questions to ask, and a great many *sophisms* to affirm on this subject; or in other words, a great deal to say concerning the original rectitude of man. The original vague terms are rendered by some critics, *Ipsæ se infinitas miserit questionibus*.

us feel that God is no less incomprehensible in his manner of governing the world than in that of creating it. It would be easy to prove this, if time would allow us to examine the secret way, which Providence uses to govern this universe. Let us be content to cast our eyes a moment on the conduct of Providence in the government of the church for the last century and a half.

Who would have thought that in a neighbouring kingdom a cruel and superstitious king,* the greatest enemy that the Reformation ever had, he, who by the fury of his arms and by the productions of his pen, opposed this great work, refuting those whom he could not persecute, and persecuting those whom he could not refute, who would have thought that this monarch should first serve the work he intended to subvert, clear the way for reformation, and by shaking off the yoke of the Roman pontiff execute the plan of Providence, while he seemed to do nothing but satiate his voluptuousness and ambition?

Who would have thought that the ambitious Clement,† to maintain some chimerical rights, which the pride of the clergy had forged, and which the cowardice of the people and the effeminacy of their princes had granted, who would have believed, that this ambitious pope, by hurling the thunders of the Vatican against this king, would have lost all that great kingdom, and thus would have given the first stab to a tyranny, which he intended to confirm?

Who would have imagined that Zuinglius would have had such amazing success among the people in the world the most inviolably attached to the customs of their predecessors, a people scrupulously retaining even the dress of their ancestors, a people above all so inimical to innovations in religion, that they will hardly bear a new explication of a passage of Scripture, a new argument, or a modern critical remark, who would have supposed, that they could have been persuaded to embrace a religion diametrically opposite to that which they had imbibed with their mothers' milk?

Who would have believed that Luther could have surmounted the obstacles that opposed the success of his preaching in Germany, and that the proud emperor,‡ who reckoned among his captives pontiffs and kings, could not subdue one miserable monk?

Who would have thought that the barbarous tribunal of the inquisition, which had enslaved so many nations to superstition, should have been in these provinces one of the principal causes of our reformation?

And perhaps the dark night, which now envelops one part of the church, will issue in a bright morning. Perhaps they, who in future time speak of Providence, will have reason to add to a catalogue of the deep things of divine government, the manner in which God shall have delivered the truth oppressed in a kingdom, where it once flourished in vigour and beauty. Perhaps the repeated blows given to the reformed may serve only to establish the reformation. But we abridge this third article,

and proceed to the fourth, in which we are to treat of the depths of revelation.

IV. Shall we produce the mortifying list of unanswerable questions, to which many doctrines of our religion are liable; as for example those which regard the Trinity, the incarnation, the satisfaction, the union of two natures in Jesus Christ, the secret ways of the Holy Spirit in converting the souls of men, the precise nature of the happiness to be enjoyed in the intermediate state between our death and our resurrection, the faculties of glorified bodies, the recollection of what we shall have seen in this world, and many more of the same kind?

All this would carry us too far from the principal design of the apostle. It is time to return to the precise subject, which inspired him with this exclamation. The words of the text are, as we have intimated, the conclusion of a discourse contained in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh chapters of this epistle. Those chapters are the cross of divines. The questions there treated of concerning the decrees of God are so abstruse, that in all ages of the church, and particularly since the schism of Pelagius, divines, orthodox and heterodox, have employed all their efforts to give us a system free from difficulties, and they have all failed in their design.

To enable you to comprehend this, we are going succinctly to state their different systems; and the short view we shall take will be sufficient to convince you, that the subject is beyond the reach of the human mind, and that though the opinion of our churches has this advantage above others, that it is more conformable to right reason, and to the decisions of Scripture, yet it is not without its abysses and depths.

Let us begin with the system of Socinus and his followers. God, according to them, not only has not determined the salvation of his children, but he could not even foresee it. Whatever man resolves depends on his own volition, and whatever depends on human volition cannot be an object of the knowledge of God, so that God could not foresee whether I should believe or not believe, whether I should obey or not obey, whether I should receive the gospel or reject it. God made no other decree than that of saving such as believe, obey, and submit to his gospel: these things depend on my will, what depends on my will is uncertain, an uncertain object cannot be an object of certain knowledge: God therefore cannot certainly foresee, whether my condition will be eternally happy, or eternally miserable.

This is the system. Thanks be to God, we preach to a Christian auditory. It is not necessary to refute these errors, and you feel, I persuade myself, that to reason in this manner is not to elucidate, but to subvert religion; it is at once to degrade God from his deity, and Scripture from its infallibility.

This system degrades God, for what, pray, is a God, who created beings, and who could not foresee what would result from their existence? A God who formed spirits united to bodies by certain laws, and who did not know how to combine these laws so as to foresee, the effects they would produce? A God forced to suspend his judgment? A God who every day learns something new, and who does not know to-day

* Henry VIII. of England.

† Pope Clement VII.

‡ Charles V.

what will happen to-morrow. A God who cannot tell whether peace will be concluded, or war continue to ravage the world; whether religion will be received in a certain kingdom, or whether it will be banished; whether the right heir will succeed to the crown, or whether the crown will be set on the head of a usurper? For according to the different determinations of the wills of men, of kings, or people, the prince will make peace, or declare war, religion will be banished or admitted, the tyrant or the lawful king will occupy the throne: for if God cannot foresee how the volitions of men will be determined, he cannot foresee any of these events. What is this but to degrade God from his Deity, and to make the most perfect of all intelligences a being involved in darkness and uncertainty like ourselves.

Farther, to deny the presence of God is to degrade Scripture from its infallibility, for how can we pretend to respect Scripture when we deny that God knows the determinations, and volitions of mankind? What then are we to understand by all the express declarations on this subject? For example, what does the psalmist mean? "O God, thou hast searched and known me. Thou knowest my down-sitting and up-rising, thou understandest my thoughts afar off. Thou art acquainted with all my ways, for there is not a word in my tongue but thou knowest it altogether," Ps. cxxxix. 1, &c. What means God himself, speaking by Ezekiel? "Thus saith the Lord to the house of Israel, I know the thoughts that came into your mind every one of them," chap. xi. 5. And again by Isaiah; "I know that thou wouldst deal very treacherously," chap. xlvi. 8. What did St. Peter mean? speaking of his own thoughts, he said, "Lord, thou knowest all things," John xxi. 17. What does the Wise Man mean, who assures us, not only that God knows the hearts of kings, but that he has them "in his hand, and turneth them whithersoever he pleaseth as rivers of water!" Prov. xxi. 1.

Above all, how can this principle be reconciled to many express prophecies of events which being closely connected with the volitions of men could not have been certainly foretold, unless God at the time had a certain knowledge of these determinations? "The prescience of God," says Tertullian, "has as many witnesses as there are prophets and prophecies."* Had not God foreseen that Jesus Christ would preach the gospel in Judea, that the Jews would hate him, that they would deliver him to Pilate, that they would solicit his death, that Pilate would have the meanness and pusillanimity to yield to their entreaties; had not God known all these things, how could he have predicted them?

But the men we oppose do not much respect the decisions of Scripture. The principle to which all this system tends, is, that reason is to decide on the doctrines of Scripture, and not that the doctrines of Scripture are to direct reason. This principle once granted, all the doctrines of our faith are subverted, as experience proves. See into what rash declarations this principle had conducted Socinus and his followers. What decision of Scripture, what doctrine of faith, what truth however established, repeated, and enforced, has it not

allured them to deny? The bondage of the human will seems to destroy the nature of man: this bondage must be denied. But the doctrine of absolute decrees seems to disagree with the liberty of man: these absolute decrees must be denied. But the foreknowledge of God cannot be allowed without the doctrine of decrees; the foreknowledge of God must be denied. But a thousand prophecies prove this prescience; the mystical sense of these prophecies must be denied. But Jesus Christ has verified them: then Jesus Christ must be denied his titles, his attributes, his works, his worship, his satisfaction, his divinity, his union to God, his incarnation, must all be denied: he must be made a mere man, a prophet, a teacher, distinguished from others only by some extraordinary talents: the whole system of the gospel of salvation, and of redemption must be denied. To follow these ideas, my brethren, is to tumble from precipice to precipice without knowing where we shall stop.

We propose in the second place the system of our brethren of the confession of Augsburg, and that of Arminius; for though they differ in other articles, yet they both agree pretty nearly in this point. Their system is this. They grant foreknowledge; but deny foreappointment. They allow indeed that God always foresaw who would be happy in heaven, and who victims in hell; but they tremble at the thesis, which affirms that God predestinated the first to felicity, and the last to misery. According to them, God made no other decree than to save believers, and to condemn infidels; he gave all men assistance sufficient to enable them to believe, and having only foreseen who would believe, and who would not believe, he made no decree to secure the faith of some, and the unbelief of the rest.

Although it is never our custom to envenom controversy, and to tax people with heresy for not being of our opinion; though we would rather reconcile opposite opinions than triumph in refuting them; yet we cannot help making three reflections. First, this system does not agree with itself—secondly, it is directly opposite to many decisions of the Holy Spirit, and particularly to the doctrine of the three chapters before us—and thirdly, should we grant the whole, a thousand difficulties would remain in the doctrine of the decrees of God, and we should always be obliged to exclaim, as these brethren must on this article, "O the depth!"

1. We affirm, that this system is inconsistent with itself, that the doctrine of prescience supposes that of predestination, and that unless we deny that God foresaw our salvation, we are obliged by our own thesis to affirm that he predestinated us to it. I grant there is a sense, in which it is true that to foresee a thing is different from determining to bring it to pass: but there is another sense, in which to foresee and foreappoint is one and the same thing. If I foresee that a prince sending armed troops into the house of the widow and orphan will expose that house to pillage, it is certain, my foresight has no influence in the fate of that house, and in this case to foresee the act of plundering is not a determination to plunder. But if the prince foresee the event,

* In his second book against Marcion.

if he know the rage and fury with which his soldiers are animated, if he knew by experience that in such conjectures they have committed such crimes, if, in spite of this prescience, he send his madmen into this house, if he allow them their armour, if he lay them under no restraint, if he do not appoint any superior officer to bridle their fury, do you not think, my brethren, that to foresee and to resolve this case are in him one and the same thing?

Apply these reflections to our subject. Let us suppose that before the creation of this world God had subsisted alone, with one other spirit such as you please to imagine. Suppose, when God had formed the plan of the world, he had communicated it to this spirit that subsisted with him. Suppose, that God who formed the plan, and the intelligence to whom he had communicated it, had both foreseen that some men of this world would be saved and others lost; do you not perceive, that there would have been an essential difference between the prescience of God, and the prescience of the spirit we have imagined? The foreknowledge of this last would not have had any influence either over the salvation, or destruction of mankind, because this spirit would have foreknown, and that would have been all. but is not the foreknowledge of God of another kind? Is that a speculative, idle, and uninfluential knowledge? He not only foresaw, but he created. He not only foresaw that man being free would make a good or ill use of his liberty, but he gave him that liberty. To foresee and to foreappoint in God is only one and the same thing. If indeed you only mean to affirm, by saying, that these are two different acts, that God does no violence to his creatures, but that notwithstanding his prescience, the one hardens himself freely, and the other believes freely: if this be all you mean, give us the right hand of fellowship, for this is exactly our system, and we have no need to asperse one another, as both hold the same doctrine.

There is a second inconvenience in the system of bare prescience, that is, that it does not square with Scripture, which clearly establishes the doctrine of predestination. We omit many passages usually quoted in this controversy; as that Jesus Christ said to his father, "I thank thee, O Father, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight," Matt. xi. 25. And this of St. Paul, "God hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, having predestinated us to the adoption of sons," Eph. i. 4. As this famous passage, "whom he did foreknow them he did predestinate, and whom he did predestinate them he also called," Rom. viii. 28, 29.

We omit all these passages because our opponents dispute the sense we give of them, and because it is but justice either to hear and answer their objections (which the limits of these exercises will not allow) or not to make use of them, for that would be taking for granted what is not allowed, that is, that these passages speak of predestination in our sense of the term. Let us content ourselves to oppose

against the doctrine of prescience without predestination these three chapters in Romans, of which the text is the close.

I am aware of what is objected. It is said that we make phantoms to combat, that the meaning of St. Paul is clear, that the end he had in view puts the matter out of doubt, and that his end has no relation to absolute decrees much less did he design to establish them. The apostle had laid down this position, that the gospel would hereafter be the only economy of salvation, and consequently that an adherence to the Levitical institution would be fatal. The Jews object to this, for they could not comprehend how an adherence to a divine institution could lead to perdition. St. Paul answers these complaints, by telling them that God had a right to annex his grace to what conditions he thought proper, and that the Jews, having rejected the Messiah who brought salvation to them, had no reason to complain, because God had deprived them of a covenant, the conditions of which they had not performed. According to these divines this is all the mystery of these chapters, in which say they, there is no trace of predestination.

But how can this be supposed to contain the whole design of the apostle? Suppose a Jew should appear in this auditory, and make these objections against us. You Christians form an inconsistent idea of God. God said, the Mosaical worship should be eternal: but you say God has abolished it. God said, "he that doth these things shall live by them;" but you say, that he who does these things shall go into endless perdition for doing them. God said, the Messiah should come to the children of Abraham; but you say, he has cast off the posterity of the patriarch, and made a covenant with Pagan nations. Suppose a Jew to start these difficulties, and suppose we would wish simply to remove them, independently of the decrees we imagine in God, what should we say to this Jew? We should tell him first, that he had mistaken the sense of the law; and that the eternity promised to the Levitical economy signified only a duration till the advent of the Messiah. Particularly we should inform him that his complaints against the Messiah were groundless. You complain, we should say, that God makes void his fidelity by abandoning you, but your complaint is unjust. God made a covenant with your fathers, he promised to bless their posterity, and engaged to send your Redeemer to bestow numberless benedictions and favours upon you. This Redeemer is come, he was born among you in your nation, of a family in one of your own tribes, he began to discharge his office among you, and set salvation before you; you rejected him, you turned his doctrine into ridicule, you called him Beelzebub, you solicited his death, at length you crucified him, and since that you have persecuted him in his ministers and disciples. On the contrary, the Gentiles display his virtues, and they are prodigal of their blood to advance his glory. Is it surprising, that God so dispenses his favours as to distinguish two nations so very different in the manner of their obedience to his authority?

Instead of this, what does St. Paul? Hear his answers. "Before the children were born,

before they had done either good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, he saith, the elder shall serve the younger. Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. The Scripture saith to Pharaoh, for this purpose have I raised thee up that I might make my power known. He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Who art thou who repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel to honour, and another to dishonour? What if God willing to show his wrath, and make his power known, endures with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath prepared to destruction?" Rom. ix. 11, &c. In all these answers, St. Paul has recourse to the decrees of God. And one proof that this is the doctrine he intends to teach the converted Jew, to whom he addresses himself, is, that this Jew makes some objections, which have no ground in the system we attack, but which are precisely the same that have been always urged against the doctrine of predestination. "Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?" Thus the system of prescience without predestination does not agree with Scripture.

We ask, thirdly, what is the system good for? Does it cast any light on the ways of Providence? Does it fill up any of the depths which absorb our imperfect reason? In a word, is it not subject to the very same difficulties as that of predestination? These difficulties are the following, how could a God supremely good create men, who he knew must be some day infinitely miserable? How could a God infinitely holy permit sin to enter the world? How is it, that a God of infinite love to justice, does not bestow on all mankind succour sufficient to render them perfectly holy? How it came to pass that a God, who declares he "would have all men to be saved," did not reveal his will for the space of four thousand years to any but the single nation of the Jews? How is it that at this present time he does not extend our conquests to the ends of the earth, that we might carry thither the light of Christianity, preach the gospel in idolatrous climes, and the mosques of Mohammed? How does he afford life, and health, and strength, and courage, and opportunity to a creature, while he prosecutes black and horrible crimes, which make nature tremble? These are great difficulties in Providence. Let any one inform us of a system without them, and we are ready to embrace it: but in this system now before us all these difficulties are contained, and should we grant its advocates all they require, they would be obliged however to exclaim with us on the borders of the ways of God, "O the depth!"

The third system is that of such divines as are called *Supralapsarians*. The word *supralapsarian* signifies above the fall, and these divines are so called because they so arrange the decrees of God as to go above the fall of man, as we are going to explain. Their grand principle is, that God made all things for his own

glory; that his design in creating the universe was to manifest his perfections, and particularly his justice and his goodness; that for this purpose he created men with design that they should sin, in order that in the end he might appear infinitely good in pardoning some, and perfectly just in condemning others; so that God resolved to punish such and such persons, not because he foresaw they would sin, but he resolved they should sin that he might damn them. This is their system in a few words. It is not that which is generally received in our churches, but there have been many members and divines among us who adopted and defended it: but whatever veneration we profess for their memory, we ingeniously own, we cannot digest such consequences as seem to us necessarily to follow these positions. We will just mention the few difficulties following.

First, we demand an explanation of what they mean by this principle, "God has made all things for his own glory." If they mean that justice requires a creature to devote himself to the worship and glorifying of his Creator, we freely grant it. If they mean that the attributes of God are displayed in all his works, we grant this too. But if this proposition be intended to affirm that God had no other view in creating men, so to speak, than his own interest, we deny the proposition, and affirm that God created men for their own happiness, and in order to have subjects upon whom he might bestow favours.

We desire to be informed in the next place, how it can be conceived, that a determination to damn millions of men can contribute to "the glory of God?" We easily conceive that it is for the glory of divine justice to punish guilty men: but to resolve to damn men without the consideration of sin, to create them that they might sin, to determine that they should sin in order to their destruction, is what seems to us more likely to tarnish the glory of God than to display it.

Thirdly, we demand, how according to this hypothesis it can be conceived that God is not the author of sin? In the general scheme of our churches, God only permits men to sin, and it is the abuse of liberty that plunges man into misery. Even this principle, moderate as it seems, is yet subject to a great number of difficulties: but in this of our opponents, God wills sin to produce the end he proposed in creating the world, and it was necessary that men should sin; God created them for that. If this be not to constitute God the author of sin, we must renounce the most distinct and clear ideas.

Fourthly, we require them to reconcile this system with many express declarations of Scripture, which inform us, that "God would have all men saved." How does it agree with such pressing entreaties, such cutting reproofs, such tender exhortations as God discovers in regard to the unconverted; "O that my people had hearkened unto me! O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and ye would not?" Matt. xxiii. 37.

Lastly, we desire to know how it is possible to conceive a God, who being in the actual

enjoyment of perfect happiness, incomprehensible and supreme, could determine to add this degree though useless to his felicity, to create men without number for the purpose of confining them for ever in chains of darkness, and burning them for ever in unquenchable flames.

Such are the gulfs opened to us by these divines! As they conceive of the ways of God in a manner so much beyond comprehension, no people in the world have so much reason as they to exclaim, "O the depth! How unsearchable are the ways of God!" For my part, I own I cannot enough wonder at men, who tell us in cool blood, that God created this universe on purpose to save one man, and to damn a hundred thousand; that neither sighs, nor prayers, nor tears, nor groans, can revoke this decree; that we must submit to the sentence of God, whose *glory* requires the creation of all these people for destruction! I say I cannot sufficiently express my astonishment at seeing people maintain these propositions with inflexibility and insensibility, without attempting to mitigate or limit the subject, yea, who tells us that all this is extremely plain and free from every difficulty, and that none of our objections deserve an answer.

Such being the difficulties of the several systems of the decrees of God, it should seem there is but one part to take, and that is to embrace the plan of our churches; for although it is evident by the reflections we have made, that the subject is obscure, yet it is that of all which is most conformable to the light of reason, and to the Holy Scriptures. We believe that God from a principle of goodness, created mankind—that it was agreeable to his wisdom to form man free—that the root of mankind, Adam, our unhappy father, abused this liberty—that his descendants have added their natural depravity, and to the sins of their ancestors, many crimes of their own—that a conduct so monstrous rendered parents and children worthy of eternal misery, so that without violating the laws of justice God might for ever punish both—that having foreseen from all eternity these misfortunes, he resolved from all eternity to take from this unworthy mass of condemned creatures a certain number of men to be saved—that for them he sent his Son into the world—that he grants them his Spirit to apply the benefits of the death of his Son—and that this Spirit conducts them by the hearing of the word to sanctification, and from sanctification to eternal felicity. This in a few words is the system of our churches.

Hereupon, if you ask how it happens that two men to whom Christ is preached, the one receives and the other rejects him? We answer with St. Paul, this difference is, "that the purpose of God according to election might stand." If you ask again whence comes this choice, how is it that God chooses to give his Spirit, and to display his mercy to one, and that he chooses to make the other a victim to his justice? We answer, "God hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth," that is, leaves him to his own insensibility. If you inquire farther how God can without injuring his holiness, leave a man to his own hardness? We reply, that God is master of his creature, and

that "the potter hath power over the clay of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour." If you still demand, what then is the use of our ministry, and what right has God to complain that so many sinners persist in impenitence, since he has resolved to leave them in it? To this we answer, "who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?"

After all these questions should you appeal to our consciences to know whether our own answers fully satisfy ourselves; whether our arguments may not be turned against us; whether the objections we have made against others do not seem to conclude against ourselves; and whether the system we have proposed to you appears to ourselves free from difficulty; to this we reply by putting our finger upon our mouth: we acknowledge our ignorance, we cannot rend the veil under which God has concealed his mysteries: we declare, that our end in choosing this subject was less to remove difficulties than to press them home, and by these means to make you feel the toleration which Christians mutually owe to one another on this article. It was with this view that we led you to the brink of this abyss of God, and endeavoured to engage you to exclaim here, as well as on the borders of other abysses, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

So much for the *deep things of God* considered as objects astonishing and transporting the mind. Now let us consider them as objects productive of virtue and holiness. As the doctrine we have been establishing is most sublime in speculation, so is it most effectual in practice. Recall what we said on the darkness in which God conceals himself. Remember this obscurity is every where mixed with light, a sort of twilight. There is obscurity in our natural ideas, obscurity in the works of nature, obscurity in the conduct of Providence, obscurity in many doctrines of revelation. Amidst all this darkness, I discover one certain principle, one particle of pure light emitting brightness without obscurity, one truth which natural ideas, the whole creation, the ways of Providence, and the language of revelation, concur to teach us, that is, that a holy life is necessary.

We do not make this reflection by way of introducing skepticism, and to diminish the certainty of the doctrines, which it has pleased God to reveal. We be to us, if while we labour with one hand to establish the foundations of religion, we endeavour to subvert them with the other! Far from us be those modern *Vaninis*, who, under pretence of making us consider the Deity as covered with holy darkness, would persuade us that he is an inconsistent being, and that the religion he addresses to us shocks reason, and is incompatible with itself. But whence is it, pray, that amidst all the obscurities that surround us, God has placed practical duties in a light so remarkably clear? Whence is it that doctrines most clearly revealed are however so expressed as to furnish difficulties, if not substantial and real, yet likely and apparent: and that the practical part is so clearly revealed that it is not liable to any

objections which have any show or colour of argument? My brethren, either we must deny the wisdom of the Creator, or we must infer this consequence, that what is most necessary to be known, what will be most fatal to man to neglect, what we ought most inviolably to preserve, is practical religion. Let us apply this general reflection to the deep decrees of God. If the "foundation of God stands sure," you can have no true joy or solid content, till you have each of you decided this great question; am I one of the "vessels of mercy decreed unto glory?" Or am I one of the "vessels of wrath fitting to destruction?" But how can I satisfy myself on this question at the same time so obscure and so important? The decree is impenetrable. The book of life is sealed. We have told you a thousand times, that there is no other way than by examining whether you bear the marks of election, and your whole vocation is to endeavour to acquire them. These characters, you know, are patience, gentleness, charity, humility, detachment from the world, and all other Christian virtues. It belongs to you to exercise them. A little less speculation and more practice. Let us become less curious, and try to be more holy. Let us leave God to arrange his own decrees, and for our parts let us arrange our actions, and regulate our lives. Do not say, if I be predestinated to salvation I shall be saved without endeavouring. You would be wicked to make this objection, for although you are persuaded that your days are numbered, yet you do not omit to eat, and drink, and take care of your health. In this manner you should act in regard to your salvation.

And we, ministers of Jesus Christ, what is our duty? Why are we sent to this people? Is it to fathom the decrees of predestination and reprobation? As the Spirit of God has revealed these mysteries, it is right to treat of them in the course of our ministry, and we should "think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think," were we to suppress this part of religion. But after all, must we stop here? Must this be the principal subject of our sermons? God forbid we should so ill understand the end of our ministry! I would as willingly see a physician, when he is consulted in a dangerous illness, employ himself in discoursing on the term of human life, haranguing his patient, telling him that his days are numbered, and that a hair of his head could not fall without the will of God. Unseasonable orator, leave talking, and go to work, consult the symptoms of my illness, call art and nature to my assistance, leave God to execute his own decrees, prescribe the remedies I must take, and the regimen I must follow, endeavour to strengthen this tottering body, and to retain my breath just ready to evaporate. Let us apply this image. Let us think of the account we must give to the master who sent us. Let us take care that he does not say to us in the great day of judgment, Get ye behind me ye refractory servants! I sent you to make the church holy, and not pender it disputatious: to confirm my elect, and not to engage them in attempts to penetrate the mysteries of election, to announce my laws, and not to fathom my decrees.

But not to confine ourselves to these general

remarks, let us observe, that obscurity in regard to God affords powerful arguments against the rash divine, the indiscreet zealot, the timorous Christian, and the worldly man attached to sensible objects.

This subject addresses itself to you rash divines, you who perplex your mind by trying to comprehend incomprehensible truths, to you whose audacious disposition obliges you to run into one of these two extremes, either to embrace error or to render truth doubtful by the manner of explaining it. For understand, my brethren, the man who rejects a truth because he cannot comprehend it, and he who would fully comprehend it before he receives it, both sin from the same principles, neither understands the limits of the human mind. These two extremes are alike dangerous. Certainly on the one hand we must be very rash, we must entertain very diminutive ideas of an infinite God, we must be very little versed in science to admit only principles which have no difficulty, and to regard the depth of a subject as a character of falsehood. What! A miserable creature, an ignorant creature, a creature that does not know itself, would know the decrees of God, and reject them if they be unfathomable! But on the other hand, we must have very narrow views, we must have a very weak mind, we must know very little of the designs of God, not to feel any difficulty, to find every thing clear, not to suspend our judgment upon any thing, to pretend not only to perceive the truth of a mystery, but to go to the bottom of it. Insignificant man, feel thy diminutiveness. Cover thyself with dust, and learn of the greatest of divines to stop where you ought to stop, and to cry on the brink of the ocean, "O the depth!"

The deep things of God ought to confound the indiscreet zealot, who decries and reviles all opinions different from his own, though in matters in themselves dark and obscure. Here we pour our tears into the bosoms of our brethren of Augsburg, some of whose teachers describe us in the most odious colours, dip their pen in gall when they write against us, tax us with making of the Deity a God cruel and barbarous, a God who is the author of sin, and who by his decrees, countenances the depravity and immorality of mankind. You see, whether this be our doctrine. You see, we join our voices with those of seraphims, and make our assemblies resound with "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts." You see, we exhort our people to "enter in at the strait gate," and to "work out their salvation with fear and trembling." But, say you, do not the consequences we impute to you follow from your principles? To grant for a moment that they do follow, is it not sufficient that we disown and condemn them? Does not such an answer from you concerning another doctrine satisfy us? Accuse us of being bad reasoners: but do not accuse us of being wicked men. Accuse us of reasoning inconclusively; but do not accuse us of exercising a faithless ministry. But, say you, you have divines among you who poison controversy, who refute with bitterness, who excommunicate such as are not of their sentiments on predestination, and who, had they power equal to their will, would establish

every opinion with fire and blood. Have we such divines? Ah! may God deliver us from them! They follow their own spirit, and not the spirit of our churches. Our churches never separated any person from their communion for not believing predestination. You know this by experience. Do we not open our arms to you? Do we not receive you into our communion? Have we not a sincere and ardent desire to be in union with you? O that God would hear our prayers! Spouse of Jesus Christ! O that God would put an end to the intestine wars that tear thee asunder! Children of the Reformation! O that you had but the wisdom to unite all your efforts against the real enemy of the Reformation, and of the reformed! This is our wish, and these shall incessantly be our prayers.

The depths of the ways of God may serve to reprove the timid and revolting Christian; a character too common among us. Our faith forsakes us in our necessities; we lose the sure anchor of hope in a storm; we usually dash against rocks of adversity; we are confounded when we see those projects vanish, on the success of which we rested our happiness, and the prosperity of the church. My brethren, let us be more firm in our principles. Christian prudence indeed will oblige us to put our hand to every good work. We must be vigilant, assiduous, exact in our own affairs. In like manner in public dangers, we must assemble wise men, raise armies, and every one must endeavour to do what is in his power, and carry a stone towards the building of the temple: but when our designs fail, let us be steady, immoveable, unchangeable. Let us remember that we are only little children in comparison with the Intelligence at the helm of the world; that God often allows us to use just and rational means, and at length frustrates all our designs in order to deliver us by unexpected methods, and to save us with more conspicuous power and glory.

When I am to penetrate this truth, I fix my eyes on the great enemy of religion. I see him at first equalling, yea surpassing the most superb potentates, risen to a point of elevation astonishing to the whole world. His family numerous, his armies victorious, his territories extended far and wide, at home and abroad. I see places conquered, battles won, and every blow aimed at his throne, serving only to establish it. I see a servile idolatrous court elevating him above men, above heroes, and likening him to God himself. I see all parts of the world overwhelmed with his troops, your frontiers threatened, religion trembling, and the Protestant world at the brink of ruin. At the sight of this tempest, I expect every moment to see the church expire, and I exclaim, O thou little boat, driven with the wind, and battered in the storm! Are the waves going to swallow thee up? O church of Jesus Christ! against which the gates of hell were never to prevail, are all my hopes come to this!—Behold Almighty God makes bare his holy arm, discovers himself amidst all this chaos, and overwhelms us with miracles of love, after having humbled us by the darkness of his Providence. Behold! In two campaigns,* more

* Of Hochstet and Ramillies.

than a hundred thousand enemies are either buried in the waves, or killed by our troops, or trodden to death by our horse, or taken prisoners. Behold! whole provinces yield to our arms. Behold! our noble army covered with more laurels than we had ever seen before. Behold the fatal power that was just now exalted to heaven, shaking, falling, and about to be cast down to hell. My brethren, let these events make us wise. Let us not judge of the conduct of God by our own ideas, but let us learn to respect the depths of his Providence.

But what! shall we always live in shades and darkness! Will there always be a veil between the porch and the sanctuary? Will God always lead us among chasms and gulfs? Ah! my brethren, these are precisely the ejaculations, these are the desires with which we would inspire you; and this we affirm, that the deep things of God expose the folly of a worldly man, who immoderately loves the present life. Presently this night, this dark night, shall be at an end; presently we shall enter into that temple, "where there is no need of the sun, because the Lamb is the light thereof," Rev. xxi. 23. Presently we shall arrive at that blessed period, when that which is in part shall be done away. In heaven we shall know all things. In heaven we shall understand nature, providence, grace, and glory. In heaven, Jesus Christ will solve all our difficulties and objections. In heaven we shall see God face to face. O how will this knowledge fill us with joy! O how delightful will it be to derive knowledge and truth from their source! My soul, quit thy dust! Anticipate these periods of felicity, and say with Moses, "Lord, show me thy glory!" O Lord, dissipate the clouds and darkness that are around thy throne! O Lord shorten the time that separates us! . . . "No man can see my face and live." Well! Let us die then. Let us die to become immortal. Let us die to know God. Let us die to be made partakers of the divine nature. Happy to form such elevated wishes! Happier still to see them accomplished! Amen.

SERMON LXVI.

THE SENTENCE PASSED UPON JUDAS BY JESUS CHRIST.

MATTHEW xxvi. 24.

The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but wo unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed: it had been good for that man, if he had not been born.

This verse is part of a period beginning at the seventeenth, and ending with the twenty-fifth verse, in which the evangelist narrates two events, the last passover of Jesus Christ, and the treason of Judas. One of my colleagues will explain the other parts of this passage of sacred history, and I shall confine myself to this sentence of our Saviour against Judas, "It had been good for that man, if he had not been born."

This oracle is unequivocal. It conveys a

most melancholy idea of the condition of the unhappy criminal. It should seem, Jesus Christ enveloped in qualified terms a truth the most dreadful imaginable. These words, "It had been good for that man, if he had not been born," are equivalent to these, Judas is for ever excluded from the happiness of heaven; Judas is for ever condemned to the punishment of hell. It is the same truth, which the apostles expressed, after the example of their master, in milder terms, "Thou Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, show whether thou hast chosen Justus or Matthias, that he may take part of this apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place," Acts i. 24-28. What is this place? The answer is easy, though some ancient heretics affirm extravagant things about it. It is the place reserved for those against whom the door of mercy is shut: it is the place reserved for those who must for ever serve for victims of divine justice.

If you recall to mind all the most guilty persons, and those whose condition is the most desperate, you will not find one of whom that can be said without rashness which is here affirmed of Judas, Judas is the only person, literally the only person, whom we are allowed with certainty to declare is in the torments of hell. Certainly we cannot help forming lamentable ideas of the condition of some sinners, who died in perpetrating their crimes; as of some who were less men than monsters of humanity, and who died blaspheming God, and attacking religion and morality, as Pharaoh, Belshazzar, Julian, and others; but after all, it is not for us to set limits to the mercy of God. The Holy Spirit has ways unknown to us to convert the hearts of men. Judas is the only one without exception, of whom I dare venture to affirm, *he is irrecoverably lost*. And when I form this judgment of his destiny, I do not ground it merely on his betraying Jesus Christ; for it is not impossible that after he had committed that crime he might have obtained forgiveness by repentance. I do not ground it on the manner of his death, for he was distracted, and madness is sometimes caused by trouble, and in such a case reason has no share, and divine justice does not impute sin to a man deprived of his senses. I ground my judgment of the punishment of Judas on the words of my text, "It had been good for that man, if he had not been born;" words never denounced by the Spirit of God against any other wretch that ever was. Thus the object which I exhibit to your view to-day, is not only a particular object, but is even an unique, a sole, a single object.

But perhaps, because it is a singular case, you think it does not regard you, and that you need not make any inferences concerning your own eternal destiny from it. And does not this object regard you? Alas! My brethren, I dare not . . . but however hear me; condescend to accompany me in this mortifying and (I must tell you, how improper soever it may seem to reconcile your attention) deign to accompany us in this alarming meditation. Come and examine what a melancholy likeness there is between the features of some of our hearers, and those of the miserable Judas.

How like are their dispositions! How sad soever the examination may be, there is at least one comfortable consideration, at least one difference between them and this traitor, that is, Jesus Christ has pronounced the decree of his condemnation, whereas he has not yet pronounced the sentence on my hearers; the door of mercy is yet open to them, the time of their visitation is not yet quite expired. O that they would avail themselves of the few inestimable moments that remain! O that they would throw themselves at the feet of that Jesus whom they have so often betrayed! O that they may be washed in that blood which they have so unworthily trodden under foot! God Almighty grant, for his great mercy's sake, that this may be the effect of this discourse! Grant, O God, that such of us as are best established in piety may be filled with holy fear, by seeing to what excess self-interest may be carried! "O Lord, incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not unto covetousness." Amen.

"It had been good for that man if he had not been born," or what is the same thing in this place, "If he had never existed, and were not to exist any longer." Let us first explain the meaning of Jesus Christ by a few reflections, and justify the idea I have given you of the words.

1. Existence is the foundation of happiness and misery. Nothing has no properties. Not to exist is to be neither happy nor miserable. To exist is to be capable of one or the other, or both together. Existence considered in itself, is indifferent to the being existing; it is the happiness or the misery with which it is accompanied, which determines the value of it. If it were possible for a man to exist without being either happy or miserable, his existence would be in some sort useless and indifferent, and it would be true in regard to him, that it would be neither good nor evil to him to be born or not to be born. If the existence of a man be accompanied with equal degrees of happiness and misery, we must form the same judgment; misery is compensated by happiness, and happiness by misery, the balance is equal, and preponderates neither way. If there be more happiness than misery in his existence, it is true in regard to him, that it is better for him to be than not to be; on the contrary, if misery exceed happiness, . . . finish this proposition yourselves, and apply it to the subject in hand. "It had been good for Judas if he had not been born." So Jesus Christ declares. The existence of Judas then must be attended with more misery than happiness. This is our first reflection.

2. To judge whether a man be happy or miserable, whether it would be better for him to exist or not to exist, we must not consider him in regard to a few moments, but in the whole of his existence; we must examine whether all things considered good be greater than evil, or evil greater than good. The good and ills of past life generally leave no impression on our minds, they contribute only to our present happiness or misery, and there remains nothing but a remembrance of them. If you can judge of the happiness or misery of man by his actual condition, you will say in

each moment of his happiness, it is better for him to be than not to be; and during every moment of his misery, you will say, it is better for him not to exist. But, as I said before, it is not in regard to a single instant that a man ought to be considered to determine whether he be happy or miserable; it is in the whole of his existence.

I make this reflection to prevent your supposing that when Jesus Christ said, "It had been good for Judas if he had not been born," he meant Judas should be annihilated. Had Judas been annihilated after death, it must be said, according to our first proposition, that Judas after death would not be either happy or miserable; that it would not have been either good or evil for him to be born or not to be born. In this case, to form a just idea of the value of the existence of Judas, it would be necessary to compare the misery of his end with the happiness of his life, and as we have no reason to think he had been more miserable than happy in his life, as we have reason to presume, on the contrary, that having been in a middling state of life, he had enjoyed the gifts of nature with some kind of tranquillity, it could not be affirmed, strictly speaking, that because he died a violent death, "it had been good for him if he had not been born." The death of Judas separated from its consequences was not more miserable than that of a man who dies in his bed after lying ill some days; and as we cannot affirm of a man, who after enjoying a tranquil life dies by an illness of some days, that "it had been good for that man if he had not been born," so neither can we affirm of Judas, if he had been annihilated after death. When Jesus Christ says, "it had been good for that man if he had not been born," he supposes he would subsist after death. He compares the condition he would be in after death with all the good he had enjoyed, and would enjoy during life; and by thus forming his judgment on the whole of existence, he determines that the existence of this traitor would be accompanied with more evil than good, and he pronounces, "it would have been good for that man if he had not been born," that is to say, if he never had existed, and if he never were to exist any longer. This is our second reflection.

3. Whatever misfortunes attend the present life, there are few men, who, all things considered, would not rather choose to live for ever, as we live in this world, than to be annihilated after living a few years. I do not inquire whether their choice be good; I only say it is their choice, the fact is incontestable. If few men be of the mind of Mæcenas, who said, "Let me suffer, let me be despised, and miserable, yet I would rather exist than not exist," if there be, I say, few men of the opinion of this favourite of Augustus, there are few also who adopt the sentiment of the Wise Man, or shall I say of the fool? (for there is some reason to doubt, whether it be the language of Solomon or the fool introduced in the book,) "I praised the dead which are already dead, more than the living which are yet alive: yea, better is he than both they, which hath not yet been," Eccles. iv. 2, 3. To consider things as they usually are, whatever misfortunes attend

life, mankind prefer life before annihilation. Whether their taste be good or bad, we do not inquire now, we speak of a fact, and the fact is indisputable. Jesus Christ speaks to men, he supposes their ideas to be what they are, and he speaks according to these ideas. When he says, "it had been good for Judas, if he had not been born," he means that his misery would be greater after death than it had been during his life; for how disgusting soever life may be, mankind prefer it before annihilation; and if Judas had no other punishment to suffer for his perfidy than such as belonged to the present state, Jesus Christ would not have said, "it had been good for that man if he had not been born." He intended we should understand that Judas would be more miserable in a future economy, than we are in this life, in spite of the maladies to which our frailty exposes us, in spite of the vicissitudes we experience, and in spite of the sacrifices, which we are daily required to make.

4. If, as we said at first, the sentence of Jesus Christ against Judas be expressed in mild terms, we must, in order fully to comprehend the sense, lay aside the soft language, and advert to the terrible subject. But can we without rashness change the terms of a sentence which the Saviour pronounced, and give the whole of what he spoke only in part? Yes, provided the part we add be taken not from our own systems, but from that of Jesus Christ, who only can fill up the space which sufficient reasons induced him to leave vacant when he gave out this sentence. Now we find two things in the system of Jesus Christ on this subject. First, that the misery denounced against Judas is of the most dreadful kind. And secondly, that Jesus Christ denounces against him the greatest degree of misery of this kind. Or to express myself more clearly, my first proposition is, that every place in hell is intolerable. My second proposition is, that Jesus Christ doomed Judas to the most intolerable place in hell.

Does our first proposition need proving? I lay aside what the Scripture tells us of the "lake," the "bottomless pit," the "brimstone," the "smoke," the "darkness," the "chains of darkness," the "worm that never dies, and the fire that is never quenched." Frightful objects! I have no need to recollect you to form gloomy images of the state of the damned. My idea of heaven is sufficient to give me a horrible image of hell. "Pleasures at God's right hand for evermore;" joy of an intelligent creature finding his knowledge for ever on the increase; calm of a conscience washed in the blood of the Lamb; freedom from all the maladies that afflict poor mortals, from all the inquietudes of doubt, and from all the turbulence of the passions: society of angels, archangels, cherubim, and all that multitude of intelligences, which God has associated both in rectitude and glory: close communion with the happy God; felicity of heaven: it is you that makes me conceive the horrible state of hell! To be for ever deprived of your charms, this alone is enough to make me tremble at the idea of hell.

But if every place in hell be intolerable, some are more so than others. When, by fol-

lowing the genius of the gospel, you examine for whom divine justice reserves the most dreadful punishments, you easily conceive it is for such men as Judas, and you will agree (without our staying now to prove it) that as Jesus Christ denounced the worst kind of punishment against him, so he doomed him to suffer the greatest degree of that kind of punishment.

In fine, our last remark on the words of Jesus Christ is, that when he said, "it had been good for that man if he had not been born" or "had he never existed," he supposed not only that the punishment of Judas did not exist in annihilation, but that it would not be in his power not to exist. He supposed that Judas was not master of his own existence, and that it did not depend on him to continue or to put an end to it, as he should think proper. Existence considered in itself is indifferent. We have explained in what sense, and we have proved that it is the happiness or misery, which attends it, that determines the worth of it.—Now, whatever the pain of hell may be, it need not alarm us, if the Creator when he caused us to exist gave us the power of remaining in it or quitting it. In this case it would always depend on us to get rid of punishment, because it would depend on us to cease to exist, and we might enter into that state of annihilation which we said was neither happy or miserable, but we have not this power over ourselves. As an act of omnipotence was necessary to give us existence, so is it to deprive us of it; and as it belongs to none but Almighty God to perform the first of these acts, so it belongs only to him to effect the second: so absolute, so entire is our dependence upon him!

I do not know what is intended by the "star" mentioned in the ninth chapter of Revelation. St. John represents it as "falling from heaven unto the earth," as having "the key of the bottomless pit," as causing a "smoke to arise," by which the "sun and the air were darkened," and out of which came "locusts upon the earth." But I am persuaded, that in a system of irreligion nothing can be imagined more dreadful than the miseries which the Holy Spirit here says these infernal locusts inflict upon mankind. These were commanded "not to kill," but to "torment five months" such men as "had not the seal of God in their foreheads." And "in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it, and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them. It is a miserable relief, I grant, to destroy one's self to avoid divine punishment. But does death put an end to our existence? Is a sinner less in the hand of God in the grave, than he is during this life? "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?" Ps. cxxxix. 7.

What misery in the eyes of an irreligious man to be tormented through life, and to be deprived of a relief which the wretched almost always have in view, I mean death! For how many ways are there of getting rid of life? And to what degree of impotence must he be reduced who is not able by any means to put an end to life? "In those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it, and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them."

But if the greatest misery in the account of

an irreligious man be not to have the power of getting rid of the troubles of a few years by destroying himself, what will be the state of the damned to see themselves under a fatal necessity of existing for ever, and of not having the power of terminating their existence, and of sinking into nothing? What despairing and cruel complaints will this necessity of existing cause? In vain will they seek refuge in "dens" and chasms of the earth! In vain will they implore "mountains and rocks to fall on them and hide them!" In vain will they "curse the day," and execrate "the night of their birth!" They will be obliged to exist, because A. mighty God will refuse them that act of omnipotence, without which they cannot be annihilated.

Such will be the misery of the damned, and such is the extreme misery to which Jesus Christ adjudges Judas. But this man, you will say, had a dark perfidious soul, he was a traitor, he had the infamy to betray his Saviour, and to sell him for thirty pieces of silver; this man was such a monster as nature hardly produces in many centuries. My brethren, I am come now to the most odious but most necessary part of my discourse. I must enter on the mortifying task of examining whether there be any resemblance between some of this assembly and the unhappy Judas. What a task to perform in such an auditory as this! What a gospel to preach to Christians! What murmurs are we going to excite in this assembly! "The word of the Lord was made a reproach unto me, and a derision daily. Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay," Jer. xx. 8, 9.

Do not think that I intend to conclude my discourse by abusing the liberty given me of speaking in this pulpit, by attempting to make an ingenious essay on a subject the most grave and solemn; be not afraid of my extenuating the crimes of Judas, and exaggerating yours. How is it possible to extenuate the crimes of Judas? When I represent to myself a man whom the Saviour distinguished in a manner so remarkable, a man who travelled with him, a man to whom he had not only revealed the mysteries of his kingdom, but whom he associated with himself to teach them to the world, to subvert the empire of Satan and set his captives free, and to preach this gospel, "lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, for where your treasure is there will your heart be also. Sell that you have, and give alms, provide yourselves bags that wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not," Matt. vi. 19, &c. Luke xii. 33. When I consider this man freely opening his heart to the demon of avarice, parleying with the most obstinate enemies of his divine master, proposing to deliver him up to their barbarity, agreeing on the price of treason, executing the horrible stipulation, coming at the head of the most vile and infamous mob that ever was, giving the fatal signal to his unworthy companions, kissing Jesus Christ, and saying while he saluted him, "hail master;" when I consider this abominable man, far from

attempting to extenuate his crime, I can find no colours dismal enough to describe it. No: I tremble at the bare idea of this monster, and involuntarily exclaim, "O execrable love of money! to what wilt thou not impel the hearts of men!"*

But does this odious picture resemble none but Judas? Ah! When I imagine a Christian born in this age of knowledge, a Christian with the gospel in his hand, convinced of the truth and beauty of religion, a Christian communicant at the table of Jesus Christ, who has vowed a hundred times an eternal obedience to God, and has "tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come:" when I consider this Christian full of contrivances, intriguing in certain circles, exposing to the world a spectacle of immodesty, resisting the ministry, exclaiming against such religious discourses as his depravity forbids him to obey; or, to confine myself to the disposition of Judas, when I observe this Christian-like Judas possessed with the demon of avarice, hardening his heart against the cries of the wretched, pillaging the widow and the fatherless of their daily bread, selling his own soul and the souls of his children rather than break through a papal interdict, rather than quit a country where truth is hated and persecuted, where there is no public worship during life, no consolations at the hour of death: when I consider such Christians, I protest, I almost pity Judas, and turn all my indignation against them.

My brethren, I said, and I repeat it again, the task is mortifying, the matter is offensive, but I must come to it, "if I seek to please men, I shall not be the servant of Christ." Let us lay aside vague ideas, and let us enter on some detail. Let us describe Judas, but let us not forget ourselves, too much resembling this ugly man. Let us examine, first, the passion that governed him—next, the crime to which it impelled him—then, the circumstances in which he committed it—fourthly, the pretexts with which he covered it—and finally, the confession he was compelled to make.

1. What passion governed Judas? Every one knows it was *avarice*. Which of us is given up to this passion? Rather which of us is free from it?

Avarice may be considered in two different points of light. It may be considered in those men, or rather those public bloodsuckers, or, as the officers of the Roman emperor Vespasian were called, those *sponges* of society, who infatuated with this passion seek after riches as the supreme good, determine to acquire it by any methods, and consider the ways that lead to wealth, legal or illegal, as the only road for them to travel. Let the laws be violated, let the people be oppressed, let equity be subverted, let a kingdom be sacrificed to their irresistible passion for wealth, let it be across a thousand depopulated countries, a thousand ruined families, let it be over a thousand piles of mangled carcasses that they arrive at fortune, provided they can but acquire it, no matter what it costs.

This is our first notion of avarice. But in this point of light who of us has this passion!

Nobody, not one person, I except none. I leave to the Searcher of hearts to determine whether it be the vehemence of our piety, or the impotence of our condition, that prevents our carrying avarice to this length; whether it be respect for the laws or dread of them, that keeps us from violating them; whether we abstain from oppressing mankind because we love, or because we fear them; whether sacrificing our country to our love of wealth be prevented by love to our country, or by a despair of success. Yes, I leave the decision of this question to the Searcher of hearts. I would, as far as I can without betraying my ministry, form the most favourable judgment of my hearers; therefore I affirm not one of us is avaricious in this first sense.

Avarice, however, must be considered in a second point of light. It not only consists in committing bold crimes, but in entertaining mean ideas, and practising low methods, incompatible with such magnanimity as our condition ought to inspire. It consists not only in an entire renunciation of the "kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof," but in not "seeking it first" in the manner proposed. It consists not only in always endeavouring to increase our wealth, but in harbouring continual fears of losing it, and perplexing ourselves in endless methods of preserving it. It consists not only in wholly withholding from the poor, but in giving through constraint, and in always fearing to give too much. It consists not only in omitting to serve God, but in trying to associate the service of God with that of mammon. Which of us is free from avarice considered in this second point of light? Strictly speaking, nobody, no, not one person.

2. But what right have we to pronounce that no one is defiled with avarice considered in the first point of light? Let us consider this passion in regard to the odious *crimes* which it impels us to commit. Let us review the articles just now mentioned. Are we guilty of only trying to associate God and mammon? And do we never lay aside the service of God wholly, when it clashes with that of mammon? Are we guilty of nothing more than giving through constraint? do we not often avoid giving at all? do we not always omit charity, when we can do so without being branded with infamy? Are we to blame only for fearing to lose our wealth, are we not also always occupied about increasing it, so that this desire follows us every where, through all the tumult of the day and all the silence of the night, into every company, into private prayer and public devotion? Are we guilty of only not "seeking first the kingdom of God," are we not also ready to renounce it, when we cannot enter it without losing some of our wealth? Are we guilty of violating only the laws of charity, do we not also violate those of equity? By what unheard of secret then have some of us so rapidly acquired large fortunes? What sudden revolution then has so quickly changed the appearance of some families? What remarkable Providence then has made such an extreme difference between your ancestry and your posterity? What motive then retains so many of our protestant brethren in their native country, and why are there in this assembly so

* Quid non mortalia, &c. Virg. *Aeneid*. l. 3.

many dismembered families? Why are not children with their parents, and parents with their children in this free country, both content to have their "lives for a prey?" Ah! my brethren, what a scandalous history is that of Judas! What a horrible crime did his avarice impel him to commit! And also what a sad resemblance is there between that wretch and some Christians, who profess to abhor him!

3. As the avarice of Judas appears odious considered in itself, and more so considered in regard to the crime he committed through it, so it will appear more offensive still, if you consider it in view of the circumstances in which he was when he gave himself up to it: for how far soever the wickedest of men be from the practice of some virtues, there are occasions on which they seem to turn their attention to them. The most barbarous souls cannot help relenting, when they see the objects of their hatred reduced to extreme misery. Hearts the most lukewarm towards religion, feel, I know not what emotions of piety, when religion is exhibited in some eminent point of light, and when the love of God to his creatures, and his compassion for sinners, are described in lively colours.

On this principle, what opinion must we form of Judas? What a time did he choose to betray his master to his enemies, and to give himself up to Satan? Jesus Christ was eating the passover with his disciples, and telling them, "with desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer." Jesus Christ was taking leave of his disciples at a love-feast, and going, as soon as the company broke up, to substantiate the shadow exhibited in the paschal supper, by offering himself in their stead a sacrifice for sin. Judas partook of this paschal lamb, and sat at the table with Jesus Christ at this feast of love, yet in these circumstances so proper to eradicate avarice, at least to suspend the growth of it, it became more vigorous, and ripened in his unworthy soul.

My brethren, when we judge our own hearts, let us keep this principle in view. A passion hateful in itself, and hateful on account of the crimes it makes us commit, may become more so by circumstances. What is an innocent freedom in some circumstances may become licentiousness in other circumstances, and as circumstances alter, what is licentious may become a great crime; and thus an innocent freedom, at most an act of licentiousness, at most a crime, may become an atrocious outrage, and unpardonable on account of circumstances in which it was committed. This maxim is self-evident, it is an axiom of morality.

O God, Judge of the whole earth, do not pass sentence on this assembly according to the rigour of this maxim! This is passion week, and we are in circumstances, in which Jesus Christ most powerfully attacks our vices. You need not be a saint to have emotions of piety in these circumstances, it is sufficient to be a man; but you must be a monster, a disciple of Judas, to have none. To hate in these circumstances, to hate when Jesus Christ loves, and while he is saying of his executioners, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." To shut our hearts against the cries

of our wretched fellow-creatures, while Jesus Christ is pouring out his blood, his life, his soul for poor mortals; to give ourselves up to worldly pleasures, while nothing is treated of among us but the sufferings of Jesus Christ, while he is represented as sweating great drops of blood, contending with divine justice, fastened to a cross, and uttering these lamentable complaints, "my soul is exceeding sorrowful, very heavy, sorrowful even unto death. O my Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me! My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me!" At such a time, and in such circumstances, to pursue worldly pleasures . . . My brethren, finish this article yourselves, and pronounce your own sentences.

4. Consider the 'pretexts with which Judas covered his avarice. One of the principal causes of our indignation at the irregularities of our neighbours, and our indulgence for our own is, that we see the first without the colourings, which they who commit them make use of to conceal their turpitude from themselves, whereas we always consider our own through such mediums as decorate and disguise them. Now as we palliate our own passions, we ought to believe that other people palliate theirs.

Who can imagine that Judas considered his crime in its own real horrid colours? Can any body suppose that he said to himself, "I am determined to violate the most solemn obligations for thirty pieces of silver; I am resolved to betray the Saviour of the world for thirty pieces of silver: I would rather see him crucified than be deprived of this unworthy price of treason: this contemptible reward I prefer before all the joys of heaven?" No, no, Judas did not reason thus. Judge what he did on this occasion by what he did on another. A woman poured a box of costly ointment on the feet of Jesus Christ; Judas was hurt to see this prey escape his avarice, he therefore covered the sordid disposition of his soul, with the goodly pretence of charity, "this ointment might have been sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor," John xii. 4—6. Thus in the present case, "perhaps Jesus Christ will escape from his enemies, as he has often done before. Perhaps his looks will deter them. Perhaps he will fell them to the earth with his power. Perhaps the angels of heaven will surround, protect, and defend him. Perhaps I myself shall contribute to save the world by offering the sacrifice that is to procure salvation. Perhaps too, I may have formed ideas too high of this Jesus. Perhaps God does not interest himself in his preservation, as I have hitherto supposed. Perhaps he has assumed a character which does not belong to him, and is nothing but a phantom of Messiah. (Who can tell what extravagant reasonings may be formed by a mind given up to a passion, and determined to justify it?) After all, should I add one more crime to what I have already committed, the number will not be so very great. The blood I am going to assist in shedding, will obtain my pardon for contributing to shed it. And I cannot persuade myself that a Saviour, who came into the world on purpose to publish a general pardon to all sinners, will choose to make an exception against me, alone."

Brethren, is this source of sophistry closed in regard to you? If I may venture to speak so, did the logic of your passions expire when Judas died? Which of us is not, so to speak, two different, yea opposite men according to the agitation of our spirits, and the dominion of our passions? Let any one of us be consulted concerning a crime which we have no interest in committing or palliating, and we shall talk of nothing but equity, rectitude, and religion; but let us be questioned concerning the same crime when we have some interest in the commission of it, and behold! another language, another morality, another religion, or to say all in one word, behold another man.

To come to the point, under what pretext does not avarice conceal itself? How many forms does it take to disguise itself from the man who is guilty of it, and who will be drenched in the guilt of it till the day he dies! Sometimes it is prudence, which requires him to provide not only for his present wants, but for such as he may have in future. Sometimes it is charity, which requires him not to give society examples of prodigality and parade. Sometimes it is parental love, obliging him to save something for his children. Sometimes it is circumspection, which requires him not to supply people who make an ill use of what they get. Sometimes it is necessity, which obliges him to repel artifice by artifice. Sometimes it is good conscience, which convinces him, good man, that he has already exceeded in compassion and alms-giving, and done too much. Sometimes it is equity, for justice requires that every one should enjoy the fruit of his own labours, and those of his ancestors. Sometimes it is incompetence, perhaps indeed a little part of my wealth may be subject to some scruples, for who can assure himself that every farthing of his fortune has been acquired with the most strict regard to evangelical rectitude, but then I cannot tell to whom this restitution should be made, and till that is made, justice is not satisfied, there is no room for generosity. Sometimes . . . what am I about? who can make a complete list of all the pretences with which a miser disguises himself in his own eyes, and imagines he can disguise himself in the eyes of others!

5. Finally, let us consider the *confession* which the truth forced from Judas, in spite of his reigning passion, and in the same article, let us observe the remorse inspired by his passion, and the reparation his remorse compelled him to make. Presently I see the unhappy Judas recover himself from his infatuation. Presently he sees through the pretexts, which for a while disguised his passion, and concealed the horror of the crime he was going to commit. Presently I hear him say, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood," Matt. xxvii. 4. See, he hates the abominable thirty pieces of silver, the charm of which had allured him to commit the blackest crime, and to plunge himself into the deepest woe; see, he casts down the pieces of silver at the feet of those of whom he received them.

Christians, blush! Here the comparison of Judas with some Christians is greatly to the disadvantage of the latter. I am aware, that the confession of Judas was not sanctified by

faith, and that the restitution proceeded more from despair than true repentance; however, he did repent, he did say, "I have sinned," and he did restore the thirty pieces of silver, which he had so basely acquired.

But where are the Christians who repent of the extortions of which their avarice has caused them to be guilty? Where are Christians saying, "I have sinned?" Particularly, where are those Christians, who have made restitution? It is said there are some. I believe so, because credible people affirm it. But I declare solemnly, I have never seen one, and yet I have seen many people, whose hands were defiled with the accursed thing, whose magnificence and pomp were the fruit of the cursed thing. Extortioners of this kind have I never seen, I have never seen one of them repenting, and saying, "indeed I have sinned, and thus and thus have I done." I have never seen one, who has not invented as many pretexts to keep his ill-gotten wealth as he had invented to get it. In one word, I never saw one who understood, or was willing to learn the elements of Christian morality on the doctrine of restitution. How rare soever the conversion of sinners of other kinds may be, thanks to divine mercy, we have sometimes seen edifying examples of such conversions. We have seen voluptuous people groan at the recollection of their former debaucheries, efface the dissipations of their youth by the penitential grief, and pious actions of their mature age, and affix that body in a mortal illness to the cross of Christ, which, during health and strength they had devoted to luxury. We have seen assassins ready, if it were possible, to replace the blood they had shed with their own. We have seen vindictive people embrace inveterate enemies, and cover them with affectionate tears. But among that great number of dying people, who, we know with the utmost certainty, had become rich by oblique means; among the great number of soldiers and officers, who had robbed, plundered, and sacked; among the great number of merchants and tradesmen who had been guilty of falsehood, deceit, cheating, and perjury, and who by such means had acquired a splendid fortune; among all this great number, we have never seen one who had the resolution to assemble his family round his dying bed, and take his leave of them in this manner: "My dear children, I have been a scandal to you through life, I will now edify you by my death. I am determined in these last moments of my life to give glory to God by acknowledging my past transgressions. The greatest part of my fortune was acquired by artful and wicked means. These elegant apartments are furnished with my oaths and perjuries. This strong and well-finished house is founded on my treachery. My sumptuous and fashionable equipage is the produce of my extortions. But I repent now of my sins. I make restitution to church and state, to the public and individuals. I choose rather to bequeath poverty to you, than to leave you a patrimony under a curse. You will gain more by the example I give you of repentance, than you will by all my unjust acquisitions." An age, a whole century, does it furnish one such example?

Such is the face of mankind! Such the condition of the church! And what dreadful discoveries should we now make, could we look into futurity as easily as we can examine the present and the past! When Jesus Christ, that good master, uttered this painful prophecy to his family sitting round him, "Verily I say unto you, one of you shall betray me," all his disciples were exceeding sorrowful, and every one said unto him, "Lord, is it I?" How many subjects for grief would rise to view, should God draw aside the veil that hides the destiny of all this assembly, and show us the bottomless abyss into which the love of money will plunge many who are present.

Let us prevent this great evil. Let us purify the spring from whence our actions and their consequences flow. Let us examine this idol, to which we sacrifice our all. Judge of the value of the riches in pursuit of which we are so eager, by the brevity of life. The best course of moral instruction against the passions, is death. The grave is a discoverer of the absurdity of sin of every kind. There the ambitions may learn the folly of ambition. There the vain may learn the vanity of all human things. There the voluptuous may read a mortifying lesson on the absurdity of sensual pleasure. But this school, fruitful in instructions that concern all the passions, is profusely eloquent against avarice. I recollect an anecdote of Constantine the Great. In order to reclaim a miser, he took a lance and marked out a space of ground of the size of a human body, and told him, "add heap to heap, accumulate riches upon riches, extend the bounds of your possessions, conquer the whole world, in a few days, such a spot as this will be all you will have." I take this spear, my brethren, I mark out this space among you, in a few days you will be worth no more than this. Go to the tomb of the avaricious man, go down and see his coffin and his shroud, in four days these will be all you will have.

I conclude, and I only add one word of Jesus Christ. Our divine Saviour describes a man revolving in his mind great projects, thinking of nothing but pulling down and rebuilding, dying the same night, void, destitute, miserable, and terrified at seeing all his fancied projects of felicity vanish; on which our Lord makes this reflection, "so is every one who layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich towards God," Luke xii. 21. My God! how poor is he, though among piles of gold and silver, amidst all riches and plenty, who is not rich towards God! On the contrary, how enviable is the condition of a man hungry, indigent, and wrapped in rags, if he be rich towards God! Rich men! This is the only way to sanctify your riches. Be rich towards God. Ye poor people, this is all you want to support you under poverty, and to enable you to triumph even in your indigence. May we be all rich towards God! Let us all accumulate a treasure of good works, it is the most substantial wealth, and that only which will yield a bountiful harvest at last. "There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased," Ps. iv. 6, 7. Amen.

SERMON LXVII.

THE CAUSE OF THE DESTRUCTION OF IMPENITENT SINNERS.

HOSEA xiii. 9.

O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thine help.

THESE words are so concise in the Hebrew text that no distinct idea can be affixed to them, unless we supply something. All expositors allow this. The only question is, what word ought to be supplied to express the prophet's meaning.

Some supply, "thine idols, or thy calves, have destroyed thee;" and by these they understand the images which Jeroboam placed at Samaria to prevent the ten tribes, who had revolted under his direction from the government of Rehoboam, from returning to that prince, as probably they might have been tempted to do, had they gone to worship the true God at Jerusalem.

Others supply, "thy king hath destroyed thee, O Israel," meaning Jeroboam, who had led the people of Israel into idolatry.

But not to trouble you with a list of the various opinions of expositors, I shall content myself with observing that which I think best founded, that is, the sense given by the ancient Latin version, Thy destruction is of thyself, O Israel, or, Thou art the author of thine own ruin. This translation which supplies less to the original, is also perfectly agreeable to the idiom of the Hebrew language. With this the version of our churches agrees, "thou hast destroyed thyself, or thou art destroyed," which is much the same, because others cannot destroy us unless we contribute by our negligence to our own destruction. This translation too is connected with what precedes, and what follows, and in general with the chief design of our prophet.

This chief design is very observable in most chapters of this prophecy. It is evident, the prophet intended to convince the Israelites, that God had discovered in all his dispensations, a desire to fix them in his service, to lead them to felicity by the path of virtue, and that they ought to blame none but themselves if judgments from heaven should overwhelm them, giving them up to the Assyrians in this life, and to punishment after death. This design seems to me most fully discovered in the latter part of this chapter, a few verses after the text, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction." You know, my brethren, St. Paul informs us that this promise will not be accomplished till after the general resurrection; "Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" But, adds our prophet, "Samaria shall become desolate, for she hath rebelled against her God." The text is therefore connected with the foregoing and following words according to this translation, "O Israel thou hast destroyed thyself."

I class the text then among those passages of Scripture in which God condescends to exonerate his conduct in regard to sinners by declaring, that they ought to take the whole blame of their own destruction on themselves: and in this point of view I am going to consider it. The difficulties of this subject chiefly proceed from three causes, either from our notion of the nature of God—or the nature of religion—or the nature of man. We will examine these difficulties, and endeavour to remove them in the remaining part of this discourse.

I. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself." The first difficulties that seem to belong to this truth, are taken from the nature of God, who, having created nothing of which he had not an idea before, and having realized no idea, all the consequences of which he had not foreseen, is the author not only of every being that exists, but also of every thing that results from their existence, and seems for this very reason the only cause of the miseries of his creatures.

It is much to be wished, my brethren, that mankind were so apprised of the narrow limits of their own understanding, as not to plunge themselves into some deep subjects which they are incapable of fathoming, and so as to attribute to their natural incapacity, their incompetency to answer some objections against the perfections of God. Some pagans have been more aware of this than many Christians; and the Persians, followers of Mohammed, have endeavoured to make their disciples comprehend it by an ingenious fable.

"There were, say they, three brethren, who all died at the same time; the two first were far advanced in age; the elder had always lived in a habit of obedience to God: the second, on the contrary, in a course of disobedience and sin; and the third was an infant, incapable of distinguishing good from evil. These three brothers appeared before the tribunal of God; the first was received into paradise, the second was condemned to hell, the third was sent to a middle place, where there was neither pleasure nor pain, because he had not done either good or evil. When this youngest heard his sentence, and the reasons on which the Supreme Judge grounded it, sorry to be excluded from paradise, he exclaimed, Ah, Lord! hadst thou preserved my life as thou didst that of my good brother, how much better would it have been for me? I should have lived as he did, and then I should have enjoyed as he does the happiness of eternal glory! My child, replied God to him, I knew thee, and I knew hast thou lived longer thou wouldst have lived like thy wicked brother, and like him wouldst have rendered thyself deserving of the punishment of hell. The condemned brother hearing this discourse of God, exclaimed, Ah Lord! why didst thou not then confer the same favour upon me as upon my younger brother, by depriving me of a life which I have so wickedly misspent as to bring myself under a sentence of condemnation? I preserved thy life, said God, to give thee an opportunity of saving thyself. The younger brother, hearing this reply, exclaimed again, Ah! why then, my God, didst thou not preserve my life also, that I might have had an opportunity of saving myself? God, to put an end

to complaining and disputing, replied, because my decree had determined otherwise."^{*}

Were I to follow my own inclination, I should imitate this cautious reserve; but as silence on this subject is sometimes an occasion of imaginary triumph to the enemies of religion, and as it sometimes causes scruples in weak consciences, I think it absolutely necessary to say something towards removing this objection; and to prove, at least, that though we are incapable of fully satisfying ourselves on this subject, yet there is nothing in this incompetency favourable to the insults of infidels, or the doubts and fears of the scrupulous.

Now, my brethren, it seems to me, we cannot possibly imagine any more than two ways to satisfy ourselves on this subject: the one is to obtain a complete idea of the decrees of God, and to compare them so exactly with the disposition of sinners as to make it evident by this comparison, that sinners are not under a necessity of committing such crimes as cause their eternal destruction. The second is, to refer the subject to the determination of a being of the most unsuspected knowledge and veracity, whose testimony we may persuade ourselves is unexceptionable, and whose declaration is an infallible oracle.

The first of these ways is impracticable. To be able to demonstrate, by an exact comparison of the decrees of God with the nature of man, that sinners are not necessitated to commit such crimes as cause their eternal destruction, is, in my opinion, a work more than human. Many have attempted it, but though we cannot refuse the praise due to their piety, yet, it should seem, we owe this testimony to truth, that they have not removed all the objections to which the subject is liable.

I say more, I venture to predict, without pretending to be a prophet, that all future efforts will be equally unsuccessful. The reason is, because it is an attempt to infer consequences from principles unknown. Who can boast of knowing the whole arrangement, all the extent, and all the combinations of the decrees of God? The depth of these decrees, the obscure manner in which the Scripture expresses them, and if I may be allowed to say so, the darkness in which attempts to elucidate them have involved them, place them infinitely beyond our reach. As this method has been impracticable to this day, probably it will continue so to the end of the world.

Let us try the second. The question is, whether, allowing the decrees of God, God does any violence to sinners, compelling them to commit sin? Has not this question been fully answered by a Being, whose decisions are infallible oracles, and of whose testimony we cannot possibly form any reasonable doubt? Yes, my brethren, we know such a Being; we know a Being infinitely capable of deciding this question, and who has actually decided it. This Being is God himself.

To explain our meaning, and to show the connexion of the answer with the question, I will suppose you to put up this petition to God.—Does the eternal destination, which thou

hast made of my soul before I had a being, force my will? do what they call predestination and reprobation in the schools destroy this proposition, that if I perish, my destruction proceeds alone from myself? My God, remove this difficulty, and lay open to me this important truth. I suppose, my brethren, you have presented this question, and that God answers in the following manner: The frailty of your minds renders this matter incomprehensible to you. It is impossible for men finite as you are to comprehend the whole extent of my decrees, and to see in a clear and distinct manner the influence they have on the destiny of man: But I who formed them perfectly understand them. I am truth itself, as I am wisdom. I do declare to you then, that none of my decrees offer violence to my creatures, and that your destruction can proceed from none but yourselves. As to the rest, you shall one day perfectly understand what you now understand only in part, and then you shall see with your own eyes what you now see only with mine. Cease then to anticipate a period, which my wisdom defers, and laying aside this speculation attend you to practice, fully persuaded that you are placed between reward and punishment, and may have a part in which you please. Is it not true, my brethren, that if God had answered in this manner, it would be carrying, I do not say rashness, but insolence to the highest degree to object against the testimony, or to desire more light into this subject at present? Now, my brethren, we pretend that God has given this answer, and in a manner infinitely more clear than we have stated it.

He has given this answer in those pathetic exhortations, in those powerful applications, and in those exhortations, which he employs to reclaim the greatest sinners. Now if the decrees of God forced sinners, if they did violence to their liberty, would the equity of God allow him to call men out of bondage, while he himself confined them in chains?

God has given this answer by tender complaints concerning the depravity of mankind; yea, by tears of love shed for their miseries. "O that my people had hearkened unto me! O that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!" Ps. lxxxi. 14, Luke xix. 42. Now if the decrees of God force sinners, if they offer violence to their liberty, I am not afraid to say, this sort of language would be a sport unworthy of the divine majesty.

He has given this answer by express assurances, that he would have all men to be saved; that "he hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live;" that he is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. Now if the decrees of God force sinners, and do violence to their liberty, contrary propositions are true; it would be proper to say, God will not have all men to be saved, he will not have the sinner come to repentance, he is determined the sinner shall die.

He has published this answer by giving us high ideas of his mercy; when he prolongs the time of his patience and long-suffering, he calls it "riches of goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering." Now if the decrees of God force

sinners, if they offer violence to their liberty, God would not be more merciful, if he grants fourscore years to a wicked man to repent in, than if he took him away suddenly on the commission of his first sin.

He has given this answer expressly in the text, and in many other parallel passages, where he clearly tells us, that after what he has done to save us, there are no difficulties insurmountable in our salvation, except such as we choose to put there. For if the divine decrees force men to sin, and offer violence to their liberty, the proposition in the text would be utterly false, and the prophet could not say on the part of God, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself."

As the first way of removing our difficulties is absolutely impossible, the second is fully open. God has not thought proper to give us a distinct idea of the connexion between his decrees and the liberty of sinners: but he has openly declared that they do not clash together. Let us make no more vain efforts to explain mysteries, a clear demonstration of which God has reserved for another life: but let us attend to that law, which he has required us to obey in the present state.

But men will run counter to the declarations of God in Scripture. "Things that are revealed, which belong unto us and our children for ever," we leave, and we lay our rash hands on "secret things, which belong unto the Lord our God." We lay aside charity, moderation, mutual patience, duties clearly revealed, powerfully pressed home, and repeated with the utmost fervour, and we set ourselves the task of removing insuperable difficulties, to read and turn over the book of God's decrees. We regulate and arrange the decrees of God, we elevate our pretended discoveries into articles essential to salvation and religion, and at length we generate doubts and fears, which distress us on a death-bed, and oblige us to undergo the intolerable punishment of trying to reconcile doctrines, the clearing of which is beyond the capacity of all mankind.

No, no: it was not thy decree, O my God, that dug hell, and kindled the "devouring fire," the "smoke of which ascendeth up for ever and ever!" In vain the sinner searches in a decree of reprobation for what comes only from his own depravity. Thou dost not say to thy creatures, yield, yield miserable wretches to my sovereign will, which first impels you to sin, in order to compel you to suffer that punishment, which I have decreed for you from all eternity. Thou reachest out thy charitable arms, thou appliest to us motives the most proper to affect intelligent minds. Thou openest the gates of heaven to us, and if we be lost amidst so many means of being saved, "to thee belongeth righteousness, and to us shame and confusion of face." "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself."

II. You will see the evidence of this proposition much better, my brethren, if you attend to the discussion of the second class of difficulties, to which the subject is liable. They are taken from the nature of religion. There are men so stupid, or rather so wicked, as to consider religion, that rich present which God in his great love made mankind, as a fatal present

given in anger. The duties required seem to them vast valleys to fill up, and huge mountains to level, and attributing insuperable difficulties to religion, which are creatures only of their own cowardice and malice, they cannot comprehend how men can be punished for not performing such impossible conditions. Let us examine this religion; nothing more is necessary to remove this odious objection.

1. Observe the first character of evangelical morality, how *clearly it is revealed*. Let heresy attack the truths of our mysteries. If demonstrative arguments cannot be produced, probable ones may; if the doctrines cannot be expunged from the letter of Scripture, at least they may be disguised; if they cannot be rendered contemptible, they may for a while be made difficult to understand: but propositions that concern moral virtues are placed in a light so clear, that, far from extinguishing it, nothing can diminish its brightness. Religion clearly requires a magistrate to be equitable and a subject obedient; a father tender, and a son dutiful; a husband affectionate, and a wife faithful; a master gentle, and a servant diligent; a pastor vigilant, and a flock teachable. Religion clearly requires us to exercise moderation in prosperity, and patience in adversity. Religion clearly requires us to be wholly attentive to the divine majesty, when we are at the foot of his throne, and never to lose sight of him after our devotions are finished. Religion clearly requires us to perform all the duties of our calling through the whole course of life, and wholly to renounce the world when we come to die. Except some extraordinary cases, (and would to God, my brethren, we had arrived at such a degree of perfection as rendered it necessary for us to examine what conduct we ought to observe in some circumstances, which the law seems not to have fully explained!) I say, except such cases, all others are regulated in a manner so clear, distinct, and intelligible, that we not only cannot invent any difficulties, but that, except a few idiots, nobody has ever pretended to invent any.

2. The next character of Christian morality is *dignity of principle*. Why did God give us laws? Because he loves us, and because he would have us to love him. Why does he require us to bear the cross? Because he loves us, because he would have us love him, and because infatuation with creatures is incompatible with this twofold love. Why does he require us to deny ourselves? Because he loves us, and because he would have us love him, because it is impossible for him to love us and yet to permit our ill-directed self-love to hurry us blindly into a gulf of misery, because it is impossible if we love him to love ourselves in a manner so inglorious to him. How pleasant is it to submit to bonds, which the love of God imposes on us! How delightful is it to yield to obligations, when the love of God supports us under the weight of them!

3. The third character of Christian morality is the *justice* of its dominions. All its claims are founded on reason and equity. Examine the laws of religion one by one, and you will find they all bear this character. Does religion prescribe humility? It does; but what is this humility? Is it a virtue that shocks reason, and

degrades the dignity of human nature? By no means, the gospel proposes to elevate us to the highest dignity that we are capable of attaining. But what then does it mean by requiring us to be humble? It means, that we should not estimate ourselves by such titles and riches, such dignities and exterior things, as we have in common with men like Caligula, Nero, Helio-gabalus, and other monsters of nature, scourges of society. Does religion require mortification? It does, it even describes it by the most painful emblems. It requires us to cut off a right hand, to pluck out a right eye, to tear asunder all the ties of flesh and blood, nature and self-love. But what does it mean by prescribing such mortification as this? Must we literally hate ourselves, and must we take as much pains hereafter to make ourselves miserable as we have taken hitherto to make ourselves happy? No, my brethren, on the contrary, no doctrine has ever carried self-love, properly explained, so far. The Christian doctrine of mortification means, that by a few momentary acts of self-denial we should free ourselves from eternal misery, and that by contemning "temporal things which are seen" we should obtain "things which are not seen, but which are eternal."

4. But, say you, this perfection required by the gospel, is it within our reach? Is it not this religion which exhorts us to be "perfect as God is perfect?" Is not this the religion that exhorts us to be "holy as God is holy?" Does not this religion require us to be "renewed after the image of him that created us?" Indeed it does, my brethren: yet this law, severe as it may seem, has a fourth character exactly according to our just wishes, that is, it has a character of *proportion*. As we see in the doctrines of religion, that although they open a vast field to the most sublime geniuses, yet they accommodate themselves to the most contracted minds, so in regard to the moral parts of religion, though the most eminent saints are required to make more progress, yet the first efforts of novices are acceptable services, provided they are sincerely disposed to persevere. Jesus Christ, our great lawgiver, "knoweth our frame, and remembereth that we are dust; he will not break a bruised reed, and smoking flax he will not quench;" and the rule by which he will judge us, will not be so much taken from the infinite rights acquired over us by creation and redemption as from our frailty, and the efforts we shall have made to surmount it.

5. *Power of motive* is another character of evangelical morality. In this life we are animated, I will not say only by gratitude, equity, and reason, motives too noble to actuate most men: but by motives interesting to our passions, and proper to inflame them, if they be well and thoroughly understood.

You have ambition. But how do you mean to gratify it? By a palace, a dress, a few servants, a few horses in your carriages? False idea of grandeur, fanciful elevation! I see in a course of Christian virtue an ambition well directed. To approach God, to be like God, to be made a "partaker of the divine nature;" this is true grandeur, this is substantial glory.

You are avaricious, hence perpetual care,

hence anxious fears, hence never ending movements. But how can your avarice bear to think of all the vicissitudes that may affect your fortune? In a course of Christian virtue I see an avarice well directed. The gospel promises a fortune beyond vicissitude, and directs us to a faithful correspondent, who will return us for one grain thirty, for another sixty, for another a hundred fold.

You are voluptuous, and you refine sensual enjoyments, tickle your appetite, and sleep in a bed of down! I see in a course of virtue a "joy unspeakable and full of glory, a peace that passeth all understanding," pleasures boundless in prospect, and delicious in enjoyment, pleasures greater than the liveliest imagination can conceive, and more beautiful than the most eloquent lips can describe.

Such is religion, my brethren. What a fund of stupidity, negligence, and corruption, must a man have to resist it? Is this the religion we must oppose in order to be damned? "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself."

III. Well, well, we grant, say you, we are stupid not to avail ourselves of such advantages as religion sets before us, we are negligent, we are depraved: but all this depravity, negligence, and stupidity, are natural to us; we bring these dispositions into the world with us, we did not make ourselves; in a word, we are naturally inclined to evil, and incapable of doing good. This religion teaches, of this we are convinced by our own feelings, and the experience of all mankind confirms it.

This is the third difficulty concerning the proposition in the text, and it is taken from the condition of *human nature*. In answer to this, I say, that the objection implies four vague notions of human depravity, each erroneous, and all removable by a clear explication of the subject.

1. When we speak of our natural impotence to practise virtue, we confound it with an insurmountable necessity to commit the greatest crimes. We may be in the first case without being in the second. We may be sick, and incapable of procuring medicines to restore health, without being invincibly impelled to aggravate our condition by taking poison for food, and a dagger for physic. A man may be in a pit without ability to get out, and yet not be invincibly compelled to throw himself into a chasm beneath him, deeper and darker, and more terrible still. In like manner, we may be so enslaved by depravity as not to be able to part with any thing to relieve the poor, and yet not so as to be absolutely compelled to rob them of the alms bestowed on them by others, and so of the rest.

It seems to me, my brethren, that this distinction has not been attended to in discourses of human depravity. Let people allege this impotence to exculpate themselves for not practising virtue, with all my heart: but to allege it in excuse of odious crimes practised every day freely, willingly, and of set purpose, is to form such an idea of natural depravity as no divine has ever given, and such as can never be given with the least appearance of truth. No sermon, no body of divinity, no council, no synod ever said that human depravity was so great as absolutely to force a

man to become an assassin, a murderer, a slanderer, a plunderer of the fortune, and a destroyer of the life of his neighbour, or, what is worse than either, a murderer of his reputation and honour. Had such a proposition been advanced, it would not be the more probable for that, and nothing ought to induce us to spare it. Monsters of nature! who, after you have taken pains to eradicate from your hearts such fibres of nature as sin seems to have left, would you attempt to exculpate yourselves you who, after you have rendered yourselves in every instance unlike God, would carry your madness so far as to render God like yourselves by accusing him of creating you with dispositions, which oblige you to dip your hands in innocent blood, to build your houses with the spoils of widows and orphans, and to commit crimes subversive of society? Cease to affirm, these are natural dispositions. No, they are acquired dispositions. That part of religion which prohibits your excesses, is practicable by you without the supernatural aid necessary to a thorough conversion.

2. When we speak of natural depravity, we confound the pure virtue that religion inspires with other virtues, which constitution, education, and motives of worldly honour, are sufficient to enable us to practise. I grant, you cannot practise such virtues as have the love of God for their principle, order for their motives, and perfection for their end: but you may at least acknowledge your natural depravity, and exclaim, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" You may at least exclaim with the magician mentioned by a poet, I see and approve of the best things, though I practise the worst. You may do more, you may practise some superficial virtues, which the very heathens, not in covenant with God, exemplified. You may be cautious like Ulysses, temperate like Scipio, chaste like Polemon, wise like Socrates. If then you neglect this sort of virtue, and if your negligence ruin you, "your destruction is of yourselves."

3. When we speak of natural depravity, we confound that of a man born a pagan with only the light of reason with that of a Christian, born and educated among Christians, and amidst all the advantages of revelation. This vague way of talking is a consequence of the miserable custom of taking detached passages of Scripture, considering them only in themselves without any regard to connexion of time, place, or circumstance, and applying them indiscriminately to their own imaginations and systems. The inspired writers give us dreadful descriptions of the state of believers before their being called to Christianity: they call this state "a night, a death, a nothing," in regard to the practice of virtue, and certainly the state of a man now living without religion under the gospel economy may be properly described in the same manner: but I affirm, that these expressions must be taken in a very different sense. "This night, this death, this nothing," if I may be allowed to speak so, have different degrees. The degrees in regard to a native pagan are greater than those in regard to a native Christian. What then, my brethren, do you reckon for nothing all the care

taken of you in your infancy, all the instructions given you in your childhood by your pious fathers and mothers, all the lessons they procured others to give you, all the tutors who have given you information! What! agreeable books put into your hands, exhortations, directions, and sermons, addressed to you, you reckon all these things for nothing! What! you make no account of the visits of your pastors, when you thought yourselves dying, of the proper discourses they directed to you concerning your past negligence, of your own resolutions and vows! I ask, do you reckon all this for nothing? All these efforts have been attended with no good effect: but you are as ambitious, as worldly, as envious, as covetous, as eager in pursuit of lasciviousness, as ever the heathens were, and you never blush, nor ever feel remorse, and all under pretence that the gospel teaches us we are frail, and can do nothing without the assistance of God!

4. In fine, my brethren, when we speak of the depravity of nature, we confine the condition of a man, to whom God has given only exterior revelation, with the condition of him to whom God offers supernatural aid to assist him against his natural frailty, which prevents his living up to external revelation. Does he not offer you this assistance? Does not the holy Scripture teach you in a hundred places that it is your own fault if you be deprived of it?

Recollect only the famous words of St. James, which were lately explained to you in this pulpit with the greatest clearness, and pressed home with the utmost pathos.* “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.” God gives to all men liberally, to all without exception, and they who are deprived of this wisdom ought to blame none but themselves, not God, who gives to all men liberally, and upbraids not.

True, to obtain it, we must ask with a design to profit by it; we must ask it “nothing wavering,” that is, not divided between the hope and the fear of obtaining it: we must not be like those “double-minded men, who are unstable in all their ways,” who seem by asking wisdom to esteem virtue, but who discover by the abuse they make of that wisdom they have, that virtue is supremely hateful to them. We must not resemble the “waves of the sea” which seem to offer the spectator on a shore a treasure, but which presently drown him in gulfs from which he cannot possibly free himself. Did God set this wisdom before us at a price too high? Ought we to find fault with him for refusing to bestow it, while we refuse to apply it to that moral use which justice requires? Can we desire God to bestow his grace on such as ask for it only to insult him?

O! that we were properly affected with the greatness of our depravity, and the shame of our slavery! But our condition, all scandalous and horrible as it is, seems to us all full of charms.

When we are told that sin has subverted nature, infected the air, confounded in a man-

ner cold with heat, heat with cold, wet with dry, dry with wet, and disconcerted the beautiful order of creation, which constituted the happiness of creatures; when we cast our eyes on the maladies caused by sin, the vicissitudes occasioned by it, the dominion of death over all creatures, which it has established; when we see ourselves stretched on a sick bed, cold, pale, dying, amidst sorrows and tears, fears and pains, waiting to be torn from a world we idolize; then we detest sin, and groan under the weight of its chains. Should that Spirit, who *knocks to-day at the door* of our hearts, say to us, open, sinner, I will restore nature to its beauty, the air shall be serene, and all the elements in harmony, I will confirm your health, reanimate your enfeebled frame, lengthen your life, and banish for ever from your houses death, that death which stains all your rooms with blood: Ah! every heart would burn with ardour to possess this assistance, and every one of my hearers would make these walls echo with, Come, Holy Spirit, come and dry up our tears by putting an end to our maladies.

But when we are told, that sin has degraded us from our natural dignity; that it has loaded us with chains of depravity; that man, a creature formed on the model of the divine perfections, and required to receive no other laws than those of order, is become the sport of unworthy passions, which move him as they please, which say to him, go and he goeth, come and he cometh, which debase and vilify him at pleasure, we are not affected with these mortifying truths, but we glory in our shame!

Slaves of sin! Captives under a heavier yoke than that of Pharaoh, in a furnace more cruel than that of Egypt! Behold your Deliverer! He comes to-day to break your bonds and set you free. The assistance of grace is set before you. What am I saying? An abundant measure is already communicated to you. Already you know your misery. Already you are seeking relief from it. Avail yourselves of this. Ask for this succour, and if it be refused you, ask again, and never cease asking till you have obtained it.

Recollect, that the truths we have been preaching are the most mortifying of religion, and the most proper to humble us. It was voluntarily, that we so often rebelled against God. Freely, alas! freely, and without compulsion we have, some of us, denied the truths of religion, and others given mortal wounds to the majesty of its laws. Ah! Are there any tears too bitter, is there any remorse too cutting, any cavern in the earth too deep, to expiate the guilt of such a frightful character!

Remember, the truths we have been teaching are full of consolation. This part of my text, “O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself,” is connected with the other part, “but in me is thine help.” God yet entreats us not to destroy ourselves. God has not yet given us up. He does not know, pardon this expression, he is a stranger to that point of honour, which often engages us to turn away for ever from those who have treated us with contempt. He, he himself, the great, the mighty God does not think it beneath him, not unworthy of his glorious majesty, yet to entreat us to return

* This remark indicates a generous temper in Saurin, to speak handsomely of his colleagues.

o him and be happy. O "mercy," that 'reacheth to the heavens!" O "faithfulness, eaching unto the clouds!" What consolations low from you to a soul afraid of having exhausted you!

Above all, think, think, my brethren, that the truth we have been preaching will become one of the most cruel torments of the damned. Devouring flame, kindled by divine vengeance in hell, I have no need of your light; smoke ascending up for ever and ever, I have no need to be struck with your blackness; chains of darkness that weigh down the damned, I have no need to know your weight, to enable me to form lamentable ideas of the punishments of the reprobate, the truth in my text is sufficient to make me conceive your horror. Being lost, it will be remembered that there was a time when destruction might have been prevented. One of you will recollect the education God gave you, another the sermon he addressed to you, a third the sickness he sent to reform you: conscience will be obliged to do homage to an avenging God, it will be forced to allow, that the aid of the Spirit of God was mighty, the motives of the gospel powerful, and the duties of it practicable. It will be compelled to acquiesce in this terrible truth, "thou hast destroyed thyself." A condemned soul will incessantly be its own tormentor, and will continually say, I am the author of my own punishment, I might have been saved, I opened and entered this horrible gulf of myself.

Inculcate all these great truths, Christians, let them affect you, let them persuade you, let them *compel* you. God grant you the grace! To him be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON LXVIII.

THE GRIEF OF THE RIGHTEOUS FOR THE MISCONDUCT OF THE WICKED.

PSALM CXIX. 36.

Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.

FEW people are such novices in religion as not to know, that sinners ought not to be troubled for their own sins; but it is but here and there a man, who enters so much into the spirit of religion as to understand how far the sins of others ought to trouble us. David was a model of both these kinds of penitential grief.

Repentance for his own sins is immortalized in his penitential psalms: and would to God, instead of that fatal security, and that unmeaning levity, which most of us discover, even after we have grossly offended God, would to God, we had the sentiments of this penitent! His sin was always before him, and imbittered all the pleasures of life. You know the language of his grief. "Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak, my bones are vexed. Mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me. Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O

Lord. I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me. Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice."

But as David gives us such proper models of penitential expressions of grief for our own sins, so he furnishes us with others as just for lamenting the sins of others. You have heard the text, "rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law." Read the psalm from which the text is taken, and you will find that our prophet shed three sorts of tears for the sins of others. The first were tears of zeal: the second flowed from love: the third from self-interest. This is a kind of penitence, which I propose to-day to your emulation.

In the first place, I will describe the insults which a sinner offers to God, and will endeavour to show you, that it is impossible for a good man to see his God affronted in this manner without being extremely grieved, and shedding tears of *zeal*.

In the second place, I will enumerate the miseries, into which a *sinner* plunges *himself* by his obstinate perseverance in sin, and I will endeavour to convince you, that it is impossible for a good man to see this without shedding tears of *pity and love*.

In the third place, I shall show you, if I perceive your attention continue, the disorders which sinners cause in *society*, in our cities and families, and you will perceive, that it is impossible for a good man to see the prosperity of society every day endangered and damaged by its enemies without shedding tears of *self-interest*.

Almighty God, whose "tender mercies are over all thy works," but whose adorable Providence condemns us to wander in a valley of tears; O condescend, "to put our tears into thy bottle," and to gather us in due time to that happy society in which conformity to thy laws is the highest happiness and glory! Amen.

I. David shed over sinners of his time, tears of zeal. Thus he expresses himself in the psalm from which we have taken the text, "My zeal hath consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten thy words." But what is zeal? How many people, to exculpate themselves for not feeling this sacred flame, ridicule it as a phantom, the mark of an enthusiast? However, there is no disposition more real and sensible. The word *zeal* is vague and metaphorical, it signifies fire, heat, warmth, and applied to intelligent beings, it means the activity and vehemence of their desires, hence, in common style, it is attributed to all the passions indifferently, good and bad: but it is most commonly applied to religion, and there has two meanings, the one vague, the other precise.

In a vague sense, zeal is put less for a particular virtue, than for a general vigour and vivacity pervading all the powers of the soul of a zealous man. Zeal is opposed to lukewarmness, and lukewarmness is not a particular vice, but a dullness, an indolence that accompanies and enfeebles all the exercises of

the religion of a lukewarm man. On the contrary, zeal is a fire animating all the emotions of the piety of the man who has it, and giving them all the worth and weight of vehemence.

But as the most noble exercises of religion are such as have God for their object, and as the virtue of virtues, or, as Jesus Christ expresses it, "the first and great commandment" is that of divine love, zeal is particularly taken (and this is the precise meaning of the word,) for loving God, not for a love limited and moderate, such as that which we ought to have for creatures, even creatures the most worthy of esteem, but a love boundless and beyond moderation, so to speak, like that of glorified spirits to the Supreme Intelligence, whose perfections have no limits, whose beauties are infinite.

The idea thus fixed, it is easy to comprehend, that a soul animated with zeal, cannot see without the deepest sorrow, the insults offered by sinners to his God. What object is it that kindles flames of zeal in an ingenuous soul? It is the union of three attributes: an attribute of magnificence, an attribute of holiness, and an attribute of communication. This union can be found only in God, and for this reason God only is worthy of supreme love. Every being in whom any one of these three attributes is wanting, yea, any being in whom any degree is wanting, is not, cannot be an object of supreme love.

In vain would God possess attributes of charitable communication, if he did not possess attributes of magnificence. His attributes of communication would indeed inspire me with sentiments of gratitude: but what benefit should I derive from his inclination to make me happy, if he had not power sufficient to do so, and if he were not himself the happy God, that is, the origin, the source of all felicity, or, as an inspired writer speaks, "the parent of every good and every perfect gift?" James i. 17. In this case he would reach a feeble hand to help me, he would shed unavailing tears over my miseries, and I could not say to him, my supreme "good is to draw near to thee; whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee," Ps. lxxiii. 28. 25.

In vain would God possess attributes of holiness, if he did not possess attributes of communication. In this case he would indeed be an object of my admiration, but he could not be the ground of my hope. I should be struck with the contemplation of a virtue always pure, always firm, and always alike: but in regard to me, it would be only an abstract and metaphysical virtue, which could have no influence over my happiness. Follow this reasoning in regard to the other attributes, and you will perceive that nothing but a union of these three can render an object supremely lovely; and as this union can be found only in God, it is God only who can be the object of zeal, or, what is the same thing, expressed in other words, God alone is worthy of supreme love.

As we make a progress in our meditation, and in proportion as we acquire a just notion of true zeal, we shall enter into the spirit and meaning of the words of our psalmist. Do you love God as he did? Does your heart burn

like his, with flames of divine zeal? Then you can finish the first part of my discourse, for you know by experience this disposition of mind, "my zeal hath consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten thy words. Rivers of waters run down mine eyes because they keep not thy law."

Sinners, I do not mean such as sin through infirmity and surprise, the text does not speak of them, I mean such as sin openly, freely, and deliberately, these sinners attack the perfections of God, either his attributes of magnificence, or those of holiness, or those of communication, and sometimes all three together. They endeavour to disconcert the beautiful harmony of the divine perfections, and so to rob us of all we adore, the only worthy object of our esteem.

They attack the magnificence of God. Such are those madmen who employ all the depths of their erudition, all the acuteness of their genius, and all the fire of their fancy to obscure the eternity of the first cause, the infinity of his power, the infallibility of his wisdom, and every other perfection that makes a part of that complexure, or combination of excellences, which we call magnificence.—Such, again, are those abominable characters, who supply the want of genius with the depravity of their hearts, and the blasphemies of their mouths, and who, not being able to attack him with specious reasons and plausible sophisms, endeavour to stir up his subjects to rebel, defying his power, and trying whether it be possible to deprive him of the empire of the world.

Some sinners attack the attributes of holiness in the perfect God. Such are those detestable men, who presume to tax him with falsehood and deceit, who deny the truth of his promises, who accuse his laws of injustice, and his conduct of prevarication, who would persuade us, that the reins of the universe would be held much more wisely by their impure hands than by those of the judge of all the earth.

Some sinners attack the attributes of communication. Such, in the first instance, are those ungrateful persons, who, while they breathe only his air, and live only on his aliments, while only his earth bears, and only his sun illuminates them, while they neither live, nor move, nor have a being, but what they derive from him, while he opens to them the path to supreme happiness, I mean the road to faith and obedience, pretend that he is wanting in goodness, charge him with all the miseries into which they have the madness to plunge themselves, dare to accuse him with taking pleasure in tormenting his creatures, and in the sufferings of the unfortunate; who wish the goodness of the Supreme Being were regulated by their caprice, or rather by their madness, and will never consent to worship him as good, except he allows them with impunity to gratify their most absurd and guilty passions.

Observe too, people may be profane by action as well as by system and reasoning. If sinners attack the attributes of God directly, it is equally true, they make an indirect attack upon the same perfections.

Here I wish, my brethren, each of us had accustomed himself to derive his morality from evangelical sources, to hear the language of inspired writers, and to judge of his own actions, not by such flattering portraits as his own prejudices produce, but by the essential properties of morality as it is described in the word of God.

For example, what is a man who coolly puts himself under the protection of another man without taking any thought about the guardianship of God? He is a profane wretch, who declares war against God, and attacks his attributes of magnificence by attributing more power to the patron, under whose wing he creeps and thinks himself secure, than to that God who takes the title of *King of kings*.—What I say of confidence in a king, I affirm of confidence in all other creatures, whoever or whatever they be. On this principle the psalmist grounded this exhortation, 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." On this principle is this other declaration of a prophet founded, "cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm." And it is on this principle that sacred history imputes so great a crime to Asa, because when he fell sick, and saw himself reduced to extremity, "he sought to the physicians, and not to the Lord."

What is a man who gives up his heart to idolize any particular object? What is a man who follows certain sympathies, a certain secret influence, certain charms omnipotent to him, because he chooses to yield to their omnipotence? He is a profane wretch, who declares war against God, and who attacks his attributes of communication; he is a man, who attests by his conduct that there is more pleasure in his union to his idol than there can be in communion with God; he is a man, who maintains by his actions that this creature to whom he gives himself up without reserve, merits more love, and knows how to return love with more delicacy and constancy than that God, who is the only model of perfect love; he is a man who resists this invitation of eternal wisdom, "my son, give me thine heart," and who disputes a truth, that ought to be considered as a first principle in a system of love, "in thy presence is fulness of joy, at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore," Ps. xvi. 11.

Let us abridge this part of our discourse, and let us return to the chief end proposed. A sinner, who sins openly, freely, of set purpose, attacks the attributes of God, either his attributes of greatness, or his attributes of communication, or his attributes of holiness, sometimes all the three together. A good man, who sincerely loves God, can he look with indifference on such insults offered to the object of his love? And in which of the saints whom the inspired writers have proposed as examples to you, have you discovered this guilty indifference?

Behold Moses! He comes down from the holy mountain, he hears the acclamations of those madmen who were celebrating a foolish

feast in honour of their idol, and he replies to Joshua, who thought it was a war shout, "Ah! no, it is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome, but the noise of them that sing do I hear," Exod. xxxii. 18. Convinced by his own eyes, he trembles at the sight, breaks the tables of the law, on which God had engraven with his own adorable hand the clauses of the covenant which this people were now violating, he runs to the "gate of the camp," and cries, "who is on the Lord's side? Let him come unto me!" And when "all the sons of Levi gathered themselves unto him, he said unto them, 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," ver. 26, 27. See Phinehas. He perceives Moses and Aaron "weeping at the door of the tabernacle," because the people had forsaken the worship of God, and gone over to that of Baal-peor; touched with their grief he "rises up," quits the congregation, "takes a javelin in his hand" and stabs an Israelite (with the immodest Midianite,) who had enticed the people, into this abominable idolatry. Behold Elijah. "I am very jealous," says he, "for the Lord God of hosts, for the children of Israel have forsaken his covenant, thrown down his altars, and slain his prophets with the sword," 1 Kings xix. 10. Remark St. Paul. "His spirit was stirred in him, to see a nation, in other respects the most learned and polite, rendering to "an unknown God" such homage as was due to none but the Most High, whose "glory the Heavens declare, and whose handy work the firmaments sheweth." Behold the royal prophet, "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? And am I not grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred, I count them mine enemies," Ps. cxxxix. 21, 22. "My zeal hath consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten thy words. Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law." "Rivers of tears," tears of which my zeal for thy glory is the first cause.

11. Although the sinner be hateful as a sinner, yet as an unhappy person he is an object of pity, and it is possible he may preclude future ills by repentance. As to love God with all the heart is the first and great commandment, so "the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Sin is a source of misery to a sinner, and it is impossible for a good man to see, without shedding tears of *love and pity*, the depths of woe into which people united to him by bonds of affection plunge themselves by their obstinacy in sin.

Every thing favours this subject. In regard to the present life, a man living according to laws of virtue is incomparably more happy than he who gives himself up to vice. So the Holy Spirit has declared, "godliness hath promise of the life that now is," 1 Tim. iv. 8. Though this general rule has some exceptions, yet they cannot regard the serenity of mind, the peace of conscience, the calm of the passions, the confidence of good men, their steadiness in the calamities of life, and their intrepidity at the approach of death. All these

advantages and many others, without which the most brilliant condition, and the most delicious life, are only a splendid slavery, and a source of grief, all these advantages, I say, are inseparable from piety. A charitable man cannot see, without deep affliction, objects of his tenderest love renounce such inestimable advantages, poison the pleasure of their own life, open an inexhaustible source of remorse, and prepare for themselves racks and tortures.

But, my brethren, these are only the least subjects of our present contemplation. We have other bitter reflections to make, and other tears to shed, and there is an exposition of charity more just, and at the same time more lamentable, of the words of my text, "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law."

I am thinking of the eternal misery in which sinners involve themselves. We are united to sinners by ties of nature, by bonds of society, and by obligations of religion, and who can help trembling to think that persons round whom so many tendrils of affectionate ligaments twine, should be threatened with everlasting torments! Some people are so much struck with this thought, that they think, when we shall be in heaven all ideas of people related to us on earth will be effaced from our memory, that we shall entirely lose the power of remembering, that we shall not even know such as share celestial happiness with us, lest the idea of such as are deprived of it should diminish our pleasure, and embitter our happiness. It would be easy, in my opinion to remove this difficulty, if it were necessary now. In heaven order, and order alone will be the foundation of our happiness; and if order condemns the persons we shall have most esteemed, our happiness will not be affected by their misery. We shall love only in God; we shall feel no attachment to any, who do not love God as we do: their cries will not move us, nor will their torments excite our compassion.

But while we are in this world, God would have us affected with the misery that threatens a sinner, that our own feelings may excite us to prevent it. You have sometimes admired one of the most marvellous phenomena of nature; nature has united us together by invisible bonds, it has formed our fibres in perfect unison with the fibres of our neighbour; we cannot see him exposed to violent pain without receiving a counter blow, an unvaried tone that sounds relief to him, and forces us to assist him. This is the work of that Creator, whose infinite goodness is seen in all his productions. He intends that these sentiments of commiseration in us should be so many magazines to supply what the temporal miseries of our neighbours require.

So in regard to eternity, there is a harmony, and, if you will allow the expression, there is a unison of spirits. While we are in this world, an idea of the eternal destruction of a person we esteem suspends the pleasure, which a hope of salvation promised to ourselves would otherwise cause. It is the work of the Creator, whose goodness shines brighter in religion than in the works of nature. That horror, which is caused by a bare appearance, that the man we so tenderly love should be reserved for eternal torments, I say, the bare suspicion of such a

calamitous event compels us to flee to the aid of the unhappy object of our esteem, to pluck him from the jaws of destruction by reclaiming him from his errors with the force of exhortation and the power of example. To combat these sentiments is to oppose the intention of God; to tear these from our hearts is to disrobe ourselves of that charity, without which there is no religion.

Accordingly, the more a mind becomes perfect in the exercise of this virtue, the more it has of this kind of sensibility. Hence it was that St. Paul so sharply reproved the Corinthians, because they had not *mourned* on account of that incestuous person, who had disgraced their church. Hence it was that Moses, when he discovered that gross idolatry of which we just now spoke, gave himself up to the deepest sorrow, and said to the Lord, "Oh, this people have sinned a great sin! Yet now, forgive their sin, and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book." Hence it was that Jeremiah said to the Jews of his time, who were going captives into a foreign land, where they would be destitute of the comfort of religion, "give glory to God before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains. But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride, and mine eyes shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the Lord's flock is carried away captive." Hence this declaration of Paul to the Philippians, "Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ." Hence it was that Jesus Christ, the chief model of charity, when he overlooked the unhappy Jerusalem, and saw the heavy judgments coming upon it, "wept over it," saying, "O that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes."

Here I venture to defy those of you, who glory in insensibility, to be insensible and void of feeling. No, nothing but the most confirmed inattention to futurity, nothing but the wretched habit we have formed of thinking of nothing but the present world can hinder our being affected with subjects which made the deepest impressions on the soul of the psalmist. Consider them as he did, and you will be affected as he was. You hardest hearts, try your insensibility, and see whether you can resist such reflections as these! This friend, who is my counsel in difficulty, my support in trouble, my comfort in adversity; this friend, who constitutes the pleasure of my life, will be perhaps for ever excluded from that happiness in heaven, to which all my hopes and wishes tend: when I shall be in the society of angels, he will be in the company of devils: when he shall knock at the door of the bridegroom who opened to me, he will receive this answer, "Verily, I say unto you, I know you not." This catechumen, in whose mind I endeavoured to inculcate the truths of religion; a part of the men, whom I thought I had subdued to Jesus Christ; a great number of these hearers, whom I often told, that they would be my joy and crown in the day of the Lord (certainly "you are our joy and crown,") will perhaps be one day disowned by Jesus Christ in the face of heaven and earth.

This pastor, whom I considered as my guide in the way to heaven, this pastor will himself experience all the horrors of that state, of which he gave me such dreadful ideas. This husband to whom Providence united me, this husband whom I esteemed as part of myself, I shall perhaps one day consider as my most mortal foe, I shall acquiesce in his damnation, I shall praise God and say, "Hallelujah, power belongeth unto the Lord our God!" True and righteous are his judgments! Hallelujah, the smoke of the torment" of him whose company once constituted my happiness, "shall rise up for ever and ever!" This child, in behalf of whom I feel I exhaust all that the power of love has of tenderness, this child whose least cry pierces my soul, and who feels no pain without my feeling a thousand times more for him, this child will be seized with horror, when he shall see coming in the clouds of heaven surrounded with holy angels that Jesus whose coming will overwhelm me with joy: this child will then seek refuge in dens, and caverns, and chasms, he will cry in agony of despair, "Mountains and rocks, fall on me and hide me from the wrath of the Lamb!" He will be loaded with chains of darkness, he will be a prey to the worm that never dies, and fuel for the fire that will never be quenched, and when Jesus Christ shall say to me in that great day, "Come, thou blessed of my Father," I shall hear this dreadful sentence denounced against this child, "depart, thou cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." Too just a subject of grief! "Rivers of waters," tears of love and pity, "run down mine eyes: because they keep not thy law."

III. So earnestly do I desire to have your attention fixed on the objects just now mentioned, that I shall hardly venture to finish the plan proposed, and to proceed to a third part of this discourse. I wish you were so alarmed with the eternal misery that threatens to overwhelm your fellow-citizens and friends, your husbands and children, and so employed to prevent it, that you were become as it were insensible to the temporal ills to which the enemies of God expose you. However, we do not pretend that love to our neighbours should make us forget what we owe ourselves. As the excesses of the wicked made our prophet shed tears of charity, so they caused him to shed tears of *self-interest*.

The wicked are the scourges of society. One seditious person is often sufficient to disturb the state; one factious spirit is often enough to set a whole church in a flame; one profligate child is often enough to poison the pleasure of the most happy and harmonious family. Good people are generally the butts of the wicked. A wicked man hates a good man. He hates him, when he has not the power to hurt him, because he has not had the pleasure of hurting him; he hates him, after he has injured him, because he considers him as a man always ready to revenge the affront offered him; and if he thinks him superior to revenge, he hates him because he is incapable of vengeance, and because the patience of the offended and the rage of the offender form a contrast, which renders the latter abominable in the eyes of all equitable people.

A good man, on the contrary, is happy in the company of another good man. What countrymen feel, when they meet in a foreign land where interests and customs, maxims and views, all different from those of the land of their nativity, resembles the pleasures believers experience when they associate in a world where they are only strangers and pilgrims. Accordingly, one of the most ardent wishes of our prophet was, to be always in company with people of this kind, "I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts," said he to God. In another place, "I will early destroy all the wicked of the land, that I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the Lord." And again, "All my delight is in the excellent saints that are in the earth."

But how few of these saints did he find! Most of his misfortunes were brought on him by the very sinners whose depravity he deploras. They were the poison of his life, and them he always saw standing ready to persecute him, and to discharge against his person the impotent malice they had against that God whose servant he considered it as his glory to be.

Does our age differ in this respect from that of David? Are saints more numerous now than they were then? May a good man promise himself among you more approbation, more countenance and support, than the psalmist found?

This is an odious question, and our doubts may seem to you illiberal. Well, we will not press it. But if the bulk of you be saints, this country must be the most delicious part of the whole universe. A good man must be as happy as it is possible to be in this world. In these provinces, free by constitution, opulent by trade, invincible by alliances, and perfectly safe by the nature of their government from tyrants and tyranny, if the number of saints be greater in these provinces than that of the wicked, it must be the most delicious of all residences in this world for a good man: if he stumbles, you will charitably save him from falling, if he errs, you will patiently bear with him, and gently reclaim him; if he be oppressed, you will assist him with firmness and vigour; if he form schemes of piety, charity, and reformation, you will second him with eagerness and zeal; if he sacrifice his health, and ease, and fortune, for our good, you will reward him with gratitude, yea with profusion. May a good man promise himself all this among you? Alas! to be only willing to devote himself to truth and virtue, is often sufficient to cause him to be beset round with a company of contradictors and opposers.

But we will not engage too deeply in such gloomy reflections, we will finish the discourse, and can we finish it in a manner more suitable to the emotions of piety that assembled you in this solemn assembly, than by repeating the prayer with which we began? Almighty God! whose adorable judgments condemn us to wander in a valley of trouble, and to live, sometimes to be united by indissoluble ties, among men who insolently brave thy commands, Almighty God! grant we may be gathered to that holy society of blessed spirits, who place their happiness in a perfect conformity to thine august laws.

The occupation of the blessed in heaven,

(and this is one of the most beautiful images under which a man who loves his God, can represent the happiness of heaven,) the employment of the blessed in heaven is to serve God; their delight is to serve God; the design of all the plans, and all the actions, and the motions of the blessed in heaven, is to serve God. And as the most laudable grief of a believer in this unhappy world, which sin makes a theatre of bloody catastrophes, and a habitation of maledictions, is to see the unworthy inhabitants violate the laws of their Creator, so the purest joys of the blessed, is to see themselves in a society where all the members are always animated with a desire to please God, always ready to fly where his voice calls them, always collected in studying his holy laws.

This is the society to which you, my dear brethren, are appointed; you who, after the example of Lot, vex your righteous souls from day to day at seeing the depravity of the world; you, I mean, "who shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation." Into that society those happy persons are gone, whom death has taken from us, and a separation from whom has caused us so many sighs and tears. Behold, faithful friend! behold the company where now resides that friend to whom your soul was knit, as the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David! See, thou weeping Joseph! See that society where thy good father now is, that good Jacob whom thou didst convey to the grave with tears so bitter, that the inhabitants of Canaan called the place where thou didst deposit the body, "Abel-Mizraim, a grievous mourning to the Egyptians." Look, frail father! look at that society, there is thy son, at whose death thou didst exclaim, "O Absalom, my son, would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" And you, too, distressed Rachels! whose voices are heard lamenting, weeping, and mourning, refusing to be comforted, because your children are not; see, behold there in heaven your chil-

dren, the dear objects of your grief and your love!

Oh! "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord! I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." Let us apply this thought of the prophet to ourselves, and may the application we make, serve for a balm to heal the wounds, which the loss of our friends has occasioned! "They shall not return to us," they shall never return to this society. What a society! A society in which our life is nothing but a miserable round of errors and sins; a society where the greatest saints are great sinners; a society in which we are often obliged to communicate with the enemies of God, with blasphemers of his holy name, violators of his august laws! No, they shall not "return to us," and this is one consolation. But (and this is the other,) but "we shall go to them." They have done nothing but set one step before us into eternity; the pleasures they enjoy are increased by the hope of our shortly enjoying the same with them. They, with the highest transports, behold the mansions which Jesus Christ has prepared for us in the house of his Father. "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God," said our divine Redeemer, to raise the drooping spirits of his apostles, stunned with the apprehension of his approaching death. This is the language we have heard spoken, this is the declaration we have heard made by each of those whom we have had the consolation of seeing die full of the peace of God, "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." O may we be shortly united in the bosom of this adorable Being with our departed friends, whose conversation was lately so delightful to us, and whose memory will always continue respected and dear! May we be united with the redeemed of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, in the presence of the blessed God! God grant us this grace! To him be honour and glory, for ever. Amen.

AN
ESSAY
ON THE
CONDUCT OF DAVID
AT THE
COURT OF ACHISH, KING OF GATH,
IN A
LETTER OF MR. DUMONT
PASTOR OF THE FRENCH CHURCH AT ROTTERDAM, AND PROFESSOR OF THE ORIENTAL
LANGUAGES, AND ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY
TO
MR. SAURIN, AT THE HAGUE

TRANSLATED BY ROBERT ROBINSON.

ADVERTISEMENT.

GABRIEL DUMONT, author of the following essay, was born at Crest, in Dauphiny, August 19th, 1680, and died at Rotterdam, January 1st, 1748. He was a refugee for religion, pastor of the Waloon church at Rotterdam, and professor of Oriental languages and Ecclesiastical history. He published nothing himself during his life; but, after his decease, Mr. Superville, his colleague, published, with a short preface, one volume of his sermons, containing twelve discourses, the most plain, artless, and edifying that I have ever had the happiness of reading; not so disputatious as those of Amyraut, not so grave as those of Superville, not so stiff as those of Torne and Bourdaloue, not so far-fetched and studied as those of Massillon, nor so charged with colouring as those of Saurin: but placid, ingenious, gentle, natural, and full of evidence and pathos: just as "wisdom from above" should be, "pure, peaceable, mild—full of mercy and good fruits—sown in peace to make peace," James iii. 17, 18. The public owe this volume to Mademoiselle de Heuqueville, the pious patroness and friend of the author, who had, as it were, extorted them from him before his death.

Mr. Saurin, who published this essay in his dissertations on the Bible, says, "I follow our version, and the general sense of interpreters. A learned man (Mr. Dumont,) has investigated the subject at large, and, if he does not furnish us with demonstrations in favour of the system he proposes, yet his conjectures are so full of erudition, and so very probable, that we cannot help admiring them, while we feel an inclination to dispute them."

For my part, I own, if I may venture a conjecture, I think Mr. Dumont has placed his opinion in a light both beautiful, and, in a very high degree, probable. To sum up his meaning, he would read the passage thus:—

1 SAMUEL, chap. xxi.

Ver. 10. And David fled that day for fear of Saul, and went to Achish, the king of Gath.

11. And the servants of Achish said unto him, Is not this David the king of the land? did they not sing one to another of him in dances, saying, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands?

12. And David was struck to the heart with these words, and was sore afraid of Achish, king of Gath.

13. And he changed countenance before them, and fell convulsed into their hands, and he hurt and marked himself against the posts of the gate, and he frothed on his beard.

14. Then said Achish unto his servants, Lo, you see the man is epileptic: wherefore then have you brought him unto me?

15. Have I need of epileptics, that ye have brought this man to fall into convulsions in my presence? Shall this fellow come into my house?

AN ESSAY

ON

THE CONDUCT OF DAVID AT THE COURT OF ACHISH, KING OF GATH.

SIR,

I MAY venture to call the letter I have the honour to write you, "An apology for the conduct of David at the court of king Achish," for my design is to prove three things: First, that if David had counterfeited madness on the occasion mentioned in the twenty-first chapter of the first book of Samuel, he would not have committed any sin. Secondly, that David did not feign himself mad, as is generally supposed. And thirdly, that this heir apparent to the crown of Israel, had not, at the court of Gath, the least degree of madness, either real or feigned.

I. If you were a man who decided a point of morality by human authority, I might allege, in favour of this first article, the following distich of Cato:

Insipiens esto, cum tempus postulat, aut res;
Stultitiam simulare loco, prudentia summa est.*

Independently of this author, of whom we hardly know either the true name, the religion, the country, or the age, every body will allow that there is a good deal of wisdom required to play the fool properly. Madness is no sin, it is a disease of the mind, or rather of the brain. David, it is to be observed, during his pretended madness, said nothing criminal. He did a few apparent acts of a person insane. Why might he not be allowed to free himself from imminent danger by this prudent dissimulation? To treat of this question fully and accurately, it would be necessary to go to the bottom of the subject, and examine the grounds and principles of the obligations men are under to speak and act sincerely to one another. It might not be improper to investigate this matter by inquiring, whether, in this reciprocal engagement, there be any difference between deceiving by words known and agreed on between mankind, and misleading, by actions, the natural signs of the sentiments of our hearts. Particularly, it should be examined, whether there be no cases in which this kind of contract is in a sort suspended, and whether David were not in one of these cases, in which he was not obliged so to act, as to convey to king Achish his true and real sentiments. But as I know, sir, you have examined this subject in the case of Samuel, I will confine myself to two arguments, supported by a few facts, relative to the conduct attributed to David in order to justify him.

First, his life was in danger; and will not a

man give all that he has for life? Have we not a right to do every thing except sin to avoid death? Blame, and welcome, the cruel policy of Dionysius of Sicily,* who sometimes spread a report that he was sick, and sometimes that he had been assassinated by his soldiers, with a design to discover, by the unguarded conversation of his subjects, how they stood affected to his government, that he might have a pretence for proscribing such as were ill affected to his despotism. Censure, if you please, the king of Ithaca, and the astronomer Meton† for pretending to have lost their senses, the first for the sake of his continuing with his dear Penelope, and the last to avoid accompanying the Athenians in an expedition against Sicily. Pity, if you will, the two monks Simeon and Thomas,‡ who affected to play the fool, lest the extraordinary holiness of their lives should not be perceived. I freely give up these tyrants and hypocrites to the most severe criticism; and I am inclined to be of the opinion of Cicero,§ who calls the finesse of Ulysses, *non honestum consilium*, a disingenuous conduct. Form, if you think proper, the same opinion of the stratagem of the famous St. Ephraim,|| who, understanding that he was chosen bishop, and that they were going to force him to be ordained, ran into a public place, walked irregularly, let fall his robe, went eating along the streets, and did so many actions of this kind, that every body thought he had lost his senses. He watched his opportunity, fled and concealed himself, and continued to do thus till they had nominated another bishop. I will not pretend to say, whether this proceeded from his contempt of vain glory, as Sozomen¶ pretends, or from his great love of retirement, for he was *αποκλεισθείς ἄγαν ἐρησότης*. For my part, I make no scruple to say of this artifice, as well as of the trick he played Apollinaris,** *non honestum consilium*. But you, sir, who are such a good citizen, will you condemn the wise Solon‡‡ for counterfeiting distraction, in order to divert his fellow-citizens of Athens from their resolution to abandon Salamin, his country, to the inhabitants of Megara? You, sir, who are no

* Polyænus Stratag. l. v. cap. 2. S. 15, 16.

† Ælian variar. historiar. lib. xiii. cap. 12.

‡ Evagrius. Hist. Eccles. lib. iv. cap. 34.

§ Cic. de officiis. lib. iii. cap. 26.

|| Sozomen Hist. Eccl. lib. iii. cap. 16.

¶ Ibid.

** Greg. de Nyssen Paneg. de S. Ephr.

‡‡ Diogenes Laert. lib. i. in Solone.

* Disticha de moribus, lib. ii. Dist. 18.

enemy to prudence, will you disapprove the opinion given of Lucius Junius Brutus,*

Brutus erat stulti sapiens imitator.

He affected to be stupid, lest he should become suspected by Tarquin the proud, who had put to death his father and his eldest brother, for the sake of seizing their great wealth. It should seem, that on supposition David acted a part when he was in danger of his life, in a place where he had fled for refuge, it would be a sufficient justification of his character to say, that he thought he might innocently make use of such a stratagem.

2. If the danger of losing his life be not sufficient, let it be observed farther, that the deception was directed to the Philistines, with whom the Israelites were then at war. This is a second argument to justify the conduct of David. When was it ever unlawful to use stratagems in war? Did not God, himself, order the Israelites to "lie in ambush" and "to flee" before the inhabitants of Ai, in order "to draw them from the city?" Is there any less evil in affecting cowardice than there is in pretending to be deprived of reason? Where is the general, who would not be glad to take cities at the same price as Callicratidas of Cyrene† took the fort of Magnesia, by introducing four soldiers, who pretended to be sick? You have observed, sir, in Buchanan's excellent history of Scotland,‡ the manner in which king Duncan defeated the army of Swen king of Norway, who was besieging him in Perth. He sent the besiegers a great quantity of wine and beer, in which some herbs of noxious qualities had been infused, and while this soporific was taking effect, he went into the camp, and put the whole army to the sword, except the prince of Norway, and ten soldiers, who had suspected the present made them by the enemy, and had not tasted the beverage. The herb is supposed to be the *solanum* or *strychnos* of Pliny,§ the *night shade*, which in a certain quantity stupifies, in a greater quantity distracts, and if more than two drachms, causes death. For these two reasons, then, I conclude that my first proposition is sufficiently clear. I said, if David had counterfeited madness, and played the fool, he would not have committed any sin: first, because his life was in danger: and secondly, because the Philistines were at war with his country.

II. If any continue obstinately to maintain that the dissimulation of David was criminal, and opposite to sincerity and good faith, I have another string to my bow, to defend this illustrious refugee. I affirm that David did not play the fool, and act a part; but that, being seized with extreme fear at hearing the conversation of the ministers of state, in the court of king Achish, he fell under a real absence of mind, and behaved, in a few instances,

* Dion. Halicarn. Antiquitat. Roman. lib. 4.

† Polyænus Stratag. lib. ii. cap. 27, S. I.

‡ Buchanan's Hist. Scotica.—Rem. This tale is not credited by some historians, and indeed it appears highly improbable in itself. Mr. Guthrie calls it an infamous and improbable story.—Hist. of Scot. Vol. I. p. 234.

§ Plin. Hist. Nat. lib. xxi. cap. 31.—Salmas ad Solin. p. 1086.

like a man disordered in his senses. Sebastian Schmidt,* a celebrated Lutheran divine, proposed as a kind of problem, whether Providence might not permit David to be terrified into a momentary delirium, in order to effect his deliverance. Mr. John Christian Ortlob, a learned man of Leipsic† published a dissertation, in 1706, on the *delirium of David before king Achish*, in which he shows, that the whole of the sacred text in Samuel naturally leads us to judge that David was so struck with the fear of sudden death, that for a few moments his understanding was absent. As this thesis is little known in this country, and as it is curious in itself, you will not be displeased, sir, if I give you here a sketch of what he says.

1. Mr. Ortlob shows, that dissimulation was impracticable in David's condition. Either he affected to play the fool the moment he was seized by the servants of the king, or only while he was in the presence of Achish. The text is contrary to the first, for it expressly assures us that this madness of David was in consequence of the conversation that passed between Achish and his officers in the presence of David. The second supposition is not at all likely, for it would have been very imprudent for him to begin to act his part in the presence of Achish; his officers would have discovered the artifice, and would have informed their master: beside, it is inconceivable that David should continue from his being first taken to that moment as mute as a fish, in order to conceal a design which required a state of mind more tranquil than that of David could be, in a danger so imminent.

2. Next, Mr. Ortlob proceeds to prove, that David had a true and natural alienation of mind.

The first proof is, his fear of danger. David, says the twelfth verse, "laid up the words in his heart, and was sore afraid of Achish the king of Gath." The terror that seized his soul affected the organs of his body, and disconcerted the fibres of his brain. There are many examples of persons affected in like manner with sudden fear. Our learned author relates the case of a girl of ten years of age,‡ who was so terrified with thunder and lightning in a furious tempest, that she was seized with violent convulsions in her left arm and her left leg. Though she did not lose her senses, yet she was constrained to flee on the other foot along the wainscot of the chamber, and the company could not stop her.

The next proof is taken from the expressions of the inspired writer, which simply and literally explained, signify a real madness.

"David changed his behaviour." It is in the Hebrew, his *taste*, that is his reason, for reason is, in man, what taste is in regard to aliments.

"And he became mad." The Hebrew verb *halal*, in the conjugation *hithpael*, as it is here, always signifies in Scripture real, and not

* D. Sebast. Schmidtus in 1 Sam. xxi.

† Davidis delirium coram Achis. Lipsiæ, 1706, 4. p. 24.

‡ Ephemer. Med. Phys. Germ. Academiæ, curiosorum, An. 8. Observ. 71.

feigned madness; and there is nothing in the text which obliges us to depart from a sense that perfectly agrees with the simplicity of the history. The French and English versions render it, he *feigned* himself mad; but they are wrong, for the original says nothing about *feigning*.

"He scabbled on the doors of the gate." Cornelius a Lapide thinks he wrote the letter *tau* to form the figure of the cross. Rabbi Schabtai, in a German book entitled *Esrin Vearba*,* was better informed, and he says David wrote on the gates of the palace, "The king owes me a hundred thousand guilders, and his kingdom, fifty thousand." Mr. Ortlob, learned as he is, does not know so much as the Rabbi and the Jesuit. He contents himself with observing, that David, all taken up with his delirium, and having no instrument in his hand to write, scratched the gate with his fingers, like people in a malignant fever. He observes also, that the indecent manner in which David "let his spittle fall down upon his beard," is a natural and usual consequence of a delirium.

His third proof is taken from the connexion of the whole history, which supposes and indicates real madness. "David changed his behaviour:" the sacred author explains first in what this change consisted, it was in becoming mad in the presence of the king and his officers; and he adds two actions of madness, the one scratching and writing on the gates with his fingers, and the other drivelling on his beard.

The last proof our author takes from the consequences. Achish gives David his life and liberty, as a man beneath his resentment. He was angry with those who brought a madman to him. David, on his side, escaped the danger, recovered his spirits, and became himself. There is no reason to question whether he observed the precept given by himself in the thirty-fourth Psalm, which he composed, as well as the fifty-sixth, to praise God for his deliverance, "keep thy lips from speaking guile," ver. 13.

My second proposition was, that David did not feign himself mad, as is usually supposed; and Mr. Ortlob, in this treatise, has justified David from the charge of every kind of dissimulation, and so far it gives me pleasure to follow him; for this is an opinion more tolerable than the former, but I must beg leave to dissent from this learned writer, and to state in the next place my own opinion, for I do not think, as Mr. Ortlob does, that David had any degree of madness.

III. I think the whole passage ought to be understood of an epilepsy, a convulsion of the whole body, with a loss of sense for the time. Judge, sir, of the reasons on which I ground this third proposition.

1. My first reason is taken from the original terms, which perfectly agree with an epilepsy. This is not easy to discover in our modern versions; but it is very plain in the Septuagint, and in the old Latin version, which our interpreters often very injudiciously despise. The authors of both these versions were in a better condition than we are, to understand the force

and the real signification of Hebrew words and idioms. I am fully persuaded we ought to prefer these versions in the present case.

David, said the sacred historian, *changed his behaviour*, or his *taste*. The Septuagint reads it ἡλλοίωσε το πρόσωπον, αὐτον, and the Vulgate, *immulavit os suum, he changed countenance*. I think this translation is better than that of Mr. Ortlob, *his reason was changed*: because it is added, *before them*, or in *their sight*, and in the thirty-fourth psalm, *before Abimelech*, or in his presence. It is well known, that the countenance of a person taken with an epilepsy is suddenly changed. But should we retain the word *reason*, we might with equal justice say, that the reason, or the taste is changed in an epileptic fit, because for a few moments reason is absent.

2. Our version adds, *he feigned himself mad in their hands*. The Septuagint seems to me to have rendered the words much better, *παραφρεσεν εν ταις χειρσιν αὐτον*. He *struggled* or *tossed himself in their hands*. (For I think the preceding words in this version, "in that day he feigned," is one of those interpolations, which passed from the margin to the text; and that the words, *και ετυματιζεν επι ταις οὐραις της πολεις*, are of some other version, and have got into the text as the former.) The Hebrew word *halal* is a general term, which signifies to agitate one's self, to shake, either by twinkling like the stars, or by applauding like some one, or by boasting of any thing of our own, which the Latins call *jactare, jactare se*: or by moving ourselves involuntarily, as a paralytic man does, or a madman, or a person in convulsions, or one in excessive joy. The Septuagint could not translate the word here better than by *παραφρεσεν*, because *παραφρορες* among the Greeks* is put for a distracted person, a demoniac, and because a body irregularly and involuntarily agitated is said *παραφρεσεναι*. Aristotle† uses it in the same sense. Having said that there seems something in the soul of an intemperate man beside reason, and opposite to it, he adds, he is like a paralytic body, the patient aims to move the right hand or the right foot, and the left hand and the left foot move *τουναντιον εις τα αριστερα παραφρεσεται*. The only difference is, we perceive irregular motions of the body, whereas those of the soul are invisible. The Vulgate translates in a manner more favourable still to my opinion, *et collabebatur inter manus eorum, he fell into their hands*. The term *collabi*, as well as *cadere*, and *corrueere*, are applied to the epilepsy, which the Hebrews, like us, called the *falling sickness*. All these Latin words may be seen in this sense in the first apology of Apuleius.‡ He addresses himself to Æmilianus, his adversary, to justify himself from the accusation of having bewitched one Thallus, who was fallen extremely ill with an epilepsy. *Imo si verum velis, Æmiliane, tu potius caducus qui jam tot calumniis, cecidisti, neque enim gravius est corpore quam corde collabi, pede potius quam mente corrueere, in cubiculo despuì, quam in isto splendidissimo cætu detestari.*

* Phavorinus in voce *παραφρορες*.

† Aristot. *Ethicor. ad Nichomæum*, lib. i. cap. 13.

‡ Apuleius *Apol. pro se ipso prima*.

3. *And he marked the posts of the gates.* This is the version of the late Mr. Martin, but allow me to lay aside all the versions of our modern divines, and even those of the most celebrated Rabbies, and to abide by my Septuagint and my Vulgate. The Septuagint renders it *κων επιπτεν επι της θυρας της πυλης*, and the Vulgate says, *et impingebat in ostia portiarum* and he hurt himself, or he dashed himself against the posts of the gate. Munster* pretends indeed that the Latin interpreter first wrote, *et pingebat in ostia portiarum*, and that it was afterwards changed into *impingebat*; but though this ingenious conjecture has been adopted by able critics, yet it seems to me futile, because on the one hand the Vulgate evidently follows the Septuagint, and on the other, because the Latin interpreter would have contradicted himself, *collabebatur inter manus eorum, et pingebat in ostia portiarum*, if he fell into their hands how could he write, or scratch with his fingers on the gate or the door? Nor is it necessary with the celebrated Lewis Capell† to suppose the change of a letter, and to say that the Septuagint reads *vajatoph*, instead of *vajetau*. The verb *tava* signifies to mark, to make an impression, or some print with the hand, or an instrument, and to shake, and make the body tremble where the mark is imprinted. David was violently hurt against the posts of the gate, so that marks were left in his flesh. This signification of the verb is agreeable to the Chaldean language, in which *teva* signifies to tremble, to shiver, and in the Arabic, where the same root signifies to be troubled or astonished.

4. King Achish uses another word, which modern translations render *fool, madman*. *Lo, you see the man is mad. Have I need of madmen*, and so on. The Septuagint, which I follow step by step, and the authors of which understood Hebrew better than we, translates it, *αδου αδετε ανδρα επιληπτον* and so on: Why have you brought this man? Do you not see that he is attacked with an epilepsy? Have I need of epileptics, that you have brought him to fall into convulsions in my presence? This single testimony of the Septuagint ought to determine this question.

2. My second class of arguments is taken from the scope of the place, and I think, even supposing the original terms were as favourable to the idea of folly or madness as they are to that of an epilepsy, yet we should be more inclined to the latter sense than to the former.

First, if there be some examples of persons frightened into folly or madness, there are more of persons terrified into an epilepsy. Among the various causes of this sickness, the author of a book on the subject, supposed to be Hippocrates,‡ has given sudden fright as one. It would be needless to multiply proofs when a sorrowful experience daily gives us so many! But I recollect one instance of the zeal of St. Barnard,§ which deserves to be related, I do

not say to be applauded. William the Xth Duke of Aquitain, and Count of Thoulose, declared himself against Innocent the IId in favour of Peter de Leon, an antipope who had taken the name of Anacletus the IId. The Duke had driven the Bishops of Poitiers, and of Limoges, from their sees. St. Barnard was sent into Guienne to engage him to reconcile himself to the holy see, and to re-establish the two bishops, but he could not prevail with him to be reconciled to the bishop of Poitiers. While they were talking at the church gate, St. Barnard went up to the altar and said mass. Having consecrated the host, and pronounced the benediction on the people, he took the body of the Lord in a patine, and going out with a countenance on fire, and with eyes in a flame, he addressed with a threatening air these terrible words to the Duke: "We have entreated you, but you have despised us. In a former interview, a great number of the servants of God besought you, and you treated them with contempt. Behold, now the Son of the Virgin comes to you, the head and lord of the church you persecute. Behold your judge, at whose name every name in heaven, earth, and hell, bow. Behold the avenger of your crimes, into whose hand, sooner or later, your stubborn soul shall fall. Have you the hardness to despise him? And will you condemn the master as you have done the servants?" The spectators were all dissolved in tears, and the count himself, unable to bear the sight of the abbot, who addressed him with so much vehemence, and who held up to him all the while the body of the Lord, fell all shaking and trembling, to the earth. Being raised up by his soldiers, he fell back again, and lay on his face, saying nothing and looking at nobody, but uttering deep groans, and letting his spittle fall down on his beard, and discovering all the signs of a person convulsed in an epilepsy. St. Barnard approached, pushed him with his foot, commanded him to rise, and to stand up and hear the decree of God. "The bishop of Poitiers, whom you have driven from his church, is here; go and reconcile yourself to him; and by giving him a holy kiss of peace become friendly, and reconduct him yourself to his see. Satisfy the God you have offended, render him the glory due to his name, and recall all your divided subjects into the unity of faith and love. Submit yourself to pope Innocent; and as all the church obeys him, resign yourself to this eminent pontiff chosen by God himself. At these words the count ran to the bishop, gave him the kiss of peace, and re-established him in his see."

2. I return, sir, from this digression, which is not quite foreign to my subject, to observe, in the second place, that the sacred historian attributes to David the three characteristic marks of the falling sickness, falling, convulsion, and frothing. *Falling*, for it is said he

* Munsterus in h. l. in criticis magnis.—See Bayle Achish. Rem. C.

† L. Capellus criticæ sacra libro. iv. cap. 5. S. 35.

‡ Hippocrates περι εγκεφαλιου νοσου. T. ii. S. xi. p. 336.

§ Vita Sancti Bernardi. lib. ii. cap. 6. n. 38. Rogatus te, et sprevisti nos, supplicavit tibi in altero quam jam tecum habuimus, conventu servorum Dei ante te adunata multitudo, et contempsisti. Ecce ad te

processit filius virginis, qui est caput et Dominus ecclesie, quam tu persequeris. Adest Judex tuus, in cujus nomine omne genu curvatur caelestium, terrestrium et infernorum. Adest vindex tuus, in cujus manua illa anima tua deveniet. Nunquid et ipsum spernes? Nunquid et ipsum sicut servos ejus contempneris?

Elevatus a militibus, rursus in faciem ruit, nec quippiam alieni loquentis, aut intendens in aliquem, salvos in barbam defluentibus, cum profundis effatis gemitibus, epilepticus videbatur.

fell "into the hands" of the officers of the king: *convulsion*, for he hurt himself against the "posts of the gate;" and *frothing*, for he let fall his "spittle upon his beard." These are symptoms, which Isidore of Seville gives of an epilepsy,* *cujus tanta vis est, ut homo valens concidat, spumetque*. We may see the cause, or at least what physicians say of it, in the work of Hippocrates just now quoted, in the posthumous works of Mr. Manjot, and in all the treatises of pathological physic. The manner in which Hippocrates explains the symptom of froth seems very natural, *αφρου δὲ ἐκ τοῦ στόματος*, &c. The froth, that comes out of the mouth, proceeds from the lungs, which, not receiving any fresh air, throw up little bubbles, like those of a dying man.

3. The horror of king Achish concerning the condition of David, is a third reason, which confirms our opinion. "You see," said this prince to his officers, "this man is epileptic, shall such a man come into my house? And he drove him away," as it is said in the title of the thirty-fourth psalm. According to the common opinion, David feigned himself a natural, a fool, not a madman: he did actions of imbecility, and silliness, not of madness and fury. Now the ancients, far from having any aversion to this sort of fools, kept them in their palaces to make diversion. Tarquin the proud kept Lucius Junius Brutus in his family less as a relation of whom he meant to take care, than as a fool to please his children by absurd discourses and ridiculous actions. Anacharsis, who lived about three hundred years after David, could not bear this custom of the Greeks. This wise Scythian said, "Man was a thing too serious to be destined to a usage so ridiculous."† Seneca, in one of his letters to Lucilius, speaks of a female fool, whom his wife had left him for a legacy, and who had suddenly lost her sight.‡ She did not know she was blind, and was always asking to be let out of a house where she could see nothing. Seneca says, that he had a great dislike to this kind of singularities; that if ever he should take it into his head to divert himself with a fool, he need not go far in search of one, that he would make a fool of himself: and he agreeably compares mankind with their defects to Harpasta the fool of his wife. Every body knows, adds this philosopher,§ ambition is not my vice, but we cannot live otherwise at Rome. I dislike luxury, but to live at a great expense is essential to living in this great city; and so on. Pliny the younger, writing to one of his friends, complained of having misspent his time at an elegant supper through the impertinence of these fools, who interrupted conversation: he says, that every one had his own whim; that he had no relish for such absurdities; but that some complaisance was necessary to the taste of our acquaintances.

It was not the same with madmen, and particularly epileptics. Every body carefully

avoided them, and thought, to meet them was a bad omen. Dion Cassius says, the Roman senate always broke up, when any one of them happened to be taken with an epilepsy, for which reason it was called *morbis comitialis*,* witness these verses of Serenus Sammonicus:

Est subiti species morbi, cui nomen ab illo est,
Quod fieri nobis suffragia justa recusat:
Sæpe etenim membris acri languore caducis,
Consilium populi labes horrenda diremit.

Pliny the elder,† who relates the same thing, informs us of another custom, that was, to spit at the sight of an epileptic: *Despuimus comitiales morbos, hoc est, contagia regerimus; simili modo et fascinationes repercutimus, dextræque clauditis accursum*. There was then as much superstition in this custom as aversion to the illness. Accordingly Theophrastes has not forgotten, in his character of a superstitious man, to represent him seized with horror, and spitting at meeting a madman, or an epileptic.‡ This was so common, and so much confined to an epilepsy, that it was frequently called the *sickness to be spitted at*: Thus Plautus, in the comedy of the Captives, where Tyndarus, to prevent Hegio from staying with Aristophontes, accuses him of being subject to the illness that is spit at.§

In this custom of spitting at the sight of an epileptic, I think I have formed a very probable conjecture on another famous passage of Scripture; but, sir, I shall do myself the honour to treat of this in a future letter to you. At present, I avail myself of this custom to explain why Achish discovered so much indignation against his courtiers, and so much disdain for David, and why he drove him so quickly from his palace.

4. In fine, I think, it is easy to see in the thanksgiving psalms, which David composed after he had escaped this imminent danger, several indications of the nature of the illness that had seized him so suddenly. It is agreed that he composed the thirty-fourth and the fifty-sixth on this occasion, as the titles assure us, and to them I add the thirty-first and the hundred and sixteenth, concerning which I beg leave to make two remarks.

First, that the hundred and sixteenth has so much connexion with the fifty-sixth, and the thirty-first with the hundred and sixteenth, that it is very evident these three psalms were composed at the same time, and in view of the same deliverance: with this difference, however, that in the fifty-sixth David confines himself to the malignity of his enemies, to the punishment they might expect, and to his own confidence in God, who engaged him to despise all their efforts; whereas in the thirty-first he expresses more clearly the terror which had been excited in him by the conversation of Achish and his officers, and the prayers which he had addressed to the Lord in his distress. In the hundred and sixteenth he attends more to the success of these prayers, and to the gratitude he felt for deliverance from his great danger, and to the profound impression which

* Isidor, *Hispaliensis originum* lib. iii. cap. 7. De chronicis morbis, voce Epilepsia. p. 33. Col. A. lit. c. Hippocrat. ut supra.

† Apud Eustathium in Homerum.

‡ Seneca. *Epist.* 30.

§ Hoc, quod in illa videmus, omnibus nobis accidere liceat tibi.—Plin. *Ep.* lib. ix. 17.

* Dio Cassius. lib. 37.

† Plin. lib. xxviii. cap. 4.

‡ Theophrastes *Charact.* παρὰ δεισιδαιμονίας.

§ Plut. *Capt. Act.* iii. Scen. 4. ver. 15, &c. *morbis qui insipatur.*

his late situation had made on his mind. A bare parallel of these three hymns discovers a great resemblance both in sentiment and expression. Compare Ps. lvi. verses 5. 9. 11—14, with cxvi. 8. 12, 13. 17. 14. 18. 8. 9.—and cxvi. 1—3. 11. 16, with xxxi. 23, 24. 3. 10, 11. 23. 17.

The second observation I make on the thirty-first and hundred and sixteenth psalm is, that they perfectly agree with the occasion of the two other psalms, and that some passages seem to refer to the supposed epileptic fit. The cause is remarked Ps. xxxi. 10, 11. 14. The effects and consequences are spoken of in the same psalm, ver. 12, 13. The condition to which the illness had reduced David is described Ps. cxvi. 11.—Ps. xxxi. 23, (22 in the English version), “I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes. All men are liars.” However the Hebrew words rendered in *my haste* be translated, either with the Septuagint in *my ecstasy*, or with Symmachus in *my swoon* or *fainting fit*, or with the old Italian version, in *my great dread*, or with St. Jerome in *my stupefaction*,* either of the senses supposes and confirms my opinion. Suidas explains the word *ecstasy*, which the Septuagint uses here by *βημασμος και αλλοιωσις*. This last word is the same as that in the title of the thirty-fourth psalm, where David is said to have *changed countenance*, for so I think it should be translated.

In regard to the two psalms before mentioned, which were always understood to be composed on this occasion, they both of them furnish a great deal to establish our opinion.

In the fifty-sixth psalm, there is a verse, the seventh I mean, which modern interpreters seem not to have well understood. David there, speaking of his enemies, says, according to our version, “Shall they escape by iniquity? In thine anger cast down the people, O God.” I think the words may be rendered, without violence to the original, O God, because of their iniquity spue them out, and cast down the people in thine anger; because the Hebrew word *palleth*, which in the conjugation *kal* signifies to *escape*, when it is in the conjugation *piel* signifies to *vomit*, to *reject*; so the celebrated Rabbi David Kimchi says. Indeed the Chaldee paraphrast† uses it in two places in this sense, Lev. xviii. 28. 25, “The land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants—That the land spue not you out also, as it spued out the nations before you.” Jon. ii. 10, “The fish vomited out Jonah.” This word is used in the Talmud, which forbids a disciple ever to vomit in the presence of his master; for, according to this Rabinnical code of law, he who spits before his master, is worthy of death. According to Mr. d’Arvieux,‡ the Arabians religiously observe this custom to this day. Among them no man ever spits before his superior, it would be considered as treating them with disrespect and contempt. The Chaldee paraphrast understood this psalm in this sense, and rendered the passage thus, because of the falsehood that

is in their hands, spit them, or vomit them out. Now, sir, would it be improper to apply this verse to my explication, and to affirm, that David here manifestly alludes to two of the symptoms of an epilepsy, which he himself had lately experienced? This holy man prays to God that his enemies might be treated in a manner which had some resemblance to the illness they had caused him; that as he had frothed and cast out his spittle, so God would spit or vomit them out of his mouth; and as he fell to the ground through their hands, so they might be degraded and cast out. The former image is used by an inspired writer, Rev. iii. 16, “Because thou art lukewarm, I will spue thee out of my mouth.”

Perhaps, sir, you will think another observation which I am going to make, not sufficiently solid. David says, while he is celebrating the deliverance God had granted him, Ps. xxxiv. 20, that “the Lord keepeth all the bones of the righteous man, not one of them is broken.” It is not worth while to refute the Jews on this article, for they quote these words in proof of a little bone, which they call *luz*, and which they place in the form of a small almond at the bottom of the back bone. They pretend that David had this bone in view; that nothing, neither fire, nor water, nor time, can destroy it, and that it is the germ of the resurrection of the body. Probably it was from this Jewish tradition that Peter Lombard,* the master of the sentences, derived his little piece of flesh, which every man inherits from the flesh of Adam, and which renders us all corrupt, and on account of which we are called the children of Adam. Much less will I pretend to dispute the application which St. John makes of this oracle to our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom it was both predicted and prefigured, that not one of his bones should be broken, chap. 36; Exod. xii. 46; Numb. ix. 12. Nothing hinders our taking this verse in its literal sense. David here blesses his God for watching so marvellously to prevent him, that in spite of his violent epileptic fit, and of the fall, that might have broke all his bones, especially as he was so hurt by falling against the posts of the gate, as to receive marks or scars in his flesh, yet not one of his bones was broken.

For the rest, if any one should think proper to take occasion, from this one convulsion fit, to dispute the inspiration of the excellent psalms of David, or only to diminish our esteem for the works or the person of this prince, the following considerations may set aside such a frivolous objection.

1. As soon as the malady is over, the mind recovers its freedom and firmness, and is presently as well as before.

2. Even supposing frequent attacks to enfeeble the mind, yet this would not effect David, for he had only one fit.

3. Great men have been subject to this illness, but they have not been the less esteemed on that account; as for example a Julius Cesar,† who was held by his army in more than

* Hierom, in Epist. 135.

† Hammond’s Annotations on Ps. lvi. 7.

‡ Mag. Lex. Chaldaic. Thalm. et Rabbinicum Eux torij. in verb. *palleth*.

§ La Roque Voyage dans la Paestine. p. 140.

* Pet. Lemb. lib. ii. Distinct. 30. N. p. m. 218. Transmisit adam modicum quid de substantia sua in corpore sitorum, quando eos procreavit, &c.

† Plutarch in Cæsare. T. i. f. 715. Suidas in voce.

admiration; Plotinus too, that celebrated Platonic philosopher, to whom, after his death, altars were erected in divers places.

4. Far from deriving from my explication a consequence so unreasonable, we ought, on the contrary, naturally to conclude, that there is a good and wise Providence, which knows how to deliver its children by means unthought of, and even when their ruin seems certain. A Christian, now afflicted with this sad disorder, may find in our sentiment a solid ground of consolation. The man after God's own heart had an epileptic fit; but he was not the less

esteemed of God, and so a Christian may reason, believing himself to be beloved of God, and an heir of his kingdom, though afflicted all his days with this malady, provided he imitate the zeal and piety of David. I submit, sir, all my conjectures to the penetration of your judgment, and I have the honour to be, with all imaginable respect,

Sir, Your most humble

And most obedient servant,

DUMONT.

ROTTERDAM,

September 2, 1725.

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SERMONS

OF

REV. JAMES SAURIN,

TRANSLATED

BY THE REV. H. HUNTER, D. D.

VOL. II.—18



PREFACE,

BY THE REV. HENRY HUNTER, D. D.

THE name of SAURIN, as a preacher and a Scripture critic, is so well known, and so highly respected, as to render any panegyric or recommendation of mine altogether unnecessary. His great work, entitled "Discourses Historical, Critical, Theological, and Moral, on the most memorable Events recorded in the Old and New Testaments," is in the hands of almost every Protestant Divine who understands the French language. Of this the first volume only has been given to the English public, by a respectable layman, John Chamberlayne, Esq., of the city of Westminster, presently after the publication of the original at the Hague, in 1723. Unhappily for the world, Mr. Saurin did not live to accomplish that arduous undertaking: his valuable labours being interrupted by the stroke of death, before he had quite finished the sixth discourse of vol. iii., which contains the period of Solomon's piety and prosperity. The work was, however, very creditably continued and completed by Messrs. Roques and De Beausobre. A republication of Mr. Chamberlayne's volume, and a translation of the other five, would be an important, and no doubt an acceptable addition to English literature.

The late Reverend Robert Robinson, of Cambridge, has given a very good translation of five volumes of the "Sermons" of "Saurin," selected from twelve, of which the original consists; to these he has prefixed "Memoirs of the Reformation in France," and of "Saurin's Life." This work has been so well received all over Great Britain, that a third large impression of it is already nearly exhausted: a striking proof, surely, of the author's extraordinary merit as a Christian orator, especially if it be considered that this approbation is expressed in an age and a country daily enriched with original displays of pulpit eloquence, and whose taste is rendered fastidious by profusion and variety of excellence.

But the public, it would appear, is still disposed to receive more of Mr. Saurin's Sermons, for I have been frequently and unfortunately solicited to undertake the translation of what remains: a request with which, I acknowledge, I felt no great reluctance to com-

ply; being thoroughly convinced that no compositions of the kind are more calculated to be useful to mankind. By the reception given to this volume I shall be enabled to determine whether it is proper to desist, or to go on.

The attentive reader will readily perceive that I have made the *arrangement* of the subjects part of my study. When I found any of the links of my chain anticipated by my respectable predecessor in the works of translation, I refer to it, that those who choose to read in a series may be saved the trouble of tracing it from volume to volume.

As the originals are much longer than the generality of modern sermons, and as I suppose these may probably be adopted by families as part of their serious domestic reading, I have taken the liberty to divide most of them into two, and some into three parts, in the view of relieving the exertion of the person who reads, and the attention of the hearers: introducing nothing of my own, except sometimes a few lines of recapitulation, where it seemed necessary to connect the several members of the subject.

To one advantage only over my predecessor, do I presume to lay claim, congeniality of sentiment with my author on certain points of *doctrine, of rites and ceremonies, of church discipline,* and some others, in which Mr. Robinson differs from him. There must be many passages, accordingly, which he disapproved while he translated; and some sermons he probably omitted altogether, because they coincided not with his religious belief. Under this disadvantage I did not labour in executing my task; as I agree in almost every point with my great original, and possibly translated with peculiar satisfaction what Mr. Robinson had reluctantly, or saw it his duty entirely to leave out. His readers and mine will, undoubtedly, exercise the same right of private judgment, and, I trust, practise the same candour and forbearance which he and I thought ourselves obliged by precept and by example to recommend.

H. H.

BETHNAL-GREEN ROAD,
24th June, 1796.

SERMON LXIX.

THE SONG OF SIMEON.

LUKE ii. 25—30.

And behold there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed to him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law; then he took him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.

"Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive," Gen. xlvii. 30. This was the exclamation of an affectionate father; might I not have said, of a weakly affectionate father, on a memorable occasion in his life. If such an emotion savour not of heroism, it is at least an effusion of nature. Joseph had been the centre of a fond parent's tenderest affections. Jacob had for more than twenty years been impressed with the belief that this dearly beloved son was devoured by an evil beast. He displayed every token of affliction that could be expressed by the paternal heart, on the loss of a child, a darling child, thus cruelly torn from him. After so many years of mourning, he is informed that his son is yet alive, that he is exalted to the most eminent state of power and splendour which the king of Egypt could bestow; that he had sent to bring his father down to him. Every instant now appears an age to the good old man, till the period of their reunion arrives. Every thing that retards the accomplishment of his wishes seems to defeat it. He trembles to think on the length of the way, on the dangers of such a journey, on his own debilitated frame. He departs at length, he reaches the desired haven: he beholds with his eyes the endeared object of so many earnest prayers. He feels himself in the embrace of his Joseph, he feels his visage bedewed with the tears of filial love. Joy deprives him of the powers of utterance, and with difficulty the faltering tongue can pronounce the words which Moses, if I may be allowed the expression, seems to have derived from the bowels of paternal tenderness: "Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive."

A greater than Jacob, my brethren, or rather a greater than Joseph, is here. Simeon had received from God the assurance of having his life prolonged till his eyes should see the promised Messiah. On the accomplishment of that promise depended the solution of these anxious inquiries, so interesting to the wretched posterity of Adam:—Is there any mitigation to be expected of that fatal denunciation, "in the day thou eatest of the fruit of the tree of good and evil, thou shalt surely die?" Gen. ii. 17. Did so many oracles, which announce a Redeemer, proceed from God, or

from men? Is it possible that the love of God should rise so high, as to immolate his own Son in the room of the guilty? In a word, is the expectation of Israel well founded, or is it chimerical? The promise is at last fulfilled: that divine infant at last appears, whom God had "prepared before the face of all people, a light to lighten the gentiles, and the glory of Israel," Luke ii. 31, 32. Already has an angel of the Lord announced his advent to the shepherds: already has a multitude of the heavenly host made the air resound with these triumphant strains, "glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men," Luke ii. 14. Already have the sages of the east arrived to render him supreme homage, as to their sovereign. What remained to Simeon, after having seen the Saviour of the world, but to take possession of the long expected salvation? He accordingly takes the child in his arms: his faith is now changed into vision, and his hope into enjoyment, and he in transport exclaims, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

This devout rapture is to be the subject of our present discourse, and its import we shall attempt to unfold, after having made a few reflections of a different kind, tending to elucidate the text.

I. We are to make a few preliminary reflections, for elucidating the text. And here it is natural, in the first place, to inquire, who this Simeon was, who acts such a distinguished part, at this period of the gospel history? But all that can be added to the narration of the evangelist is merely a tissue of conjectural traditions palpably false, or, at best, extremely uncertain. Cardinal Baronius,* on the authority of some ancient doctors of the church, insists that he must have been of the sacerdotal order. This they attempt to prove from the words of the passage under review, "He took the infant Jesus in his arms," as if to present him to the Lord; an idea not supported by any one of the circumstances recorded in the gospel. Certain modern doctors† believe him to have been the son of the celebrated Hillel, who was chief of the sect of the Pharisees. They even go so far as to assert, that he was the father of that Gamaliel at whose feet Paul was brought up. With respect to his condition, a variety of fables are retailed descriptive of his person; such as that he was blind,‡ and recovered his sight on receiving our Saviour into his arms: and that other, of his being one of the interpreters of the Septuagint version;§ that having found many passages which predicted that the Messiah was to be born of a Virgin, he refused to translate them; nay, that he substituted the term *Woman* in place of *Virgin*, in translating the noted prediction of Isaiah vii. 14: that having closed his tablets, on opening them to resume his labour, he found the word *Virgin* miraculously substituted in place of *Woman*; that he besought

* Annal. Eccles. Antv. 1612. A. C. 1. p. 58. tom. 1.

† Consult Lightfoot, tom. 2. Horse Hebr. in Luc. ii. 25. p. 498. Rot. 1686.

‡ Baronius ut supra.

§ Allatius de Ecc. Occid. Col. 1648. Niceph. Hist. Eccl. lib. i. cap. 2. Paris, 1630.

God to grant him an explanation of this wonderful phenomenon, and his prayer was answered: once more,* that having seen in the temple various women presenting their children, he had distinguished the holy Virgin by certain rays of light which surrounded her person, on which he thus addressed the other mothers: "Wherefore do you present these children before the altar? Turn round, and behold this one, who is more ancient than Abraham." Fictions, of no higher authority than what is farther related of him, namely, that the Jews,† jealous of his talents and virtues, and, more especially, scandalized at the testimony which he had borne to Jesus Christ, had refused him the honours of sepulchre: that his remains, after having reposed a long time at Constantinople,‡ in a chapel dedicated by James, denominated the Less, were conveyed to Venice§ in the thirteenth century.

Dropping, then, legends of such doubtful authority, let us satisfy ourselves with exhibiting Simeon under three authentic characters, which while they lead us to an acquaintance with the man himself, will give us an idea of the state of the Jewish nation, at the era of the Messiah's birth. The first respects the faith of Simeon; "he waited for the consolation of Israel." The second respects his piety and moral conduct; "he was just and devout." The third respects his gifts and privileges; "he was divinely inspired, and it was revealed to him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ."

1. "He waited for the consolation of Israel," that is, for the Messiah. This phraseology was adopted by the ancient Jews, and is still in use among the modern. "The years of the consolation,"|| is a usual expression employed by them to denote the years of the Messiah. One of their most solemn oaths is that which appeals to the consolation: and one of their most common formularies is to this effect; "So may I see the consolation, as I have done such or such a thing; so may I see the consolation, as my testimony is consistent with truth." The prophets themselves employ the same style: "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God: speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem," Isa. xl. 1. "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek . . . to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord; . . . and to comfort all that mourn," Isa. lxi. 1, 2. "Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains; for the Lord hath comforted his people," Isa. xlix. 13.

It were easy to prove, that these are so many oracular predictions, which the inspired authors of the New Testament, the only infallible interpreters of the Old, understood as descriptive of the Messiah. And proofs would multiply upon us without end, were we more particularly to undertake to demonstrate, that the title of the consolation is peculiarly adapted to our Lord

Jesus Christ: but however instructive such reflections might be of themselves, they would carry us too far from the present object of pursuit.

We could only wish, that the faith of Simeon might assist you in forming an idea of the state of the Jewish church prior to the coming of the Messiah. Believers, under that dispensation, entertained the same expectation with Simeon: like him they waited for "the consolation of Israel."

We by no means presume to affirm that their ideas on this subject were exempted from prejudice. We well know that they assigned to most of the oracles, which announced a Redeemer, a sense conformable to the colour of their passions. Isaiah, who represented him as "despised and rejected of men," Isa. liii. 3, had, undoubtedly, a more just conception of him than the sons of Zebedee adopted, Mark x. 37, when they requested of him the most distinguished honours of his kingdom. Daniel, who predicted that "Messiah should be cut off," Dan. ix. 26, entered, undoubtedly, much more profoundly into the view of his coming into the world, than Peter did, who having heard him speak of the death which he was to suffer, "began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee," Matt. xvi. 22; Job, who contemplated him by the eye of faith, "as standing at the latter day upon the earth," Job xix. 25, 26; and who hoped to behold him eye to eye, even after "worms should have destroyed his body," knew incomparably better the blessings which he was to purchase for mankind, than those grovelling spirits who expected from him temporal enjoyments merely. Even those of the Jews whose understanding was most clearly enlightened, had much less penetration into the mystery of the cross than the meanest of Christians, and according to the saying of Jesus Christ, "He that is least in the kingdom of heaven, is, in this respect, greater than John Baptist," Matt. xi. 11, and then all the prophets; nevertheless they all lived in expectation of a deliverer: they all considered him as the centre of every divine grace: they all waited for him as "the consolation of Israel." This is the first character given us of Simeon.

2. He was *just and devout*. The epithet *just* must not be taken in a literal and exact sense. Beware how you give a lie to revelation, to experience, to your own heart, whose concurring testimony evinces that "there is none righteous" upon the earth, "no not one;" imagine not that Simeon by his virtues merited the privilege of "seeing the Lord's Christ," and of partaking of the fruits of his incarnation. The righteousness of Simeon consisted in the efforts which he made to work righteousness: his perfection, in the desire with which he was animated to go on to perfection, and in the regret which he felt that his attainments were so inconsiderable. The sacrifices which he made to God, derived all their value from the mercy of that God who was the object of his fear. Let this great principle of Christian theology be deeply impressed on your minds: lose sight of it, no not for a moment, and be constantly vigilant lest the impure doctrine of the merit of good works find admission among you.

* Baronius ut supra.

† From a passage of St. Epiphanius misunderstood. See Epiph. tom. 2. de Vit. Proph. p. 150. Paris, 1622.

‡ Codin. Orig. Const. p. 56. Lut. 1655.

§ Tillemont, Memoir. Eccles. tom. i. p. 448. Par. 1693.

|| Lightfoot, in supra.

But wherefore suggest cautions to this effect? Wherefore should these walls so frequently resound with truths of this class? My brethren, you have so effectually excluded, by your coldness in the performance of good works, the doctrine of their merit, that there is little room to entertain the apprehension of its ever finding an establishment in the midst of us. And it is an undeniable fact, that this error has gained no partisans in our churches; at least, if there be any, they have kept themselves invisible. We have seen many persons who, under the power of illusion, imagined they had fulfilled the conditions upon which the promises of salvation are founded; but never did we find one who advanced a plea of merit. But what we have seen, and what we have cause every day to deplore, and what is involving multitudes in utter ruin, is our frequently deceiving ourselves with the belief, that because *righteousness* and *the fear of God* are not meritorious, they are therefore unnecessary. What we have seen, and what we have cause every day to deplore, is the unhappy persuasion prevailing with many who bear the Christian name, that because the advent of the Messiah is a dispensation of *grace*, it gives encouragement to licentiousness and corruption. Let us not employ such ingenious pains to deceive ourselves.— Multiply without end, ye “disputers of this world,” your questions and controversies, it will never be in your power to prevent my clearly discerning, in the doctrine of the gospel, this twofold truth: on the one hand, that the best preparation for receiving the reign of grace, is that which Simeon made; “he was just and devout, and he waited for the consolation of Israel.” On the other hand, that the most insurmountable obstacle which can be opposed to this reign, is impiety and injustice. “Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God,” Isa. xl. 3; Matt. iii. 3; Luke iii. 6. This was the voice of the forerunner of Jesus Christ, and wherein did he make this preparation to consist? The preparation of him who had “two coats” was to “impart to him who had none,” Luke iii. 11. The preparation of him who had *meat* was to act in like manner. That of the publicans was to “exact no more than that which was appointed them,” ver. 13. That of the soldier was to “do violence to no man, to accuse no one falsely, and to be content with his wages,” ver. 14. The preparation of all was to “bring forth fruits worthy of repentance,” ver. 8. Without these, the reign of grace was the reign of wrath: without these, “the axe was already laid unto the root of the tree; and every tree which brought not forth good fruit was to be hewn down, and cast into the fire,” ver. 9; and this Messiah, this Redeemer of mankind, was to come with “his fan in his hand, thoroughly to purge his floor; to gather the wheat into his garner; but to burn the chaff with fire unquenchable,” ver. 17.

Ah! if at this period of the gospel dispensation, when we are exercising, in some manner, the functions of John Baptist, if in these days

wherein we come to announce the revival of the reign of Jesus Christ in the midst of us, by the celebration of his incarnation and birth; by the commemoration which we are to make next Lord's day in the sacrament of the supper: if at this season, when we are crying aloud to you in the words of St. John, “prepare ye the way of the Lord:” should you with the multitudes who attended his ministry, inquire, saying, “and what shall we do?” We would reply, wait for “the consolation of Israel,” as Simeon waited for it: “bring forth fruits worthy of repentance.”

“Prepare the way of the Lord,” ye great ones of the earth; lead the way in a procession of penitents, as the king of Nineveh did, when the preaching of Jonah thundered impending destruction in his ears, Jon. iii. 4. 9. “Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God,” 1 Pet. v. 6, “by whom kings reign, and princes decree justice,” Prov. viii. 15. Employ the power with which Providence has intrusted you, not in a vain display of furniture more magnificent, or of equipages more splendid; not by assuming a deportment more lofty and intimidating; but in curbing bold and insolent vice; but in maintaining the cause of truth and justice; but in wiping away the tears of the widow and the orphan; but in rewarding services rendered to the state; but in procuring respect to the solemn institutions of religion; but in preventing the circulation of indecent and corruptive publications; and, as far as in you lies, in levelling to the ground that monster infidelity, which is rearing its daring forehead in the midst of you.

“Prepare the way of the Lord,” ye pastors of the flock. Distinguish yourselves from private individuals, not only by the habit which you wear, and by the functions which you discharge; but by your zeal for the church of Christ; by your unshaken firmness and fortitude in opposing those who impudently transgress; but by preserving a scrupulous distance from every thing characteristic rather of the slaves of this world, than of the ministers of the living God.

“Prepare ye the way of the Lord,” professing Christians. Celebrate your solemn feasts, not only by frequenting our religious assemblies, but by a holy abstinence from those secret abominations, and those public scandalous practices which have so long inflamed the wrath of heaven against us; which even now are scattering the seeds of discord through these provinces; which are draining the resources of our country, which are tarnishing her glory, which present to our eyes, in a lowering futurity, vicissitudes still more calamitous and more deeply ensanguined than those which have already cost us so many tears, and so much blood.

This, this is the only effectual method of waiting for deliverance and redemption. Far removed from us be those frivolous terrors, which would suggest, that to be subjected to the yoke of Jesus Christ, is to derogate from his merits! And let us not deceive ourselves; there is not a single particular in the system of the gospel; there is not a single article of Christian theology, but what preaches terror, if we are destitute of that righteousness, and of that

fear of God with which Simeon "waited for the consolation of Israel." In order to our having an interest in the pardoning mercy which the Messiah has purchased for us, we must "fear God," as Simeon did; we must be just as he was; we must hold sin in detestation; we must be "of a poor and of a contrite spirit," Isa. lxi. 2, because of it; we must "cease to do evil, and learn to do well," Isa. i. 16, 17. In order to our having an interest in sanctifying grace and in the spirit of regeneration, communicated to us by the Messiah, we must "fear God" as did Simeon; we must be just like him, we must love wisdom; we must "ask it of God . . . nothing wavering," James i. 5, 6; or, as the passage of St. James to which I refer might be rendered, not halting, or hesitating between the choice of wisdom and folly; we must not be like "a wave of the sea," which seems to be making a movement towards the shore, but anon returns with impetuosity into the gulf from which it issued.

Farther, in order to our having a knowledge of the doctrines which were taught by the Messiah, we must "fear God" as did Simeon, we must be just like him; for "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant," Ps. xxv. 14, and "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. In order to our having an interest in the promises of the glory to be revealed, which are made to us by the Messiah, we must "fear God" as did Simeon, we must be just like him, for "without holiness no man shall see the Lord," Heb. xii. 14, and "having these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit," 2 Cor. vii. 1. If we would attain the assurance of salvation, we must "fear God," as did Simeon, we must be just like him: "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall," 1 Cor. x. 12, and "if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee," Rom. xi. 21.

3. Finally, we are informed by the evangelist, that "the Holy Ghost was upon Simeon; and it was revealed to him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ."

On this particular, I shall confine myself to a single reflection. It supplies us with an explanation of several ancient oracles, and particularly that of the prophet: "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophecy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions," Joel ii. 28. The Jews themselves acknowledge,* that the spirit of prophecy was one of the prerogatives, which had been denied to the second temple. This gift seems to have expired with Malachi. For an uninterrupted series of more than four hundred years no prophet had arisen. This high privilege was not to be restored to the church till the latter days should come; and conformably to the style of the Old Testament, the latter days denote the dispensation of the Messiah. Here then, we

have the commencement of the latter days. Here we behold the prophetic illumination re-appearing in all its lustre. Here the hallowed fire is rekindling, and celestial revelations enlighten a dark world. These exalted privileges are communicated first to Zacharias, who beholds an angel of the Lord "standing on the right side of the altar of incense," Luke i. 11. They are next bestowed on the blessed Virgin, whom the angel thus addresses, "Hail thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women," ver. 28. They are extended even to the shepherds, to whom another angel announces the birth of the Saviour of the world, and who "suddenly hear a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men," Luke ii. 13, 14. They are poured down upon Simeon; and we shall presently behold the whole Christian church inundated with an overflowing flood of divine irradiation. Let this suffice as to the character of Simeon.

II. We are to attempt to unfold the import of the devout rapture which he felt. And here let us give undivided attention to the object before us, and let every power of thought be applied to discover, and to display, the emotions by which this holy man of God was then animated. He takes Jesus Christ in his arms: he blesses God, and says, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." "Lettest thou thy servant depart:" the Greek phrase literally rendered, is, *thou unloosest, or settest free thy servant*. The sense of the expression cannot, in my apprehension, be disputed in this place. To unloose, in the writings of certain profane authors, and the meaning is the same in our text, signifies that act of Deity which separates the soul from the body. *Thou liberatest thy servant in peace*, that is, *thou permittest thy servant to die in peace*. This object which strikes the eye of Simeon, is to him a complete security against the terrors of death. Wherefore should he wish to live longer in this world? Could it be to behold some wonderful event, or to acquire some valuable possession? But his whole soul is rapt in admiration of the object with which his eyes are feasted; the delight he feels in contemplating the Redeemer, "the Lord's Christ," absorbs every faculty. Could the fear of the punishment of sin suggest a wish to live longer? He holds in his arms the victim which is going to be offered up to divine justice. Could he desire longer life from any doubt he entertained respecting the doctrine of a life to come? He is at the very source of life, and needs only to be released from a mortal body, to arrive at immortality. Three sources of meditation, well worthy, I am bold to say, of all the attention you are able to bestow.

1. The desire of beholding some wonderful and interesting event, is one of the most usual causes of attachment to life. There are certain fixed points, in which all our hopes seem to be concentrated. Nothing is more common among men, even among those whose character as Christians is the least liable to suspicion, than to say, could I but live to see such and such an event take place, I should die content:

* Talmud Hieros. Taanith, fol. vi. 1. Babylon. Joma, fol. xxi. 2.

could I but live to see that adversary of the church confounded: could I but live to see that mystery of Providence unfolded: could I but live to see Zion arise out of her ruins, and the chains of her bondmen broken asunder: could I but live to see my son attain such and such a period. Such emotions are not in every case to be condemned as unlawful; but how much do they frequently savour of human infirmity! Let it be our study to die in peace with God, and we shall be disposed to die, whenever it shall please him, who has sent us into the world, to call us out of it again.

Death draws aside the curtain, which conceals from our eyes what is most worthy of our regard, of our desire, of our admiration. If thou diest in a state of reconciliation with God, thine eyes shall behold events infinitely more interesting and important than all those which can suggest a wish to continue longer in this world. Thou shalt behold something unspeakably greater than the solution of some particular mystery of Providence: thou shalt discern a universal light, which shall dispel all thy doubts, resolve all thy difficulties, put to flight all thy darkness. Thou shalt behold something incomparably surpassing the confusion of those tyrants, whose prosperity astonishes and offends thee: thou shalt behold Jesus at the right hand of his Father, holding "a rod of iron," ready to "dash in pieces, like a potter's vessel," Ps. ii. 9, all those who dare oppose his empire. Thou shalt behold something incomparably more sublime than the dust of Zion reanimated: thou shalt behold the "new Jerusalem," of which "God and the Lamb," are the sun and temple, Rev. xxi. 2, 22, 23. Thou shalt behold something incomparably more interesting than the chains of the bondmen broken asunder: thou shalt behold the souls of a thousand martyrs invested with white robes, Rev. vi. 11, because they fought under the banner of the cross: thou shalt hear them crying one to another; "Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready," Rev. xix. 6, 7. Thou shalt behold something incomparably more interesting than the establishment of that son, the object of so many tender affections: thou shalt behold those multitudes of glorified saints who are eternally to partake with thee in the felicity of the ever blessed God: thine eyes shall behold that adorable face, the looks of which absorb, if I may use the expression, all those of the creature.

Let it be admitted, at the same time, that if ever any one could be justified in expressing a wish to have the hour of death deferred, it was in the case of those believers, who lived at the period when the Messiah was expected. This was the case with Simeon. Brought up under an economy in which every thing was mysterious and emblematical, he is justifiable, should he have expressed a wish to see the elucidation of all these sacred enigmas. When a prince is expected to visit one of our cities; when we behold the sumptuous equipages by which he is preceded, the train of messengers who announce his approach; palaces decorated, and triumphal arches reared, for his reception: does not all this excite a desire of obtaining a

nearer view of the person of whom so lofty an idea is conveyed from preparations so magnificent? All these preparations, however, are in many cases, not so much the badges of the real greatness of the personage whom they announce, as of his vanity. It has oftener than once been felt, that the object of the least importance in a splendid procession, was the very man who acted as the hero of it. But what could the Levitical dispensation furnish, to convey an idea of the Messiah, but what fell infinitely short of the Messiah himself?

Simeon at length beholds this Messiah, so eagerly expected through so many ages. Simeon, more highly favoured than Jacob, who, on his dying bed exclaimed, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord!" Gen. xlix. 8. Simeon exulting, says, "Lord, I have seen thy salvation:" more highly favoured than so many kings, and so many prophets, who desired to see the Redeemer, but did not see him, Luke xi. 24, more highly privileged than so many believers of former ages, who saw only the promises of him "afar off, and embraced them," Heb. xi. 13, he receives the effect of those promises; he contemplates, not afar off, but nigh, "the star which was to come out of Jacob," Numb. xxiv. 17, he beholds the accomplishment of the prophecies, "Christ the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth," Rom. x. 4, the ark, the Shechinah, the habitation of the Deity in his temple, he in whom "all the fulness of the Godhead dwelleth bodily," Col. ii. 9, he sees the manna, and more than the manna, for "your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness and are dead," John vi. 58, but, "who eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life," ver. 54. "Father of day," exclaimed a Pagan prince, "thou radiant Sun, I thank thee that before I leave the world, I have had the felicity of seeing Cornelius Scipio in my kingdom and palace; now I have lived as long as I can desire." It is the very emotion with which Simeon is animated: he has lived long enough, because he has seen "the salvation of God." Let the Roman republic henceforth extend her empire, or let its limits be contracted; let the great questions revolving in the recesses of cabinets be determined this way or that; let the globe subsist a few ages longer, or crumble immediately into dust; Simeon has no desire to see any thing farther: "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

Secondly, Simeon remains no longer attached to life from terror of the punishment of sin after death. "The sting of death is sin;" that sting so painfully acute to all mankind, is peculiarly so to the aged. An old man has rendered himself responsible for all the stations which he occupied, for all the relations which he formed in social life, and in the church. And these in general, become so many sources of remorse. Generally speaking, it is not separation from the world merely which renders death an object of horror; it is the idea of the account which must be given in, when we leave it. If nothing else were at stake, but merely to prepare for removing out of the world, a small degree of reflection, a little philosophy, a little fortitude, might answer the purpose.

What is the amount of human life, especially to a man arrived at a certain period of existence? What delight can an old man find in society, after his memory is decayed, after his senses are blunted, after the fire of imagination is extinguished, when he is from day to day losing one faculty after another, when he is reduced so low as to be the object of forbearance at most, if not that of universal disgust and dereliction? But the idea of fourscore years passed in hostility against God, but the idea of a thousand crimes starting into light, and calling for vengeance; by their number and their atrocity exciting "a fearful looking for of judgment?"—this, this presents a just ground of terror and astonishment.

But all such terrors disappear in the eyes of Simeon; he knows the end for which this child was born, whom he now holds in his arms: he directs his eyes beyond the cradle, to his cross; by means of the prophetic illumination which was upon him, he perceives this Christ of God "making his soul an offering for sin." Isa. liii. 10. He expects not, as did his worldly-minded countrymen, a temporal kingdom; he forms far juster ideas of the glory of the Messiah; he contemplates him "spoiling principalities and powers, making a show of them openly, nailing them to his cross," Col. ii. 15. Let us not be accused of having derived these ideas from the schools, and from our courses of theological study: no, we deduce this all important truth immediately from the substance of the gospel. Ponder seriously, I beseech you, what Simeon himself says to Mary, as he showed to her the infant Jesus: "Behold this child is set for the falling and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against: yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also," Luke ii. 34, 35.

What could be meant by that *sword* which the mother of our Lord was to have her "soul pierced through?" That anguish, undoubtedly, which she should undergo, on seeing her Son nailed to a cross. What an object for a mother's eye! Who among you, my brethren, has concentrated every anxious care, every tender affection on one darling object, say a beloved child, whom he fondly looks to, as his consolation in adversity, as the glory of his family, as the support of his feeble old age? Let him be supposed to feel what no power of language is able to express: let him put himself in the place of Mary, let that beloved child be supposed in the place of Jesus Christ: faint image still of the conflict which nature is preparing for that tender mother: feeble commentary on the words of Simeon to Mary, "yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also." Mary must lose that son whose birth was announced to her by an angel from heaven; that Son on whose advent the celestial hosts descended to congratulate the listening earth; that Son whom so many perfections, whom such ardour of charity, whom benefits so innumerable should have for ever endeared to mankind: already she represents to herself that frightful solitude, that state of universal desertion in which the soul finds itself, when, having been bereaved of all that it held dear, it feels as if the whole world were dead, as if nothing else remained in the vast universe, as if every

thing that communicated motion and life had been annihilated.

And through what a path was she to behold this Son departing out of the world? By a species of martyrdom, the bare idea of which scares the imagination. She beholds those bountiful hands which had so frequently fed the hungry, which had performed so many miracles of mercy, pierced through with nails: she beholds that royal head, which would have shed lustre on the diadem of the universe, crowned with thorns, and that arm, destined to wield the sceptre of the world, bearing a reed, the emblem of mock-majesty; she beholds that temple in which "dwelleth all the fulness of the godhead bodily," Col. ii. 9, with all his wisdom, with all his illumination, with all his justice, with all his mercy, with all the perfections which enter into the notion of the supreme Being; she beholds it assaulted with a profane hatchet, and an impious spear: she hears the voices of the children of Edom crying aloud, concerning this august habitation of the Most High, "Raise it, raise it, even to the foundation thereof."

But if even then, while she beholds Jesus expiring, she could have been permitted to approach him, to comfort him, to collect the last sigh of that departing spirit! Could she but have embraced that dearly beloved Son, to bathe him with her tears, and bid him a last farewell! Could she but for a few moments have stopped that precious fluid draining off in copious streams, and consuming the sad remains of exhausted nature! Could she but have been permitted to support that sacred, sinking head, and to pour balm into his wounds! But she must submit to the hand of violence: she too is borne down by "the power of darkness," Luke xxii. 53. She has nothing to present to the expiring sufferer but unavailing solicitude, and fruitless tears: "a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also:" Simeon understood, then, the mystery of the cross: he looked to the efficacy of that blood which was to be shed by the Redeemer whom he now held in his arms, and under that holy impression exclaims, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

3. Finally, Simeon no longer feels an attachment to this world, from any doubt or suspicion he entertained respecting the doctrine of a life to come. He is now at the very fountain of life, and all that now remains is to be set free from a mortal body, in order to attain immortality. We may deduce, from the preparations of grace, a conclusion nearly similar to that which we draw from the preparations of nature, in order to establish the doctrine of a future state of eternal felicity. How magnificent are the preparations which nature makes! What glory do they promise after death! The author of our being has endowed the human soul with an unbounded capacity of advancing from knowledge to knowledge, from sensation to sensation. I make free here to borrow the thought of an illustrious modern author:* "A perpetual circulation," says he, "of the same objects, were they subject to no other inconvenience, would be sufficient to give us a dis-

* Mentor, tom. iii. Disc. cxli. p. 340.

gust of the world. When a man has beheld frequently reiterated vicissitudes of day and night, of summer and winter, of spring and autumn; in a word, of the different appearances of nature, what is there here below capable of satisfying the mind? I am well aware," adds he, "how brilliant, how magnificent this spectacle is, I know how possible it is to indulge in it with a steady and increasing delight; but I likewise know that, at length, the continual recurrence of the same images cloy the imagination, which is eagerly looking forward to the removal of the curtain, that it may contemplate new scenes, of which it can catch only a confused glimpse in the dark perspective of futurity. Death, in this point of view, is a transition merely from one scene of enjoyment to another. If present objects fatigue and excite disgust, it is only in order to prepare the soul for enjoying, more exquisitely, pleasures of a different nature, ever new, and ever satisfying."

The conclusion deducible from the preparations of nature, may likewise be derived from the preparations of grace. Let us not lose sight of our leading object. How magnificent had the preparations of grace appeared in the eyes of Simeon! This we have already hinted: the whole of the Levitical dispensation consisted of preparations for the appearance of the Messiah; if we form a judgment of the blessings which he was to bestow upon the human race, from the representations given us of him, it is impossible to refrain from drawing this conclusion. That the Messiah was to give unbounded scope to the desires of the heart of man, was to communicate to him that unspeakable felicity, for the enjoyment of which nature had already prepared him, but which nature had not the power to bestow. There, I mean in the Levitical dispensation, you found the shadows which retraced the Messiah; there you found types which represented him; there oracles which predicted him; there an exhibition in which were displayed his riches, his pomp, his magnificence; there you heard the prophets crying aloud: "Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation; and let righteousness spring up together," Isa. xlv. 8. "For 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," Isa. ix. 6. "Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner; but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished," Isa. li. 6.

Now, what state of felicity could possibly correspond to conceptions raised so high by preparations of such mighty import? What! amount to no more than that which the Messiah bestows in this world? What! no more than to frequent these temples? What! no more than to raise these sacred songs of praise: to celebrate our solemn feasts: to eat a little bread, and to drink a little wine at the com-

munion table! And then to die? And then to exist no more? And can this be all that salvation which the earth was to bring forth? And can this be all that righteousness which the skies were to pour down? And can this be the dew which the heavens were to drop down from above? And can this be the whole amount of the achievements of that Counsellor, of that Wonderful one, of that Prince of Peace, of that Father of Eternity? "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." Good Simeon, what meaning do you intend to convey by these words? Into what peace art thou wishing henceforth to depart, if these eyes, which behold the Messiah, are going to be doomed to the darkness of an eternal night? If these hands, which are privileged to hold, and to embrace him, are going to become a prey to worms? And if that life which thou wast enjoying before thy Redeemer appeared, is going to be rent from thee, because he is already come?

Ah! my brethren, how widely different are the ideas which this holy man of God entertained! "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace." Wherefore now? Because now I know, from the accomplishment of thy promise, what was before a matter of presumption only, namely, that my soul is not a mere modification of matter, and a result of the arrangement, and of the harmony of my organs: because I am now convinced, that this soul of mine, on being separated from the body, shall not become a forlorn wanderer in a strange and solitary land: because now I no longer entertain any doubt respecting my own immortality, and because I hold in my arms him who has purchased it, and who bestows it upon me: because to see Jesus Christ, and to die, is the highest blessedness that can be conferred on a mortal creature.

Permit me, my beloved brethren, to repeat my words, and with them to finish this discourse: to see Jesus Christ, and to die, is the highest blessedness that can be conferred on a mortal creature. Enjoy, my friends, enjoy the felicity which the Saviour bestows upon you, during the course of a transitory life: gratify, as you this day turn a wondering eye to the manger in which this divine Saviour lies, and as you celebrate the memory of his incarnation, gratify the taste which you have for the great and the marvellous: and cry out with an enraptured apostle, "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh," 1 Tim. iii. 16. Gratify, as in the retirement of the closet you devote yourselves to the study of the doctrine of this Jesus, gratify the desire you feel to learn and to know: draw constant supplies of light and truth from those "treasures of wisdom and knowledge," Col. ii. 3, which he opens to you in his gospel. Gratify, as you receive, next Lord's day, the effusions of his love, gratify the propensity which naturally disposes you to love him. Let every power of the soul expand on hearing the tender expressions which he addresses to you in the sacrament of the supper: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heaven laden, and I will give you rest," Matt. xi. 28. "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 after all, it is not during the course of a transitory life, at least it is not while you consider death as still remote, that you are capable of knowing the pleasure there is in being a Christian. No, it is neither in the retirement of the closet, nor seated at the table of the Lord: it is not in your solemn feasts, that you are capable of relishing the sweetness which is to be found in beholding Jesus Christ; in embracing him, in believing on him: it is in the last moments of life; it is when stretched on a death-bed. Till then, your passions will sometimes call it in question, whether the man of the world does not actually enjoy more happiness than the Christian; whether the commerce of society, whether spectacles, plays, the splendour of a court, do not confer more real pleasure than that which flows from communion with Jesus Christ.

But when you shall find yourselves, like Simeon, in a state of universal dereliction; but when you shall behold nothing around you save unavailing solitudes, save ineffectual medicines, save fruitless tears, then you will know what the religion of Jesus Christ is; then, my brethren, you will taste the delight of being a Christian; then you will feel all the powerful attraction of that peace which is mentioned in the text: "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

May these ideas of the Christian religion attach us inviolably unto it. Let us, with Simeon, embrace the Saviour of the world; let us, with the wise men of the East, present unto him our gold, and frankincense, and myrrh: or rather, let us present unto him hearts penetrated with admiration, with gratitude, with love. Yes, divine infant, desire of all nations, glory of Israel, Saviour of mankind! divine infant, whom so many oracles have predicted, whom so many prophets have announced, whom so many types have represented, and whose radiant day so many kings and prophets were desirous to behold: my faith pierces through all those veils which overspread and conceal thee; I behold, in the person of a creature feeble and humbled, my God, and my Redeemer: I contemplate thee not only as born a few days ago at Bethlehem of Judah, but subsisting "before the mountains were brought forth, before the earth was formed, even from everlasting to everlasting," Ps. xc. 2. I behold thee not only lying in a manger, wrapped in swaddling cloths, but I behold thee seated on a throne of glory, "highly exalted," having "a name that is above every name," adored by angels and seraphim, encircled with rays of divinity.

Every power of my understanding shall henceforth be devoted to the knowledge of thee: it shall be my constant endeavour to please thee, my supreme delight to possess thee; and it shall be my noblest ambition to prostrate myself one day before thy throne, and to sing with the innumerable multitudes of the redeemed of every nation, and people, and tongue: "Unto him who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, be honour and glory, and power, for ever and ever. Amen."

SERMON LXX.

CHRIST'S VALEDICTORY ADDRESS TO HIS DISCIPLES.

JOHN xiv. xv. vii.

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me, &c.*

WE begin, this morning, with explaining to you the texts which refer to our blessed Saviour's passion. If the knowledge of the Christian be all reducible to this, "to know Jesus Christ, and him crucified," 1 Cor. ii. 2, it is impossible to fix your eyes too frequently on the mysteries of the cross. Very few discourses, accordingly, are addressed to you, in which these great objects are not brought forward to view. Nay, more; it is the pleasure of this church, that, at certain stated seasons, the doctrine of the cross, to the exclusion of every other, should be the subject of our preaching: that all the circumstances attending it should be detailed, and every view of it displayed. But whatever powers may be applied to the execution of this work, it cannot possibly be accomplished within the space of a few weeks. We have especially had to lament that our Saviour's last address to his disciples should be omitted: I mean the discourse which he addressed to them, a little while before he retired into the garden of Gethsemane, and which St. John has preserved to us in the xiv. xv. and xvi. chapters of his gospel. This part of the history of the passion is, unquestionably, one of the most tender and most interesting. We propose to make it pass in review before you this day, as far as the bounds prescribed to us will permit.

Were it proper to make the place where I stand a vehicle for communications of this kind, I am ready ingenuously to acknowledge, that a particular circumstance determined my choice on this occasion. A few days only have elapsed since I was called to be witness of the dying agonies of a valuable minister,† whom Providence has just removed from the superintendance of a neighbouring church. God was pleased to visit him for some months past, if we may presume to speak so, with a "temptation," more than "is common to man," 1 Cor. x. 13; but he granted him a fortitude more than human to support it. I was filled with astonishment at the violence of his sufferings and still more at the patience with which he endured them; I could not help expressing a wish to know, what particular article of religion had contributed the most to produce in him that prodigy of resolution: "Have you ever paid a close attention, my dear brother," said he to me, "to the last address of Jesus Christ to his disciples? My God," exclaimed he, "what charity! what tenderness! but above all, what an inexhaustible source of consolation in the extremity of distress!" His words

* Those who wish to derive benefit from the following discourse, must previously peruse, with attention, the xiv. xv. and xvi. chapters of John's gospel.

† Mr. Begnon, pastor of the church at Leyden.

filled me with astonishment: my thoughts were immediately turned towards you, my dearly beloved brethren; and I said within myself, I must furnish my hearers with this powerful defence against suffering and death. I enter this day on the execution of my design. Condescend to concur with me in it. Come and meditate on the last expressions which fell from the lips of a dying Saviour; let us penetrate into the very centre of that heart which the sacred flame of charity animated.

I must proceed on the supposition that your minds are impressed with the subject of the three chapters of which I am going to attempt an analysis. The great object which our Lord proposes to himself, in this address, is to fortify his disciples against the temptations to which they were about to be exposed. And, in order to reduce our reflections to distinct classes, Jesus Christ means to fortify his disciples,

I. Against the offence of his cross.

II. Against the persecution which his doctrine was going to excite.

III. Against forgetfulness of his precepts.

IV. Against sorrow for his absence.

I. First, Jesus Christ means to fortify his disciples against the offence of the cross. A man must be a mere novice in the history of the gospel if he know not how extremely confused their ideas were with respect to the mystery of redemption. Those who ascribe to them superior illumination are mistaken, both in the principle, and in the consequences which they deduce from it. Their principle is, that the Jewish church was perfectly well acquainted with the whole mystery of the cross; an opinion supported by no historical monument whatever.

But granting we were to admit this principle, we must of necessity resist the consequences deduced from it, with respect to the apostles. It is very possible to have a clouded understanding amidst a luminous dispensation, and to grovel in ignorance be the age ever so enlightened. Had we a mind to demonstrate to what a degree the age in which we live surpasses those which preceded it, whether in physical discovery, or in metaphysical and theological speculation, would we go to collect our proofs among our common mechanics, or from among the fishermen who inhabit our seaports?

Let us call to remembrance the indiscreet zeal of Peter, when Jesus Christ declared to him, "How he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things—and be killed," Matt. xvi. 21, "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee," ver. 22. Recollect the reply which Jesus made to that disciple: "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence to me," ver. 23. Recollect farther the question which the apostles put to their master some time before his ascension: "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" Acts i. 6. Above all, recollect the conversation which passed between certain of them immediately after his resurrection: "we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and besides all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done," Luke xxiv. 21. "You trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel!" Well! and

wherefore trust no longer? Whence then arises this diffidence? Wherein has his promise failed? What oracle of the prophets has he neglected to fulfil? "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" ver. 25, 26.

Taking it for granted, then, that the apostles had but confused ideas of the mystery of the cross, what offence must they not have taken when they were called to be witnesses of that fearful spectacle! From our being accustomed to hear the punishment of crucifixion spoken of in terms of high dignity, we lose sight of what was ignominious and humiliating in it. Represent to yourself a man whom you had made the centre, the fixed point of all your hopes. Represent to yourself a man, a God-man, to whom you had been accustomed to yield all the homage of adoration: represent to yourself this divine personage, whom you believed to have descended from heaven to remedy the woes of mankind; to remove your private distresses; to re-establish your credit, and to restore to your country all its splendour and all its importance: represent to yourself this divine personage bound by the hands of an insolent rabble; dragged along from one tribunal to another; condemned as a felon, and nailed to a tree. Can this be that Messiah, into whose hand God was to put a "rod of iron to break the nations, and to dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel?" Ps. ii. 9. Can this be that Messiah who should "have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth?" Ps. lxxii. 8. Can this be the Messiah who was to make us "sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel?" Luke xxii. 30. As this was the grand offence with the apostles, their Master supplies them with more than one buckler to repel it.

1. The first buckler for repelling the offence of the cross—The miserable condition of a lost world. "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," ch. xvi. 7. Had not Jesus Christ been offered in sacrifice, there had been no Comforter, and no consolation for the wretched posterity of Adam. The anger of a righteous God was kindled against them. They had nothing to look for from heaven, but thunderbolts and "a horrible tempest," to crush their guilty heads. On the cross it was that Jesus Christ restored a blessed correspondence between heaven and earth; "for it pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell; and, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven," Col. i. 19, 20.

2. The second buckler against the offence of the cross—The downfall of the enemy of mankind, I mean the devil and his angels: "the prince of this world is judged," ch. xiv. 30, xvi. 11. The crucifixion of the Redeemer of the world, it is true, seemed to complete the triumph of Satan, but it was, in reality, precisely the point of his decline and fall. He "bruised the heel" of the promised seed, but Jesus Christ, "bruised his head," Gen. iii. 15. On the cross it was that Jesus executed the

design of his coming into the world, namely, to "destroy the works of the devil." 1 John iii. 8. On the cross it was that Jesus Christ poured out the precious blood which was going to become the true seed of the church. On the cross it was that he dashed down to the ground the trophies of idolatry, and there he "spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it," Col. ii. 15.

3. The third buckler against the offence of the cross—The sovereign command of his heavenly Father: "the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me. But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do," chap. xiv. 30, 31. What was the commandment given of the Father to Jesus Christ? You know it, my brethren; the commission which he had given him, was to deliver from the dreadful abysses of hell a world of miserable wretches, whom divine justice had there doomed to undergo the punishment of everlasting fire. This was the supreme will which the Redeemer had continually before his eyes. For this it was that he says, when he cometh into the world: "sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire: but a body hast thou prepared for me: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required: then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me: I delight to do thy will, O my God," Ps. xl. 6—8. For this it was that, dismayed, and cast down, as it were to the ground at Gethsemane, at the bare apprehension of approaching sufferings, he prayed, saying: "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me," but immediately added, "nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt," Matt. xxvi. 39.

4. The fourth buckler against the offence of the cross—The idea of the storm which was ready to burst on the authors of those sufferings, and upon a whole guilty nation which had obstinately rejected his ministry: "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin. He that hateth me, hateth my Father also," chap. xv. 22, 23. This parricide filled up the measure of the incredulity and barbarity of the Jews: it was going to put the last hand to an accumulation of criminality. But let not the impatience of the flesh hurry the spirit into the formation of precipitate judgment: let not the libertine and the profane here display their abominable system; let them not say, as they point to the cross of the Saviour, on which innocence is immolated to iniquity, where is that Providence which guides the helm of the universe? Where are those eyes which go up and down through the earth, to contemplate the actions of men? Where is that righteous judge of all the earth, ever ready to administer justice? Have a little patience, and you shall see, that as this parricide constituted the most atrocious of all crimes, it was likewise speedily followed by the most tremendous of all punishments. You shall behold the accomplishment of that prophetic denunciation: "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for

your children," Luke xxiii. 28. You shall behold the Jews driven to desperation, imploring assistance from the rocks and from the mountains, to shelter them from the strokes of that divine vengeance which pursues them: you shall behold that Jerusalem, that murderess of the prophets, deluged with her own blood: two millions of Jews offered in sacrifice to the justice of that God, who requires at their hands the blood of the Messiah.

5. The fifth buckler against the offence of the cross—The spectacle of charity which Jesus Christ presents to his disciples: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends," chap. xv. 13. Accordingly, when this divine Saviour had arrived at the period of his death, and had formed, if I may use the expression, the ultimate resolution to die, every flood-gate of his charity is set open: from this fountain of love, whence emanated the heroic purpose of immolating himself for his disciples, we behold every other proof of affection gushing out in copious streams: "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," chap. xv. 15. If you have been faithful to me while I was giving you strong proofs of my tenderness, is it possible you should be unfaithful, now that I am preparing to give you a demonstration of it still more irresistible? Is it possible you should choose the time of my crucifixion to betray me? Is it possible you should deny your Redeemer, precisely at the moment when he is dying to accomplish the work of your redemption?

II. Our blessed Lord having spoken to the disciples, of the cross which he was about to suffer, and this is the second article of mediation, proceeds to speak to them concerning their own. He disguises not either the horror or the weight of it: "These things I have spoken unto you, that you should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service," chap. xvi. 1, 2. But while he utters a prediction so melancholy and discouraging, he softens it, and supplies them with motives the best adapted to fortify and sustain them against the fearful accomplishment of it. The objects which Jesus Christ presents to the eyes of his disciples, in the three chapters which we are attempting to analyze, are the same which have supported our own martyrs and confessors in this age of fire and blood, when the enemies of religion have taken for their models the persecutors of Christ and of his apostles.

I suffer, I die for the gospel, said each of our confessors and martyrs within themselves, in the extremity of their sufferings: I suffer, I die for the gospel: it is my highest glory; it is my badge of conformity to my adorable Saviour: "I fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh," Col. i. 24. "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus," Gal. vi. 17. It is one of the motives which our Lord himself proposes to the apostles: "if the world hate you, you know that it hated me before it hated you. The servant is

not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you," chap. xv. 18. 20.

I suffer, I die for the gospel. The world passes before me a theatre of misery and persecution only: but it is because I am not of this world. I am looking and longing for another establishment of things, and every stroke aimed at me by the men of the world, is a pledge of my being a citizen of another, of a heavenly country. This is a farther motive suggested by Jesus Christ to the disciples: "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you," chap. xv. 19.

I suffer, I die for the gospel. How glorious it is for a man to devote himself in such a cause! How glorious it is to be the martyr of truth and of virtue! Our Lord suggests this likewise as a motive to his disciples: "all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him who sent me," chap. xv. 21.

I suffer, I die for the gospel; but God is witness of my sufferings and death: he feels every stroke which falls upon me: "he who toucheth me, toucheth the apple of his eye," Zech. ii. 8. And as he is the witness of the barbarity of my tormentors, he will likewise be the judge and the avenger. This likewise is a motive suggested by our Lord to his disciples: "he that hateth me hateth my father also," chap. xv. 23.

I suffer, I die for the gospel: but I have before my eyes the great pattern of patience and fortitude. I derive the support which I need from the same source whence my Saviour derived his: I look to "the author and finisher of my faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame," Heb. xii. 2, and I aspire after the same triumph. This is a motive suggested by Jesus Christ to his disciples; "in the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world," chap. xvi. 33. What cross would not appear light, when the mind is supported by motives so powerful?

III. We observed, in the third place, that our blessed Lord is, in this address cautioning his disciples against forgetfulness of his commandments. The presence of a good pastor is a bulwark against error and vice. The respect which he commands by his exemplary conduct, and the lustre which his superior intelligence diffuses, impress truth upon the understanding, and transfuse virtue into the heart. He has his eyes ever open upon the various avenues through which the enemy could find admission into the field of the Lord, to sow it with tares, and by the exercise of constant vigilance defeats the cunning of the wicked one.

Conformably to this idea, one of the most grievous solitudes which, at a dying hour, have oppressed the minds of those extraordinary men to whom God committed the oversight of his church, proceeded from the apprehension of that corruption into which their charge was in danger of falling after their own departure; and the object of their most anxious concern has been to prevent this. Be-

hold Moses approaching the last closing scene of life: "Take this book of the law," says he to the Levites, "and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee, for I know thy rebellion and thy stiff neck: behold, while I am yet alive with you this day, ye have been rebellious against the Lord; and how much more after my death?" Deut. xxxi. 26, 27. Behold St. Paul: consider the terrors which he feels as he prepares to go up to Jerusalem: it is not that of being made a partaker of his master's sufferings: "no," says he, "the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying, that bonds and afflictions abide me at Jerusalem. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God," Acts xx. 23, 24. But that which fills him with painful apprehension is the danger of apostatizing, to which his beloved Ephesians, among whom he has been so successful, were going to be exposed after he had left them: for this reason it is, that in bidding them a final adieu, he expresses an ardent wish that a last effort should indelibly impress on their hearts the great truths which had been the subject of his ministry among them; "I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men: for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock," Acts xx. 26—29.

Jesus Christ, in like manner, is ready to finish the work which his heavenly Father has given him to do: he shrinks from it no longer: he advances forward, braving the cross, being "now ready to be offered," 2 Tim. iv. 6. "Arise," says he to them, "arise," (he was still in the house where he had just eaten the passover, when he pronounced the discourse which we are endeavouring to explain) "let us go hence," chap. xiv. 31. I must pass no more time with my beloved disciples; I am going to be delivered up to my executioners; I must "no more drink" with you "of the fruit of the vine," Luke xxii. 18, in a feast of love; it is time for me to go and drink to the very dregs the cup which the justice of my Father is putting into my hands: "let us go hence;" let us go to Gethsemane: let us ascend to Golgotha. But, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat," Luke xxii. 31. But, "all ye shall be offended because of me this night," Matt. xxvi. 31. But, the devil, and the world, and all hell, are going to unite their efforts to dissolve your communion with me. What does he oppose to danger so threatening? What means does he employ to prevent it? What ought to be done by a good pastor when stretched on a death-bed; not only earnest prayers addressed to heaven, but also tender exhortations addressed to men. He gives them an abridgment of the sermons

which, during the period of his intercourse with them, had been the subject of his ministrations: "if ye love me, keep my commandments," chap. xiv. 15.

But what merits especial attention in the last address of Jesus Christ to his apostles, is the precept on which he particularly insists; and the subject of that precept is charity: "by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another," chap. xiii. 35. "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another," ver. 34; a precept which they were bound to observe as Christians, and more especially as ministers of his gospel.

1. As Christians: without charity Christianity cannot possibly subsist. A society, the individuals of which do not love each other, cannot be a society of the disciples of Jesus Christ. Tell me not of your passing whole days and nights in meditation and reading the Scriptures; of your uninterrupted assiduity in exercises of devotion; of your fervour and frequency of attendance at the table of the Lord. The question still recurs, where is thy charity? Lovest thou thy neighbour? Makest thou his interest thy own? Is his prosperity a source of satisfaction to thee? Canst thou bear with and overlook his infirmities? Respectest thou, recommendest thou his excellencies? Defendest thou his reputation? Labourst thou to promote his salvation? Such questions are so many touchstones to assist us in attaining the knowledge of ourselves: so many articles of condemnation to multitudes who bear the Christian name. Of charity, alas, little more is known than the name: and the whole amount of the practice of it is reduced to a few of the functions altogether inseparable from mere humanity: when a man has given away a small portion of his superfluity to relieve the poor; when he has bestowed a morsel of bread to feed that starving wretch; when he has covered those shivering limbs from the inclemency of the air, he considers himself as having satisfied the demands of charity: he founds, shall I venture to say it, he founds on this symptom of love a title to warrant his indifference, his vengeance, his hatred; he backbites without control, he calumniate without hesitation, he plunges the dagger without remorse: he pines at the prosperity of another, and his neighbour's glory clothes him with shame.

2. But if the disciples of Jesus Christ are engaged as Christians to love one another, they more especially are so as ministers of the gospel. Where are we to look for charity, if not in the heart of those who are the heralds of charity? What monster so detestable as a minister destitute of charity! The more that charity is inculcated by the religion which he professes to teach, the more it must expose him as a most unnatural being, if he is capable of resisting the power of motives so tender. The more venerable that his ministry is, the more liable must it be to suspicion and contempt, when exercised by a man who is himself a stranger to charity. He will warp the truths of religion according to seasons and circumstances; he will accommodate his

preaching to his interest; he will carry his passions with him into the pulpit; he will conceal the heart of a wolf under the clothing of a sheep, and will avail himself of the law of charity itself, to diffuse through the whole church the pestilential air of that hatred, animosity, and envy, which torment and prey upon his own mind.

It was, in a peculiar manner, the desire of Jesus Christ, that charity should be the reigning principle in the college of the apostles, that united together in bands of the tenderest affection, they might lend each other effectual support in the great work of publishing the gospel. Never does the devil labour with more success against a church, than when he acquires the power of disuniting the ministers who have the oversight of it. Call to the pastoral charge of a flock persons of the greatest celebrity, preachers the most eloquent, geniuses the most transcendent, unless they are closely united in the bands of charity, small will be their progress; they will separate the hearts which they were bound to unite; they will foster the spirit of party; they will encourage the fomenters of discord; they will instruct one to say, "I am of Paul;" and another, "I am of Cephas;" and another, "I am of Apollos," 1 Cor. iii. 4. They will be in constant mutual opposition. Apollos will do his utmost to pull down what Cephas has built up; Cephas will attempt to rear what Paul had demolished. Discover the art, on the contrary, of uniting the hearts of those who have the care of a flock, and you ensure their success; they will strengthen each other's hands; they will attack the common enemy with concentrated force; they will concur in pursuing the same object. "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." O charity! the livery of the disciples of Jesus Christ, must it needs be that thou shouldst be as rare as thou art indispensable! Banished from the rest of the universe, flee for refuge to the church. Exert thy sovereign power at least in the sanctuary. Bind together in bands of indissoluble affection the shepherds of this flock. Let all animosity, let discord, let envy, be for ever banished from the midst of us, my beloved companions "in the work of the ministry," Eph. iv. 12.

SERMON LXXI.

CHRIST'S VALEDICTORY ADDRESS TO HIS DISCIPLES.

PART II.

JOHN xiv. 1.

Let not your hearts be troubled: ye believe in God; believe also in me.

IV. THE fourth and last great end which our blessed Lord had in view, in addressing this farewell discourse to his disciples, was to furnish them with supplies of consolation under the sorrow which his absence was going to excite in them. This sorrow is one of those

dispositions of the soul which no powers of language are capable of expressing. The apostles tenderly loved their master. Though the history of their life had not conveyed to us this idea of them; though the gospel had not traced, for our information, certain particular traits of their affection; had nothing been mentioned of the tenderness of the disciple whom Jesus loved, nothing of the vehemence of St. Peter, always ready to kindle into a flame when the glory and the life of his master were concerned, the very nature of the thing would be sufficient to give us the assurance of it. Who could have known Jesus Christ without loving him?

Is it possible to conceive the idea of a character more amiable? Have you found in the history of those excellent ones, who were the delight of mankind; or even in the productions of those who have communicated to us imaginary ideas of excellency and perfection, have you found in these higher instances of delicacy, of magnanimity, of cordial affection? If it be impossible for you to apply your thoughts to this great object without being transported, what must have been the feelings of the disciples? Continual hearers of the gracious words which fell from the lips of the blessed Jesus, the constant witnesses of his virtues, the spectators of his wonderful works, admitted to the most intimate familiarity with him, and honoured with the most unbounded confidence, what must have been the love to him which inflamed their hearts? Now this is the gracious Master, this the delicious intercourse, this the tender-hearted friend whom they are going to lose.

What charm can the world possess after we have had the infelicity of surviving certain persons who were dear to us? No, neither the mourning of Joseph, when he accompanied with tears to "the threshing floor of Atad" the coffin of Jacob his father, Gen. i. 10; no, nor the loud lamentation of David, when he exclaimed, in an agony of wo, "O my son Absalom; my son, my son Absalom, would God I had died for thee: O Absalom, my son, my son!" 2 Sam. xviii. 33; no, nor the anguish of Rachel "weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted because they are not," Matt. ii. 18. No, nothing is capable of conveying an idea of the condition to which the disciples were going to be reduced on beholding their Master expire. One must have survived Jesus Christ in order to be sensible what it is to survive Jesus Christ. This fatal stroke was to become to them an inexhaustible fountain of tears. This death appeared to them the utter annihilation of all things: it seemed as if the whole universe were dying together with him. "Now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? but because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your hearts," chap. xvi. 5, 6. "A little while and ye shall not see me," ver. 16. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice; and ye shall be sorrowful," ver. 20.

There can be no room to doubt that Jesus Christ, who himself loves with so much delicacy of affection, and who was animated with such a predilection in behalf of his disciples, tenderly

participated in their sorrow. As the loss, which they were about to sustain, was the deepest wound in their soul, he pours into it the most powerful balm of divine consolation. And here, my dearly beloved brethren, here it is that I stand in need of, not all the attention of your intellectual powers, but of all the sensibility of which your heart is susceptible, that while you partake in the sorrow of the apostles, you may likewise partake with them in the consolation which their Lord and ours was pleased to administer.

I shall sometimes turn aside from those holy men, my dear hearers, to address myself to you, and to supply you with abundant consolation, under the most oppressive ills which you may be called to endure on the earth; I mean under the loss of those who were most dear to you in life. I could wish to convince you, that the Christian religion is "profitable for all things:" that it will serve us as a bulwark and a refuge in our greatest sorrows, if we have but the wisdom to resort to it. Only take care to apply, every one to his own particular situation, the truth which I am going to propose to you. Derive your consolations from the same sources which Jesus Christ opened to his disciples, and to a participation of which we now, after his example, cordially invite you: prayer, the mission of the Comforter, the place to which your Redeemer is gone, the foretastes of the glory which he is there preparing for you, his spiritual presence in the midst of you, and the certainty and nearness of his return.

1. In all your distresses have recourse to prayer. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father, in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name: ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full," chap. xvi. 23, 24. This ought to be adopted as a new form of prayer in the Christian world. Scarcely do we find any trace of it in the devotions of the faithful of ancient times. They indeed sometimes introduce the names of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob; but nowhere, except in the prophecy of Daniel, do we find a prayer put up in the name of the Messiah. This at least is the sense which may be assigned to those words of that prophet: "Now, therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplication, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary, that is desolate, for the Lord's sake," Dan. ix. 17.

But this unexampled form, or of which there is at most so few examples in the ancient church, was to be henceforward adopted by all Christians: it is the first source of consolation which Christ opened to his disciples, and it is likewise the first which we, after him, would propose to you. Perhaps there may be many among us to whom Jesus might still say, as formerly to his disciples, "hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name." To pray, and to pray in the name of Christ, is the Christian's grand resource. Resort to it in all your tribulations. Have you reason to apprehend that some stroke from the hand of God is going to fall heavy upon you? Do you believe yourself on the eve of hearing some melancholy tidings? Are you called to undergo some painful and dangerous operation on your person? And, to say every thing in one word, are you threatened

with the loss of the most valuable, the most generous, the most tender friend that Heaven could bestow? Have recourse to prayer: God still subsists when all things else have become dead to thee. God continues to hear thee, when death has reduced to a state of insensibility all that was dear to thee. Retire to thy closet; prostrate thyself at the footstool of the throne of the Father of mercies. Pour out your heart into his bosom: say to him, "O Lord, my strength, teach my hands to war, and my fingers to fight," Ps. cxliv. 1. Lord, take pity on thy creature; Lord, proportion my trials to the strength thou shalt be pleased to administer to sustain them; "O my God, hear the prayer of thy servant; cause thy face to shine upon me, for the Lord's sake," Dan. ix. 17. This exercise, my friend, will render thee invulnerable: this exercise will communicate strength on which thou mayest, with confidence, rely, far beyond what thou durst have expected: it will place thee under the shadow of the Almighty, and will establish thee "as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever," Ps. cxxv. 1.

2. In all your distresses call to remembrance the promise of the Comforter, which Jesus Christ gave to his disciples: "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter; that he may abide with you for ever," chap. xiv. 16. This promise contained something peculiar, relatively to the apostles, and to the then state of the infant church. It denoted the economy of miracles, which was not to commence till Jesus Christ had reascended into heaven; and this is precisely the meaning of these words: "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you," chap. xvi. 7; it is likewise the meaning to be assigned to that passage, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father," chap. xiv. By the *works* which the apostles were to do, we are to understand miracles. Those *works* were to be *greater* than the works of Jesus Christ, with respect to their duration, and with respect to the number of witnesses in whose presence they were to be performed.

This is, farther, the idea which we are to affix to those other words of our Saviour: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of Truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth," chap. xvi. 12, 13. This refers to those extraordinary gifts which the Holy Spirit was to pour down upon the apostles, the aid of inspiration, and the grace of infallibility, which were going to be communicated to them. It is likewise of these peculiar circumstances, that we must explain the effects which Jesus Christ ascribes to that Spirit whom he promises to send to his disciples: "And when he the Comforter is come, he will reprove the world of sin, because they believe not on me," chap. xvi. 8; 9; or, as it might have been translated, "he shall convince them of their criminality in refusing to believe on me:" in other words, that the mission of the Holy Spirit, which Jesus Christ had promised to his disciples, should be a new proof of the divinity of his own mission,

and should render those persons inexcusable who presumed to call it in question.

Again, "he shall reprove them of righteousness, because I go to my Father," ver. 10, that is, the miraculous gifts communicated to the first heralds of the gospel should demonstrate, in a sensible manner, that Jesus Christ was in heaven, and should, from that very circumstance, evince that he was perfectly *righteous*, although he had been condemned as an impostor, seeing God had thus exalted him to the highest pinnacle of glory.

Once more, "he shall reprove them of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged," ver. 11; in other words, that the triumphs which the Christian religion was about to obtain, through the miraculous endowments of its ministers, were to be an awful forerunner of the judgments which should overtake those who persisted in their unbelief. All this is peculiar to the apostles; all this relates to the circumstances of the primitive church.

But this promise, my beloved brethren, has a reference to us also; and let it be our support in the midst of tribulation. Jesus Christ has promised to us also, the *Comforter*. His Spirit is within us: "Greater is he that is in us, than he that is in the world," 1 John iv. 4. Let us yield ourselves to the guidance of this Spirit: he will not grant us to exercise authority over insensible beings, to control the powers of nature, and to rule the elements; but he will exalt us to a glorious superiority over flesh and blood; he will support us under every pressure of calamity, and make us "more than conquerors" over every foe.

3. In all your distresses, call to remembrance the place to which Jesus Christ is gone. "If ye love me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father," chap. xiv. 28. It is the desire of Jesus Christ, that his disciples, on being separated from him, should not confine their thoughts to their own interest merely. It is his wish, that the glory to which he was about to be exalted, should sweeten to them the bitterness of separation. Jesus Christ teaches us how to love. We frequently imagine, that we are inspired with love to a person excruciated with agonizing pains, whereas it is only self-love in disguise. When death has removed a person, who was justly dear to us, we dwell only on the loss which we have sustained, but make no account of what our friend has gained. Whence proceed those tears which stream from your eyes? Whence these sighs and sobbings? What dreadful event can thus have rent your heart, and excited those piercing shrieks which rend the air? You have just beheld one who was the object of your tenderest affection depart out of this valley of tears; he has breathed out his soul into the hands of his Creator, and the blessed "angels, who rejoice over a sinner that repenteth," Luke xv. 10, experience new transports of delight, when a believer who had been combating under the banner of the cross of Christ, comes to be admitted to a participation in his triumph: and can you consider this as a ground of affliction to you? Do you call this love? No, you know not how to love.

Ah! if the departed could see what is passing below the sun! if the supreme order of the Al-

mighty would permit those who are in heaven to maintain a communication with their surviving friends on the earth! the person, whose loss you so bitterly deplore, would reproach you with that excess of grief. He would address you in the words of the Saviour to his disciples: "If you loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father, for the Father is greater than I." Would you tear me from the bosom of that Father? Would you recall me to this scene of tribulation and distress? Do you wish to see me again struggling with the calamities which are inseparable from the life of wretched mortals?

But there is something farther which challenges our attention. All that our blessed Lord has done for himself, has an intimate relation to us. All the glory which rests on our illustrious head extends its influence to each of its members. All the parts of the economy into which he has entered for our salvation, have a direct reference to our salvation. "He was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification: He is even at the right hand of God, where he also maketh intercession for us," Rom. iv. 25; viii. 34. In all your distresses, reflect not only on the place to which Christ is gone, but likewise on what he has thither gone to do, on your behalf. "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you," chap. xiv. 2. God no longer dwells in "light which no man can approach unto," 1 Tim. vi. 16. Direct your eyes to heaven. There are no longer "cherubim, and a flaming sword," Gen. iii. 24, to obstruct your passage. "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know:" . . . "Jesus Christ is the way, and the truth, and the life," chap. xiv. 4. 6. Keep but yourselves closely united to the Redeemer in the hour of tribulation; place continually before your eyes this model of patient suffering, and he will himself conduct you to those mansions of glory.

4. But an impenetrable veil conceals from our eyes those mansions in our Father's house: but there is an infinite distance between this little corner of the world, into which God has been pleased to send us, as into a state of exile, and the place which Christ is preparing for us. God is still, with respect to us, "a strong God, who hideth himself," Isa. xlv. 15. Well, you must learn to look through that veil. You must learn to fill up the mighty void which is between heaven and earth, and to see this God who still conceals himself from our eyes. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen," Heb. xi. 1. The Christian is instructed to unite the present to futurity. The Christian is instructed to anticipate periods the most remote. The Christian is a man already "quickened together with Christ; already glorified; already seated in heavenly places with Christ Jesus," Eph. ii. 5. How so? By the foretastes of those blessings which are the object of his expectations. This is the fourth source of the consolation which our Lord opens to his disciples, and which we, after him, open to you. "From henceforth ye know the father, and have seen him: he that hath seen me hath seen the Father: peace I leave with you; my peace

I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you," chap. xiv. 7. 9. 27.

My soul, if these are mere empty ideas with respect to thee, to thyself alone is the evil to be imputed. Thou hast corrupted thy taste: thou art plunging thyself in the world; distracting thyself with its projects: eagerly hunting after its pleasures: thou art suffering thyself to be fascinated with its charms: thou art devoting no portion of thy immortal capacity to the perception of that delight which the regenerated man enjoys, when he can say to himself, "I know the Father;" he is such as I know the Son to be, full of love, full of charity, full of goodness and long-suffering. Jesus Christ has "left me his peace;" I hear within me the testimony of "a conscience void of offence:" I give myself up to the joy of reflecting that my salvation is secure." Thou renderest thyself insensible to these sublime attractions: and then, when the world betrays thee; when thy "gods are taken away from thee," Judg. xviii. 24; when thou art bent on every side with a "great sight of affliction," thou findest thyself destitute of every resource. Reform thy depraved taste. Call down paradise to reside within thee; anticipate that glorious period, when thou "shalt see God as he is," 1 John iii. 2. Call to remembrance these words of thy Saviour: "From henceforth ye know the father, and have seen him: he that hath seen me hath seen the father: peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

5. There is a fifth source of consolation which Jesus Christ disclosed to his disciples, and which we, after him, disclose unto you. it is the assurance of his spiritual presence, and of the presence of his heavenly Father in the midst of you. "I will not leave you comfortless," or, as it might have been rendered, I will not leave you *orphans*. . . . "If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him:" chap. xiv. 18. 23. In all your distresses call to remembrance that God is with you of a truth. With what fortitude did this reflection inspire those holy men whom the Scriptures have proposed to us as models!

With what fortitude was Moses animated by it! "Wherein shall it be known here," said of old time that eminent servant of God, "that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? Is it not in that thou goest with us? So shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth:" Ex. xxiii. 16. With what fortitude did it animate the prophet, when he said, "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up!" Ps. xxxvii. 10. With what fortitude did it inspire Jesus Christ himself, under that universal desertion which he experienced at the hour of death? "Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me," chap. xvi. 32.

Let us never lose sight of God in the day of

adversity. Let us ever dwell with complacency and joy on that expression of the Redeemer, "I will not leave you orphans." Let us apply to ourselves what God said of his ancient people: "Surely they are my people, children that will not lie: so he was their Saviour. In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them," Isa. lxiii. 8, 9; and let us exult in the fulness of a Christian confidence: "I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved," Ps. xvi. 8.

6. Finally, the last source of consolation which Jesus Christ disclosed to his disciples, and which we, after his example, would disclose unto you, is the nearness of his return: "Ye now have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you," chap. xvi. 22. In all your distresses call to remembrance, that if Jesus Christ be not now sensibly present in the midst of you, the time is at hand when he will certainly be so. Call to remembrance what the angels said unto the apostles, when lost in astonishment at beholding a cloud receive him out of their sight; "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come, in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven," Acts i. 11. Call to remembrance that Jesus Christ will quickly reappear; "Yet a little while, and he who shall come, will come, and will not tarry," Heb. x. 37.

No, this economy is not made for eternity. The world is waxing old; our years are hastening to fill up their measure: we are advancing with rapid strides towards the tomb. The decorations of the universe are speedily to be changed with respect to us. The universe itself is about to undergo a real change. The state of the world, that now is, presents a state of violence, which cannot be of long duration. The last trumpet must ere long utter its voice: yet a little while, and those thunders must be heard which shall shake the pillars of the earth: "arise ye dead," and leave your tombs. Yet a little while, and we shall see again those whose death hath cost us so many tears, and we shall be reunited to them. Yet a little while, and "the sign of the Son of man shall appear in heaven," Matt. xxiv. 30. Yet a little while, and this Son of man shall himself appear in his own, and in his "Father's glory, with all his holy angels."

Ah! my brethren, till that blessed period arrive, we dare not promise you the possession

of the fulness of joy. Till that blessed period, church of Jesus Christ, "thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted," Isa. liv. 2, a fearful night must involve thee in thick darkness. Till that blessed period, weep; weep, dejected Christian, disciple of the crucified Jesus, weep and lament, and let "the world rejoice because ye are sorrowful," but ere long, "your sorrow shall be turned into joy. . . . I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you."

What powers of thought are equal to a happy termination of this subject of meditation! What pencil is capable of depicting the joys of the sons of God, in that eventful day, in which they shall behold again, in which they shall embrace, a father, a friend, a child, from whom death had once separated them! Let imagination soar to the highest object which the mind is capable of contemplating. Let nothing divide the love which we entirely owe to our adorable Redeemer, or damp the delight which we derive from the exalted hope of seeing him return to us in the clouds of heaven, with his "angels that excel in strength."

Who is capable of representing the transport which the return of this Jesus shall kindle in the bosoms of the faithful! There he is, that Jesus in whom we believed: this is he, that Jesus whom we loved, and to whom we were "faithful even unto death." Come, Redeemer of our souls, come and wipe away the tears which thy departure drew from our eyes: come, and compensate to us the heaviness of so long a separation from thee; come and receive the effusions of our gratitude and joy: suffer us, suffer us to yield to the transports of that love which absorbs every faculty, which constrains us, which exalts us to seraphic ardour.

This is the last source of consolation which Jesus Christ disclosed to his disciples; this is that consolation which flows out in copious streams towards you, Christian, confounded, overwhelmed with wave upon wave, in all thy fears, thy sorrows, thy sufferings. O religion of the blessed Jesus, how powerful are thy attractions! What charms dost thou possess for a wretched creature who feels the whole earth a cheerless void: let this religion, my beloved brethren, be the object of our most ardent affection. Let us go on unto perfection: let us transmit it to our children, as the goodliest portion, as the fairest inheritance: let us live with Jesus Christ: let us die with Jesus Christ. May God grant us this supreme felicity. To him be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON LXXII.

CHRIST'S SACERDOTAL PRAYER.

PART I.

JOHN xvii.

These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son may also glorify thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. 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. Now they have known, that all things, whatsoever thou hast given me, are of thee: For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name; those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled. And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them my word: and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. 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; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world

hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it; that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.

THE words of dying persons usually sink deep into the listening ear, and touch the inmost soul. Ah! why are not the impressions which they produce as lasting as they are lively! The words of a dying pastor, more especially, seem calculated to produce an extraordinary effect.

At these last solemn moments of life, every motive of self-interest, or of vain-glory, by which he might have been actuated through the course of his ministry, vanishes away. Then it is that a faithful minister derives from the bosom of that religion which he has taught to others, the means of fortifying himself against the idea of a futurity all gloom, if a man has mere human reason for his only guide, but all light and joy to him who follows the spirit of revelation. Then it is that he feels a more particular concern and tenderness for the church, and that now, himself lifted up, he would draw all men after him.

When it is a pastor of the ordinary rate that expires, no other consequence can be deduced from his perseverance to the last but this, that he had preached what he believed to be the truth, not what was so in fact. And it is possible he may deceive himself when he is dying, as he pretended not to infallibility while he lived. But the death of those extraordinary men, who have established, by their testimony, the facts on which all religion rests, is the touchstone of the doctrines which they taught. As it was impossible they should have been deceived in the points which they attest, there can remain no other suspicion to affect their testimony, but this, that it was their intention to impose upon others: and this suspicion falls to the ground, when we behold them, without deviation, persisting to the end in the faith which they professed, attesting it by new appeals to heaven, calling God to witness their sincerity, and their innocence.

All these different considerations unite in the person of Jesus Christ: all these motives to attention, and in an order infinitely superior, fix our meditation on the words which have been read. Come and behold the sentiments of your Saviour unfolded, without disguise: come and behold the most lofty display of the human soul that ever was exhibited: come and behold whether he, for one moment, doubted, whether he shrunk back: above all, come and behold the charity by which he was animated. Charity formed the plan of the sacrifice which he should offer, and charity is hastening to accomplish it.

Every thought of this dying Jesus is employed on his disciples: is employed about you, my beloved brethren. "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me. I pray for them. I pray for those whom thou hast given me: keep them through thine own name. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word."

Such are the objects, my friends, which I would this day present to your contemplation. I put aside all the theological controversies which have taken their rise from the passage

under review. My only aim shall be to recommend to your most serious attention the expressions, one after another, the heart-affecting, the penetrating expressions of the dying Saviour of mankind. So far from going abroad in quest of enemies to combat, I could even wish to confine my address, at the present hour, to such of my hearers as have a heart susceptible of those tender sentiments with which the religion of Jesus Christ inspires all who cordially embrace it. On hearts possessed of such sensibility I could wish to engrave the last expressions of the Redeemer's love: I could wish this sermon might accompany you up to your dying hour: I could wish that, in the moment of expiring agony, you might be enabled to oppose, to the fearful threats of the king of terrors, these fervent petitions of the Saviour of the world, which set open to you the gates of heaven, and which establish your eternal felicity on a foundation more unmoveable than those of heaven and earth: "Father I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me." Amen.

We shall arrange our subject in the order of the three following ideas, and shall endeavour to point out to you,

I. The relation in which Jesus Christ stands to God.

II. The relation which subsists between the apostles and Jesus Christ.

III. The relation subsisting between believers and the apostles.

We shall distinguish these three ideas only for the purpose of afterward establishing and sublimating the mystery of their union. For the perfect obedience which Jesus Christ yielded to the supreme will of his heavenly Father, has united him to God in a manner ineffable, so that he is one with God, not only as partaking of the divine nature, but considered as a creature.

Again, the glorious manner in which the apostles have executed the functions of their apostleship; having not only believed the doctrines which their master taught them, but diffused them over the whole world; and, like him, sealed them with their own blood, has united them in the closest intimacy with Jesus Christ, so that they are "one with them as Jesus Christ is one with the Father."

Finally, the respect with which believers receive, and acquiesce in, the doctrine of the apostles, and that of Jesus Christ, raises them to a participation of the same exalted glory and felicity; so that believers being united with the apostles, the apostles with Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ with God, there results, from this union, a society, a whole, noble, sublime, possessing the perfection of glory and blessedness.

Now it is the complete union of this whole, it is the perfection of this communion among all these orders of beings, that Jesus Christ here asks of the Father.

I. Let us first examine the relations in which Jesus Christ stands to God. Jesus Christ may be considered under two different ideas, as God, and as Mediator.

There are, accordingly, two kinds of rela-

tion, subsisting between God and Jesus Christ: 1. A relation of nature; and 2. A relation of economy. Jesus as God is "one with the Father;" he is likewise so in his character of Mediator.

1. There subsists between God and Christ a unity of nature.

We perceive more than one proof of this in the words of my text. For what are we to understand by "that glory" of which Jesus Christ speaks, which he "had with the Father before the world was," unless it be that he is God, as the Father is God?

I am well aware that in the very chapter we are attempting to explain, some have pretended to discover an argument which militates against this doctrine. The enemies of the divinity of our blessed Lord have frequently employed the words which we have recited, as a bulwark to defend their error: "this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent," ver. 3. They tell us, that Jesus Christ here distinguishes himself from "the true God," and they have thence concluded, that he is of a different nature. But it is an easy matter to refute this objection by permitting Jesus Christ to explain his own meaning, and interpreting Scripture by Scripture. Let us, from other passages, see how Jesus Christ has distinguished himself from the true God. Is it because he is not a true God? By no means; for it is expressly declared in another place, that he is "the true God, and eternal life," 1 John, v. 20.

If then, Jesus Christ has referred to two classes, every branch of Christian knowledge: if he has placed in one class the knowledge relating to "the true God;" and in the other class, all knowledge relating to the Son, whom the true God *has sent* into the world, this is simply reducing the whole of Christian theology to the two great questions which were the subject of discussion in his time, and which contained a summary of all the topics which can be discussed on the subject of religion. The first was the point in dispute between the pagan and the Jew: the other, between the Jew and the Christian.

The matter in dispute between the pagan and the Jew was, whether there were *only one God*, or more than one. Respecting this question, Jesus Christ pronounces a clear decision: that "eternal life consists in knowing the one true God." The point in dispute between the Jew and the Christian relates to Christ's being the Messiah, the *sent* of God. But this Jesus whom God *has sent*, is he, God Creator, or is he a creature merely? Neither the negative nor the affirmative side of this question is directly established in these words: "this is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Once admit what Jesus Christ demands on the subject of the first two questions, and the third will presently resolve itself. For if we know that there is only one God, and that Jesus Christ is *sent* by him, we must receive, without hesitation, the doctrine which God has taught us by this Son whom he has sent: and if we receive this doctrine, we must believe from the doctrine

itself, that he who is *sent* must be God: because the divinity of his nature is one point of the doctrine which he has taught.

There are, therefore, relations of nature between Jesus Christ and God. There is a unity of Jesus Christ as God with his Father. There is a *glory* which Jesus Christ "had with God, before the world was," and which he always possessed, even at the period of his deepest humiliation. This union is as unchangeable as Deity itself. The glory which Jesus Christ derives from it is not susceptible of increase or diminution. All that he prays for in respect of it, is, that it might be known among men: and in this sense we may understand the expression in our text: "Father, glorify me with the glory which I had with thee, before the world was," ver. 5. But,

2. There subsists likewise a relation of economy between Jesus Christ and the Father. Jesus Christ as Mediator is "one with God." I have a conception of three kinds of Unity in this respect: 1. Unity of idea: 2. Unity of will: 3. Unity of dominion.

(1.) There is a unity of idea. I mean, that the human soul of Jesus Christ Mediator was endowed with so much intelligence, that he had the same ideas with God, that he formed the same judgments, and that he possessed the same infallibility. This truth had been predicted of him by the prophets: "the Spirit of the Lord God is upon me: because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek," Is. lxi. 1. It was taught by Jesus Christ himself: "my doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me," John vii. 16. "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life," John viii. 12. It is the foundation of the faith which we have, in the truths which flowed from his lips.

But however perfect this unity may have been, it was nevertheless susceptible of degrees. Jesus Christ, considered as Mediator, never could be in an error, but he did not always know the whole truth. He had not in the cradle the same extent of knowledge which he possessed at the age of "twelve years," Luke ii. 42; when in the temple, he, by his profound knowledge, excited astonishment in the most learned of the doctors. Most probably, likewise, he did not yet possess at the age of twelve years, the illumination which he attained unto in the sequel of his ministry. The evangelist expressly remarks that "he grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom," Luke ii. 40. Never did he attain during his abode on earth that height of intelligence which he had, after his ascension into heaven. It is expressly said, that, as "the Son of man," he "knew not the day" of judgment. The soul, to which his mortal body was united, acquired, undoubtedly, after that body left the tomb, an extension of knowledge which it had not, so long as the body to which it was united was yet in a mortal condition. This is the first glory that Jesus Christ asks of his Father. He prays that he would grant him to partake, in a manner more intimate, in his counsels, and to draw from the unbounded ocean of light more abundant supplies of divine wisdom and knowledge: "Father, the hour is come, glorify

thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee," ver. 1.

(2.) The second unity, subsisting between Jesus Christ Mediator and the Father, is a unity of will. Observe to what an extent it has been carried. The incarnation was an effect of the entire submission of this divine Saviour to the will of his Father: "when he cometh into the world, he saith, 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," Heb. x. 5—7. When Joseph and Mary found fault with him for having parted company with them, he replied, "how is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" Luke ii. 49. When his disciples presented him with food, "saying, Master eat: he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of: . . . my meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work," John iv. 31, &c.; and, in the text, he says, that for the "sake" of the disciples whom the Father had given him, he "sanctified himself."

It is, however, demonstrably certain, that in proportion as the human soul acquires more light and knowledge, according as it is less distracted by the senseless infirmities of nature, it takes the loftier flight towards the love of order, and conceives a more powerful attachment to the sovereign will of Heaven. There were certain moments in the life of Jesus Christ, during his abode on earth, in which he was entirely absorbed by those objects which incessantly engage the attention of the angels of God. He was led of the Spirit into the wilderness; there "he fasted forty days and forty nights," Matt. iv. 2; and these days and nights were, undoubtedly, passed in contemplation, in rapture, in an ecstasy of zeal and fervour. But after these forty days and forty nights were over, "he was afterwards an hungered."

In like manner, he beheld the glory of God on the holy mountain, and the transfiguration which he underwent, kindled to a higher and a higher degree, the desire which he felt, to discharge, in a manner worthy of his exalted character, the commission which he had received of the Father. But those rays of glory were to be eclipsed, and from that sacred place he must descend. During the whole course of his life, he kept constantly in view the end of his mission, he expressed many an ardent wish to accomplish the sacrifice which he came into the world to offer up.

But at the idea of death he is for a season in heaviness: there is an appearance of desiring, as it were, to compound matters with Deity; and this, some interpreters consider as the sense of these words: "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me, that I may not drink it," Matt. xxvi. 39; and, perhaps, it is likewise the sense of those which follow: "now is my soul troubled: and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour," John xii. 27. Not that Jesus Christ ever thought he could be saved from that hour, or delivered from drinking that cup which was going to

be put into his hand, but it was the language of innocent human infirmity, excited by the first ideas of extreme approaching agony. It is only in the possession of perfect blessedness, that our virtues shall acquire all the activity, all the extent, of which they are susceptible. And it is, yes, it is this activity, it is this extent of virtue, which had the power of still farther strengthening the hand which united Jesus Christ to his Father. For this reason it is that he promises to the glory of God, that return and increase of glory which he asks of him: "Father, glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee," ver. 1.

(3.) In the third place, there subsists between the Father and the Son, a unity of dominion. Magnificent displays of this were visible even while our blessed Lord tabernacled among men. Is the expression too strong, if we say, that God Almighty, when he sent Jesus Christ into the world, made him the depository of his omnipotence? The winds, the waves, men, devils, life, death, the elements, universal nature, all, all submitted to his sovereign will.

But, if the power of Jesus Christ was unbounded, as considered in itself, it was limited, however, in its exercise. It was no easy matter, to discover the depository of the divine omnipotence in the person of that Man, consigned over to the hands of executioners, dragged before a tribunal of iniquity, and nailed to a cross. There is a dominion, with which it implies a contradiction to suppose Jesus Christ invested before he suffered death, for this dominion was to be expressly the reward of suffering: "he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore, God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth: and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father," Phil. ii. 8—11: and in the second Psalm, ver. 8, 9, "Ask of me, and I will 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."

This is the dominion of which he took possession. On the third day after his death, angels alight upon his tomb, not to effect his resurrection from the dead, but to admire the wonders of it; to render their profoundest homage to that divine Man, the only dead person who had ever revived by his own power; and to yield obedience to that mandate of the great Supreme: "let all the angels of God worship him," Heb. i. 6. Forty days after his resurrection, he makes a cloud to serve him as a triumphal chariot, on which he is borne aloft, and disappears from the eyes of his beloved disciples. As he ascends through the regions of the air, to occupy a throne above the skies, the church triumphant, and all the spirits in bliss, unite in celebrating his return to heaven, with songs of praise: the celestial arches resound with their joyful acclamations, while they cry aloud, "lift up your heads, O ye gates,

and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in," Ps. xxiv. 7.

On his arrival at the habitation of his glory, he assumes his place at the Father's right hand. And thence it is that he exercises the dominion to which his sufferings and death have exalted him: thence it is he beholds the impotent designs of the enemies of the church, and, to use the expression of Scripture, "laughs at them," Ps. ii. 4. Thence it is he brings down to the ground the heads of the haughtiest potentates; thence it is he controls the power of tyrants, or permits it to act, and to accomplish his purpose; thence it is he bends his eyes upon us, my brethren; that he hears, and regards, and answers the prayers which, in our indigence, we present at the throne of grace; thence it is he beholds St. Stephen, and grants the petition of that martyr, from amidst the shower of stones which is overwhelming him: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," Acts vii. 59. Thence it is he draws to himself the souls of our expiring believers, and says to all those who combat under the banner of the cross: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne," Rev. iii. 21. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life," Rev. ii. 10.

Such is the glory which must follow the sufferings and death of the Saviour of the world. Such must be the perfection of that unity which subsists between Jesus Christ the Mediator and his Father: "Father, the hour is come: glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee. . . . I have manifested thy name unto the men whom thou gavest me out of the world. . . . Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost but the son of perdition. . . . I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do: and now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory I had with thee, before the world was."

SERMON LXXII.

CHRIST'S SACERDOTAL PRAYER.

PART II

JOHN xvii. 18—21

As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. 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: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

We have seen the relation which subsists between Jesus Christ and his heavenly Father. 1. A relation of nature, implied in that "glory which he had with the Father before the world was." 2. There is a relation of economy: Jesus Christ as Mediator is "one with God." And this relation consists of three particulars: 1. Unity of idea: 2. Unity of will: 3. Unity of dominion. Let us,

II. Consider the relation subsisting between Jesus Christ and his apostles, not in their character simply, of believers in Christ, but principally in the view of their public character as apostles. Let us inquire, in what sense it is that Jesus Christ makes it his request, that they may be *one* with the Father and with himself, as he was *one* with the Father. This is the second object, this the second mystery, to which we now call upon you to direct your serious attention.

Weigh the import of these remarkable words: "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world: and for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." Jesus Christ had entered into the plan of the eternal Father, respecting the salvation of the human race; and had come into the world to put it in execution. It was necessary, in like manner, that the apostles should enter into the plan of this divine Saviour, and to the utmost extent of their ability, should labour, together with him, in executing the merciful design. And as Jesus Christ, in order to acquit himself, with success, of this ministry which was committed unto him, must have possessed, with the Father, a unity of idea, of will, and of dominion, it was likewise necessary that the apostles should possess this threefold unity with Jesus Christ, and this precisely is the substance of what Jesus Christ prays for in their behalf.

1. In order to acquit themselves successfully of the functions of their ministry, it was necessary that the apostles should participate in the ideas of Jesus Christ, and in the infallibility of his doctrine. He had himself said to them, "He that heareth you heareth me," Luke x. 16. He had given them this commission: "Go ye, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: and, lo, I am with you, always, even to the end of the world," Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

How could they possibly have executed this commission to any advantage, unless they had participated in the ideas of Jesus Christ, and in the infallibility of his decisions? What dependence could we repose on their testimony had it been liable to error? How should we implicitly admit the oracles which emanated from the apostolic college, if they were to be subjected to examination at the tribunal of human reason, as those of mere human teachers? The slightest alteration affecting the assertion of the infallibility of the doctrine of these holy men, subverts it from the very foundation. The moment that human reason assumes a right to appeal from their decisions, it is all over, and we are at once brought back to the religion of nature. And the moment we are brought back to the religion of nature, we are bewildered in all the uncertainty of the human understanding; we are still "seeking the Lord, if haply we might feel after him and find him," Acts xvii. 27, as did the Pagan world. We are still saving, as did the greatest philosophers of the gentile nations, respecting inquiries of the highest importance to mankind; *Who can tell? Peradventure.* We are

treating St. Peter and St. Paul, as we do So-crates and Seneca.

Now, if such be our condition, what advantage has the Christian over the pagan? Wherein consists the superiority of the gospel over the systems of mere human philosophy? Away with a suspicion so injurious to the great Author and Finisher of our faith. He has supplied his church with every thing necessary to a clear knowledge, and a well grounded belief of all needful truth. When he committed to the hands of his disciples the ministry of his gospel, he obtained for them, in substance, the illumination which himself possessed, for the successful exercise of it.

2. But is it sufficient to possess superior illumination, in order to the honourable and useful exercise of the Christian ministry? Is it sufficient to "speak with the tongues of men and of angels?" Is it sufficient to be endowed with the "gift of prophecy: to understand all mysteries, to have all knowledge?" 1 Cor. xiii. 1. Ah! how fruitless are the most pathetic sermons, if the preacher himself pretends to exemption from the obligations which he would impose upon other men! Ah! how the most dazzling and sublime eloquence languishes, when tarnished by the vices of the orator! This position, my brethren, admits not of a doubt: and let the reflection, however humiliating, be ever present to our thoughts: one of the most insurmountable obstacles to the efficacy of preaching, is the irregular lives of preachers.

If this reflection, at all times, rests on a solid foundation, it was particularly the case with regard to those ministers whom God set apart to the office of laying the very first foundations of his church, and to be themselves "the pillar and ground of the truth," 1 Tim. iii. 15 With what dreadful suspicions must not our minds have been perplexed, had we seen in the persons whom Jesus Christ himself immediately chose to be his successors, the abominations which are visible in many of those who, at this day, pretend to fill his place in the church? What dreadful suspicions would agitate our minds, had St. Peter lived in the manner of some of those who have called themselves the successors of St. Peter? If out of the same mouth, from which issued those gracious maxims which the Holy Spirit has preserved for our instruction, there had proceeded, at the same time, those iniquitous sentences, those sanguinary decrees, those insolent decisions, which have fulminated from the mouths of certain pontiffs bearing the Christian name? If these same apostles, who preached nothing but superiority to the world, nothing but humility, but charity, but patience, but chastity, had been, like some of their pretended successors, addicted to the spirit and practice of revenge, of ambition, of simony; magicians, fornicators; men polluted with abominations which the majesty of this place, and the sanctity of the pulpit, hardly permit me to insinuate? What must not have been the infamy of committing such things, when the bare idea of them puts modesty to the blush?

O how much better has Jesus Christ, our

great leader and commander, provided whatever was necessary for the good of his church! During the whole course of his life, he presented a model of the most pure and consummate virtue. One of the great ends of his devotedness to death, was to engage his beloved disciples thence to derive motives to the practice of holiness; this is the sense which may be assigned to that expression in the prayer, which he here addresses to his Father: "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they may be sanctified," ver. 19. "For them I sanctify myself:" the meaning may be, "I labour incessantly to excite thy love within me to a brighter and a brighter flame, not only because it is a disposition of soul the most becoming an intelligent creature, but that I may serve as a model to them who are to diffuse the knowledge of my gospel over the world."

Or, according to the interpretation of others, "for them I sanctify myself, that they may be sanctified," that is, "I devote myself to death for my disciples, to the end that, beholding in my sacrifice the horrors of sin, which I am about to expiate, and the overflows of my affection for those in whose place I am substituting myself, they may be engaged to exhibit an inviolable attachment to thy holy laws." Which ever of these two senses we affix to the words of our blessed Lord, they strongly mark that intense application of thought by which he was animated, to inspire his disciples with the love of virtue.

This is not all, he is expressing an earnest wish, that assistance from Heaven might supply what his absence was going to deprive them of: "For them I sanctify myself, that they may be sanctified." But now I leave the world. My disciples are going to lose the benefit of my instructions, and of my example. May a celestial energy, may divine communications of resolution and strength occupy my place: "I pray not thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth: as thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world; and for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth."

3. Finally, Jesus Christ asks, in behalf of his disciples, a participation in the dominion of which he himself had taken possession. He had already, in part conveyed to them that dominion: "The glory which thou gavest me, I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one," ver. 22. What is that glory, which the Father had given to Jesus Christ, and which Jesus Christ had given to his apostles? Among a variety of ideas which may be formed of it, we must, in a particular manner, understand it as implying the gift of miracles. In virtue of this power, those sacred ministers were enabled to carry conviction to the human mind, with an energy of eloquence altogether divine. The resurrection of one who had been dead is the great exordium of their sermons. This argument they oppose to all the sophisms of vain philosophy: "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses; therefore being by the right hand of God exalted he hath shed

forth this which ye now see and hear," Acts ii. 32, 33. They confound those who continue proof against conviction. They call down the most formidable strokes of celestial indignation on some of those who had dared to trifle with the oath of fidelity plighted to their divine Master. Ananias and Sapphira fall dead at their feet, Acts v. 9. "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty, through God, and the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ: and having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience," 2 Cor. x. 4—6.

But this is not the whole of that authority, and the whole of that power, which Jesus Christ wishes to be conferred on his disciples. He asks, in their behalf, that when they had, like him, finished the work which they* had given them to do, they should be exalted to the same glory; that after having "turned many to righteousness," they might "shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever," Dan. xii. 3. This is what he had promised them: "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." This is what he asks for them: "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world 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. 24, 21.

We conclude this head with a reflection of no small importance: namely this, that among the graces which Jesus Christ prays for in behalf of his apostles, must be comprehended those which were necessary to the persons who were after them to exercise the gospel ministry. Whatever difference there may be between these two orders of ministers, they are the objects of the same prayer. Their talents were to differ only in degree, and God, at this day, limits the measure of them, only because circumstances have varied, and miracles are no longer necessary to the church. But as the apostles had, in substance, the same gifts with Jesus Christ, the ministers of the gospel likewise partake in the gifts of the apostles, because they have received the same commission, and are called to build up the church, of which those holy men laid the foundations.

Lofty idea of the apostleship! lofty idea of the office of the gospel ministry! The apostles entered with Jesus Christ into the plan of the redemption of mankind, as Jesus Christ entered into it with God. And the ministers of the gospel, to this day, enter into the same plan with the apostles, as the apostles entered into it with Jesus Christ. The eternal Father, "before the foundation of the world," Matt. xxv. 34, foreseeing the deplorable misery in which the wretched progeny of Adam were to

* The French reads, qu'il leur donne a faire, which he had given them to do. I. S.

involve themselves, traced the plan of redemption: from that period he provided the victim: from that period he set apart for us a Redeemer: from that period, he prepared for us a kingdom. Jesus Christ, in the fulness of time, came and executed this plan. He assumed our flesh. He lived among us. He suffered. He died. "I have glorified thee upon the earth. I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do," ver. 4.

The apostles succeeded their Master. And these holy men, with that heroic courage which the idea of a commission so honourable inspires into generous minds, braved and surmounted all the difficulties which opposed their progress. "They trod upon the lion and adder: the young lion and dragon they trampled under feet," Ps. xci. 13. "Power was given them to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy," Luke x. 19. They took as a model in their course (it is an idea of the psalmist,) that glorious orb of day, whose "going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it," Ps. xix. 6. "Yes, verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world," Rom. x. 18. They rose superior to the powers of sense and nature: they subdued the passions which have naturally the greatest influence over the heart of man: they "knew no man after the flesh," 2 Cor. v. 16. They carried on their souls the impress of their Saviour's virtues, as they bare his marks imprinted on their bodies.

The ministers of Jesus Christ assume the place of the apostles: they have one and the same vocation: they are called to the same work: they have to teach the same truths; the same vices to reprove; the same maxims to establish; the same threatenings to denounce; the same consolations to administer; the same felicity and the same glory to promise. "Who is sufficient for these things?" 2 Cor. ii. 16. But we are upheld by you, all-powerful intercession of Jesus Christ with his Father! From your energy it is that we obtain, in our retirement, that attention, that composure, that concentration of thought of which we stand in need, in order to penetrate into those lively oracles which it is our duty to announce to this people. From your powerful energy it is we obtain that clearness, that fervour, that courage, that elevation of spirit of which we stand in need in this chair of verity, to exalt us above the malignant censure of a murmuring multitude, ever disposed to find fault with those who preach the truth. To you we must stand for ever indebted for the success of our ministry, and for the hope we entertain that this people, to whom we minister in holy things, shall one day be "our joy and our crown," 1 Thess. ii. 19.

III. Thus are we led forward, my brethren, to the third division of our discourse, in which you are most particularly interested. It is truly delightful to behold "the Author and Finisher of our faith" united, in a manner so intimate with the Deity. It is delightful to behold those apostles, whose writings are in our hands, and whose doctrine is the rule of our faith, intimately united to Jesus Christ as he is with God. There is, however, something behind still more particular and more consolatory. All these

different relations, of Jesus Christ with God, of the apostles with Jesus Christ, have been formed only in the view of producing others, and these affect you. Attend to the interest which you have in the prayer of Jesus Christ: "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.

Awake to a sense of the dignity of your high calling, contemplate the unbounded extent of your privileges. Behold to what a height of glory you are encouraged to aspire, and what unspeakable benefits you already derive from the religion of the blessed Jesus! Already you possess with God, as does Jesus Christ, a unity of ideas, and you partake, in some sense, of his infallibility, by subjecting your faith to his divine oracles, and by seeing, if I may use the expression, by seeing with his eyes. Already you have with God, as Jesus Christ has, a unity of will, by the reception of his laws, and by exerting all your powers, that his will may be done on earth as it is done in heaven. Already you enjoy with God, as does Jesus Christ, a unity of dominion: "all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death," 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22. "You are already partakers of a divine nature," 1 Pet. i. 4. "You are already transformed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord," 2 Cor. iii. 18.

But how is this union still marred and interrupted! How imperfect still this "participation of the divine nature" and this "transformation into the same image!" Let this be to us, my brethren, a source of humiliation, but not of dejection. A more glorious state of things is to succeed the present: "it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is," 1 John iii. 2. A new influx of light with which the soul shall be replenished, a new influx of divine love with which the heart shall be inflamed, a new influx of felicity and delight with which the immortal nature shall be inundated, are going, ere long, to place in its brightest point of view, all the sublimity, all the excellency of our condition. "Father, I pray not for my disciples alone, but for them also who shall believe in 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."

But how is it possible for the miserable posterity of Adam, how is it possible for wretched creatures born in sin, how is it possible for frail mortals, a compound of dust and ashes, "that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth," Job iv. 19, how is it possible for beings so mean, so degraded, to become "one" with God, as Jesus Christ is "one" with him?

Away, Christians, away with every shade of incredulity. Nothing is too great for this prayer to procure. There is nothing that God can deny to this dying Intercessor. Let the mind be filled to its utmost capacity, with all that is vast and affecting in the sacrifice which Jesus Christ was about to present to his Father. Consider that "God is love," 1 John iv. 16.

And what could the God who is "love" refuse to the Redeemer of the world, at the moment when he was going to devote himself, with such ardour of affection, for the salvation of mankind? Behold him the Redeemer of a lost world, behold him ready to affix the seal to the great work which God had committed to him: behold him prepared to be "led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep, dumb before her shearers," Isa. liii. 7; behold him prepared to undergo that punishment, the bare idea of which makes nature shudder: behold him prepared to enter into "the deep mire where there is no standing," of which the prophets speak, Ps. lxxxix. 2, and all this out of that love, and all this from that principle of charity which glowed in his compassionate breast.

At that moment of love, at that moment which embraces an eternity—pardon me the expression, my friends, and condemn me not, if in a subject which has nothing human, I am constrained to employ modes of speech which are not in common use among men—at that moment which embraces a whole eternity, when charity was carried as far as it could go, this Redeemer presents himself before the God of love, and asks of him, that in virtue of this sacrifice of love, which he is going to offer up, all the faithful, this people, you, my dearly beloved brethren, you might be crowned with the felicity and with the glory with which he himself was to be crowned; but to which, love would have rendered him insensible, had he not promised himself to communicate them, one day, to men, the objects of his tenderest affection.

O mysteries of redemption, how far you transcend all expression, all thought! Ye angels of light, who live in the bosom of glory, turn aside your eyes from beholding wonders which dazzle the heaven of heavens: bend lowly over the mystical ark, and search it to the bottom. And you, for whom all these wonders are wrought, children of fallen Adam, bow down in gratitude and adoration, and measure, if you can, the dimensions, "the length, the breadth, the height, the depth, of that abyss which passeth knowledge," Eph. iii. 18, 19.

My brethren, there is an air of credulity and superstition in what passes between a dying person, and a minister who is endeavouring to fortify him against the fears of death. The minister has the appearance of an impostor, and the dying person of a visionary. We promise to a man extended on a sick bed, to a man who is in a few days to be shut up in a tomb, and to become a prey to worms, we promise him an eternal abode, and rivers of pleasures: we assure him that he is the favourite of heaven, at the very moment when he is going to become the abhorrence of the earth, at the very moment when corruption and rottenness are hastening to put to flight from his person his most affectionate friends. These pretensions are, however, incontestable. They are founded on the charitable prayers which the Redeemer of men addressed to the God of love, at the time when he himself was perfected in love: "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do," and I am going to seal with my blood that awful ministry which thou hast committed unto me. Grant to my obedience, grant to the prayers and to

the blood of thy expiring Son, that which is most capable of supporting him amidst those fearful objects with which he is surrounded; it is the salvation of that world of believers, who are to embrace my doctrine: "Father, I will that where I am, those whom thou hast given me may be there also with me, that they may behold my glory: and I pray not for them only, but also for those who shall believe in thee through their word."

These prayers, my brethren, are still presented. Jesus Christ is still doing in heaven, what, in the days of his flesh, he did upon earth: he is "even at the right hand of God," where he still "maketh intercession for us," Rom. viii. 34. He is still "able to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them," Heb. vii. 25. But do we avail ourselves of these prayers? But are we seconding this intercession? Alas! I was preparing to set open to you all the treasures of consolation which we see issuing from a dying Saviour's prayers. But I find, in that prayer, one word which stops me short; one word which terrifies me; one word which suggests an inquiry that awakens a thousand solitudes: are we in the class of those for whom Jesus Christ prayed to the Father; or are we of those for whom, he tells us, he prayed not? Does it contain the sentence of our absolution; or that of our eternal condemnation? You have heard this word; but have you seriously weighed its import? Have you listened to it with that composure, and with that application which it demands? The word is this: "I pray not for the world; I pray for those whom thou hast given me," ver. 9. My disciples for whom I pray to thee, "are not of the world, even as I am not of the world," ver. 14.

We frame for ourselves a morality that suits our own fancy. We look upon a worldly spirit as a matter of trivial importance, which it is scarcely worth while to think of correcting. A preacher who should take upon him to condemn this disposition of mind, would pass for a mere declaimer, who abused the liberty given him, of talking alone from the pulpit. A worldly life, wasted in dissipation, in pleasure, at play, at public spectacles, has nothing terrifying in our eyes. But be pleased to learn from Jesus Christ whether or not a worldly spirit be a trivial matter. But learn of Jesus Christ what are the fatal effects of a worldly mind. It is an exclusion from the glorious catalogue of those for whom Jesus Christ intercedes. It destroys the right of pretending to those blessings which the Saviour requests in behalf of his church: "I pray not for the world; I pray for them whom thou hast given me." My disciples, for whom I pray to thee, "are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."

Would you wish to know whether Jesus Christ is an intercessor for you? Would you wish to know whether you are of the number of them who shall, one day, be where Jesus Christ is? See whether you can distinguish yourself by this character, "they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." And what is it not to be of the world?

Not to be of the world, is not to live in deserts and in solitudes: it is not for a man to bury

himself before he is dead, and to pass his life as it were in a tomb. Jesus Christ and his apostles lived in society; but they sanctified society by useful instruction and by a holy example; but they were the light of the world, and if they mingled "in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation," they were "blameless and harmless, and without rebuke;" and shone among them.

Not to be of the world, is not to abandon the reins of government to ruffians. Jesus Christ and his apostles permitted Christians to occupy the most distinguished stations in society; but it was their wish and endeavour, that while they filled such stations, they should guard against the illusions of their own lustre: that they should not imagine themselves exalted to terrestrial greatness merely to display their own vain self-importance, but that they should ever keep in view the necessities of those whose happiness is intrusted to their care.

Not to be of the world, is not to break off all relation with the world, to be always absorbed in meditation, in contemplation, in ecstasies. No, religion is adapted to the various relations of human life; to fathers, to children, to masters, to servants.

But not to be of the world, is never to lose sight, even in the distraction of worldly concerns, of the end which God proposed to himself, when he placed us in the world: it is constantly to recollect that we have a soul to be saved; an account to render; a hell to shun; a heaven to gain: it is habitually to direct, towards these great objects, the edge of our spirit, the vivacity of our passions, the ardour of our desires: it is to be able to say, at the close of life, with Jesus Christ, as far as the infinite distance between the sanctity of this divine Saviour and ours can permit: "Father, I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. I have fought the good fight; I have kept the faith," 2 Tim. iv. 7. We be to the man who, at that fatal period, shall be reduced to the necessity of holding an opposite language, and of saying, "Scarcely have I, as yet, put my hand to the works which thou gavest me to do. Scarcely have I employed an instant of my time in meditating on eternity." We be to the man who shall then have cause to say: and ah! how many such are there, under the name of Christians! I have employed part of my life in cultivating my estate, in swelling my revenue, in "pulling down my barns and building greater," Luke xii. 18. I have devoted another part to the delights of a present life, to refinement in pleasure. A third has been employed in gratifying the most criminal appetites, in vomiting out blasphemy against my Benefactor, in waging war with religion, morals, and common decency; in scandalizing the church of God by my impurities and excess.

Let us not be ingenious in practising illusion upon ourselves. Let us not amuse ourselves with unprofitable speculations respecting the meaning of these words, "I pray not for the world." What bold and rash researches have the schools pursued on the subject of this saying of Christ? What chimerical consequences have not been deduced from it? But from these I must still revert to this grand principle: Are you of the world, or are you not of the world?

"Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? or, Who shall descend into the deep? the word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart," Rom. x. 6—8. "The friendship of the world is enmity with God," James iv. 4. If you are of the world, you are not of the number of those for whom Jesus Christ pleads. If you are not of the world, you are within the decree of his election: he has interceded for you, and you are warranted to expect all the fruits of his intercession.

These reflections will probably excite, in some, many a painful apprehension, amounting to a conviction that you are in the dreadful class of those for whom Christ intercedes not. But if it be high time to renounce this world, by acts of penitence, of mortification, of a sincere return unto God, let us proportion these acts to the degree of criminality which renders them necessary. The love of the world has inspired a taste for voluptuousness: let us deny ourselves by a course of abstinence, during the passion weeks, even from what is necessary to nature. The love of the world has transported us into excesses of worldly joy: let us clothe ourselves in sackcloth and ashes, during the passion weeks, or rather let us present unto God the "sacrifice of a broken and contrite heart," Ps. li. 19. Let us make extraordinary efforts to disarm his wrath, ever kindled against the abominations of the Christian world. Let us say to him a thousand and a thousand times, as we turn our eyes towards the cross of Jesus Christ: "O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces;" Dan. ix. 7. Let us entreat him by those bowels of love which prompted him to restore a fallen world, that he would disunite us from the creature, and unite us to himself.

If we act in this manner, we have every thing to expect from a God whose great leading character is love. He will take pity on this wretched people. He will have compassion on these miserable provinces, in which it seems as if every individual had undertaken the task of shutting his own eyes, in order to precipitate himself, with the greater indifference, into the abyss which is gaping to swallow us up: he will repress those sea-piracies which have reduced so many families, and impaired the general commerce: he will remove those dreadful plagues which have ruined so many respectable communities as well as individuals: he will stop those fearful inundations which have already committed such devastation in the midst of us, and which still occasion so many well-grounded alarms: he will reconcile the hearts of the potentates of Europe, and engage them to use their united efforts to promote the happiness and the glory of the Christian world.

Much more, if we are not of the world, we shall partake of delights which the world knows not of, and which it cannot take from us, as it cannot bestow. If we are not of the world, we shall have cause of self-gratulation, with our divine Master, that we are not like those desperate madmen who seem resolutely bent on mutual and self-destruction; and in these sentiments shall thus address ourselves to God: "O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee," ver. 25. If we are not of the world, we shall be animated with

a holy intrepidity, when death takes us out of the world, nay, when the world and its foundations crumble into dust beneath our feet.

We shall be filled with joy unspeakable when we reflect, that we are leaving a world of which we were not, to go to that of which we are citizens. We shall say, amidst the tears and lamentations of a last adieu: "It is true, my dear children, it is true my dear friends, I leave you upon the earth: but my Jesus is in heaven, and I go to be where he is: "having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better," Phil. i. 23; it is true, I tear myself from you, and it is like tearing me from myself; but this mournful, is not an everlasting separation. Jesus Christ has prayed equally for you and for me. He has asked for me and for you, that we should all be "where he is, that we may all be one in him and with the Father;" and I only go before you a few instants into this state of blessedness.

Ah! God grant, that after having preached the gospel to you, we may be enabled to say, with Jesus Christ, at our dying hour; "Father, those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost!" ver. 12. God grant that there may be no "son of perdition" in this assembly! May God vouchsafe to hearken to the prayer which we present in your behalf, in this place, and which we shall present to him on a dying bed: or rather may God vouchsafe to hear the prayer which Jesus Christ presents for us: "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory!" Amen. To the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON LXXIII.

THE CRUCIFIXION.

PART I.

MATTHEW xxvii. 45—53.

Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias. And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink. The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him. Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom: and the earth did quake; and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of saints which slept, arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.

WE are going to set before you this day, my Christian friends, the concluding scene of the most dreadful spectacle that ever the sun beheld. On beholding the order, the preparations, and the approaching completion of the

sacrifice of Isaac, the soul is thrown into astonishment. A father binding his own son with cords, extending him upon a funeral pile, raising up an armed right hand to pierce his bosom; and all this by the command of Heaven! What a prodigy! At such a sight reason murmurs, faith is staggered, and Providence seems to labour under an indelible imputation. But a seasonable and happy interposition dissipates all this darkness. An angel descends from heaven, a voice pierces the yielding air: "Abraham, Abraham, lay not thy hand upon the lad: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me," Gen. xxii. 12. And this revolution silences the murmurings of reason, re-establishes our faith, and vindicates the ways of Providence.

A greater than Isaac, my brethren, a greater than Abraham is here. This sacrifice must be completed; this victim must die; this burnt-offering must be reduced to ashes. In the preceding chapter you have seen the command given, the scaffold erected, the arm extended to smite the devoted Jesus. You are going to behold him expire; no victim substituted in his room; no revocation of the decree; and instead of inquiring like Isaac, "Behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?" ver. 7, he says, "Lo, I come; . . . to do thy will, O my God," Ps. xl. 7, 8. Jesus expires: the dead leave their tombs: the sun withdraws his light: nature is convulsed at the sight of her Creator dying upon a cross. And the Son of God's love, before he utters his last sigh, gives a free course to his complaints, and makes an astonished world re-echo those mournful sounds: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" ver. 46.

And you, Christians, what are you to become at beholding this spectacle; and what effects are these objects to produce, that shall be in any proportion to their magnitude? With whatever success our happiest addresses to you may be crowned, your actions must ever fall far short of your obligations and engagements. It is possible, however, that on certain points, we may have commendation only to bestow. When restitution is the theme, some one perhaps conscience-struck, some Zaccheus is induced to restore four fold. When the doctrine of forgiveness and reconciliation is preached, some one, smitten to the heart, is, it may be, disposed to open his arms to an estranged brother. But what fruit can this discourse produce, capable of, I do not say, fulfilling your obligations, but that shall bear any manner of proportion to them? Were your hearts, henceforward, to burn with the purest and most ardent affection; were your eyes to become a living fountain of tears: were every particle of your frame to serve as a several victim to penitence; were this vaulted roof to cleave asunder; were the dead, deposited in these tombs, to start up into life: what would there be in all this that is not absorbed by the objects which we are going to display?

Come and clothe yourselves in mourning with the rest of nature. Come, with the centurion, and recognise your Redeemer and your God; and let the sentiments which severally occupy all these hearts and minds unite in this

one: "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. Amen.

That you may derive from the words which we have read, the fruit which the Holy Spirit presents to us in them, we shall, 1. Attempt some elucidation of the letter of the text: and then, 2. Endeavour to penetrate into the spirit of it, and dive to the bottom of the mysteries which it contains.

I. We begin with attempting some elucidation of the letter of the text.

1. Our first remark turns on the time which the evangelist assigns to the first events which he is here relating: "from the sixth hour," says he, "there was darkness unto the ninth hour: and about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice," and so on. Respecting which, it is to be observed, that the Jews computed the hours of the day from sun-rising. The first from sun-rising was called *one hour*, the second *two*, and so of the rest: "from the sixth hour to the ninth hour;" in other words, from noon till three of the clock afternoon.

But what merits a more particular attention is this, that the evangelists appear here to vary in their testimony; at least St. Mark tells us, chap. xv. 25, that part of the events which the other evangelists say took place about the *ninth* hour, happened at the *third* hour. A single remark will resolve this difficulty. The Jews employed another method in computing time, besides that which we have indicated. They divided the day into four intervals. The first comprehended the space from the first to the third hour of the day inclusively: the second from the end of the third hour of the day to the sixth: and so of the rest. This mode of computation, if certain doctors are to be credited, took its rise from the custom which was observed in the temple, of presenting prayers and sacrifices at the third, the sixth, and the ninth hour. Now the Jews sometimes denominated the whole of this first interval, which contained three hours of the day, one hour, or the *first* hour. The second interval they denominated two, or the *second* hour, which contained the second three hours, and so of the rest. This remark solves the apparent difficulty which we pointed out. Some of the evangelists have followed the first mode of computation, and others have adopted the second. The *ninth* hour in the style of St. Matthew, and the *third* hour in the style of St. Mark, denote one and the same season of the day; because the one computes the hours elapsed from sun-rising, and the other that third interval of three hours which commenced precisely at the ninth hour.

2. Our second remark will lead us into an examination of certain questions started, relative to the prodigies recorded by our evangelists. It is said,

1. That "there was darkness over all the land." It appears from astronomical calculation, and from the very nature of solar eclipses, which are occasioned by the interposition of the body of the moon between us and the orb of day, which can take place only at the change, whereas it was then at the full, being

the fourteenth day of the month of March; it appears. I say, from these considerations, that this darkness was not an eclipse properly so called, but an obscuration effected by a special interference of Providence, which we are unable clearly to explain.

If we are incapable of assigning the cause, we are equally incapable of determining the extent of this wonderful appearance. The expression in the original, "there was darkness over all the land," or, according to St. Luke's phraseology, "over all the earth," chap. xxiii. 44, which presents at first to the mind an idea of the whole globe, is frequently restricted in Scripture, sometimes to the land of Judea, sometimes to the whole Roman empire; and this ambiguity, joined to the silence of the sacred historians, renders it impossible for us to decide whether the darkness overspread the land of Judea only, or involved all the rest of our hemisphere.

Neither do we deem it of importance to dwell on an examination of the monuments supposed to be found in antiquity respecting the truth of the prodigy of which we have been speaking. Among those which are transmitted to us on this subject, there is one which bears visible marks of forgery. I speak of the testimony of Dionysius, falsely denominated the Areopagite, who affirms that he himself saw, in Egypt, the darkness mentioned by the evangelists, which drew from him this exclamation: "Assuredly either the God of nature is suffering, or the frame of the universe is going to be destroyed."* The learned have so clearly demonstrated that the author of this book is an impostor, who, though he did not live till the fourth century, would nevertheless pass for the Dionysius who was converted to Christianity, by the preaching of St. Paul on *Mars-hill*, Acts xvii. 34, that this author, transfixed with a thousand wounds, is fallen, never to rise again.

Much more dependence is, undoubtedly, to be placed on what is said by Phlegon, surnamed the Trallian, the emperor Adrian's freedman. He had composed a history of the Olympiads, some fragments only of which have reached us: but Eusebius the historian has preserved the following passage from it: "In the fourth year of the two hundred and second Olympiad, there was an eclipse of the sun, much greater than any one which had ever before been observed. The night was so dark at noon-day that the stars were perceptible, and there were such violent earthquakes in Bithynia, that the greatest part of the city of Nicea was swallowed up by it." These are the words of Eusebius: but the inquiries to which they might lead could not be prosecuted in an exercise like the present, and they would encroach on that time which we destine to subjects of much higher importance.

2. The evangelists tell us in the second place, that "the veil of the temple was rent in twain, from the top to the bottom." There were two veils in the temple at Jerusalem; that which was suspended over the door that

* Dionys. Areopag. tom. ii. p. 91. and Annot. Gorder. p. 33. and 102. Edit. Antwerp, 1634.

† Euseb. Pamph. Thesaurus Temporum, p. 158. Edit. Amst. 1658.

separated the holy place from the exterior of the temple, which Josephus calls "a Babylonian hanging," embroidered curiously with gold, purple, scarlet, and fine flax.* There was also a veil over the door which separated the holy place from the Holy of Holies. The expression in the text *the veil*, described in Exod. xxvi. 31, and denoted the veil by way of excellence, makes it presumable that the second is here meant.

3. The evangelist relates that "the graves were opened; and many bodies of saints which slept, arose, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many." This has induced interpreters to institute an inquiry, who those dead persons were? It is pretended by some that they were the ancient prophets; others, with a greater air of probability, maintain that they were persons lately deceased, and well known to those to whom they appeared. But how is it possible to form a fixed opinion, when we are left so entirely in the dark?

4. Our last remark relates to the interpretation affirmed to the Syriac words which Jesus Christ pronounced; "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani," and which St. Mark gives in the Chaldaic form. The evangelist tells us, that some of those who heard Jesus Christ thus express himself, said that "he called for Elias." The persons who entertained this idea, could not be the Roman soldiers, who assisted at the execution. By what means should they have known any thing of Elias? They were not the Jews who inhabited Jerusalem and Judea; how could they have been acquainted with their native language? They must have been, on the one hand, Jews instructed in the traditions of their nation, and who, on the other, did not understand the language spoken at Jerusalem. Now this description applies exactly to those of the Jews who were denominated *Hellenists*, that is to say, Greeks: they were of Jewish extraction, and had scattered themselves over the different regions of Greece.

But whence, it will be said, did they derive the strange idea, that Jesus Christ called for Elias? I answer, that it was not only from the resemblance in sound between the words Eli and Elias, but from another tradition of the Jews. It was founded on those words of the prophet Malachi: "behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet . . . and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers," chap. iv. 6; an oracle which presents no difficulty to the Christian, whom Jesus Christ has instructed to consider it as accomplished in the person of John Baptist. But the Jews understood it in the literal sense: they believed that Elias was still upon mount Carmel, and was one day to reappear. The coming of this prophet is still, next to the appearance of the Messiah, the object of their fondest hope.† It is Elias, as they will have it, who "shall turn the heart of the fathers unto the children: and the heart of the children unto their fathers." It is Elias, who shall prepare the way of the Messiah, who shall be his forerunner, and who shall anoint him with the holy oil. It is Elias, who

shall answer all their inquiries, and resolve all their difficulties. It is Elias, who by his prayers, shall obtain the resurrection of the just. It is Elias, who shall do for the Jews of the dispersion, what Moses did for the Israelites enslaved in Egypt: he shall march at their head, and conduct them into Canaan. These are all expressions of the Rabbins, whose names I suppress, as also the lists of the works from which we extract the passages just now quoted. Here we conclude our proposed commentary on the words, and now proceed:

II. To direct your attention to the great object exhibited in the text, Jesus Christ expiring on the cross. We shall derive from the words read, six ideas of the death of Jesus Christ. 1. The death of Christ is an expiatory sacrifice, in which the victim was charged with the sins of a whole world. 2. It is the body of all the shadows, the truth of all the types, the accomplishment of all the predictions of the ancient dispensation, respecting the Messiah. 3. It is, on the part of the Jewish nation, a crime, which the blackest colours are incapable of depicting, which has kindled the wrath of Heaven, and armed universal nature against them. 4. It presents a system of morality in which every virtue is retraced, and every motive that can animate us to the practice of it, is displayed. 5. It presents a mystery which reason cannot unfold, but whose truth and importance all the difficulties which reason may urge are unable to impair. 6. Finally, it is the triumph of the Redeemer over the tomb.

1. The death of Jesus Christ is an expiatory sacrifice, offered up to divine justice. "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani: My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" This is the only proof which we shall at present produce in support of the doctrine of the atonement. It is, undoubtedly, difficult, to determine with precision, what were, at that moment, the dispositions of the Saviour of the world. In general, we must carefully separate from them every idea of distrust, of murmuring, of despair. We must carefully separate every thing injurious to the immaculate purity from which Jesus Christ never deviated, and to that complete submission, which he constantly expressed, to the will of his heavenly Father. We have here a victim, not dragged reluctantly to the altar, but voluntarily advancing to it; and the same love which carried him thither, supported him during the whole sacrifice. These complainings, therefore, of Jesus Christ, afford us convincing reasons to conclude, that his death was of a nature altogether extraordinary.

Of this you will become perfectly sensible, if you attend to the two following reflections; (1.) That no one ever appeared so deeply overwhelmed, at the thought of death, as Jesus Christ: (2.) That no person ought to have met death with so much constancy as he, if he underwent a mere ordinary death.

(1.) No one ever appeared so deeply overwhelmed, at the thought of death, as Jesus Christ. Recollect in what strong terms the sacred authors represent the awful conflict which he endured in the garden of Gethsemane. They tell us of his mortal sorrow: "my soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death," Matt. xxvi. 38. They speak of his agony:

* Exod. xxvi. 36. Joseph. Wars of the Jews, Book vi. chap. 14.

† See Kimchi and Aben Ezra on Mal. iv. 5.

"being in an agony," says St. Luke, xxii. 44. They speak of his fears: he was heard in that he feared: they speak of his cries and tears: "he offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears," Heb. v. 7. They speak of the prodigious effect which the fear of death produced upon his body: "his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." They even spake of the desire which he felt to draw back: "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me," Matt. xxvi. 39. And in our text, they represent him as reduced to the lowest ebb of resolution: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Is it possible to be more depressed at the thoughts of death?

(2.) But we said, secondly, That no person ought to have met death with so much constancy as Jesus Christ, if he underwent a mere ordinary death. For,

1. Jesus Christ died with perfect submission to the will of his heavenly Father, and with the most fervent love towards the human race. Now, when a man serves a master whom he honours, when he suffers for the sake of persons whom he loves, he suffers with patience and composure.

2. Jesus Christ died with the most complete assurance of the justice of his cause, and of the innocence of his life. When, at the hour of death, conscience is roused as an armed man; when the recollection of a thousand crimes awakes, when a life of unrepented guilt stares the dying sinner in the face, the most obdurate heart is then stretched on the rack. But when, at a dying hour, the eye can look back to a life of innocence, what consolation does not the retrospect inspire? This was the case with Jesus Christ. Who ever carried so far charity, holy fervour, the practice of every virtue? Who ever was more blameless in conduct, more ardent in devotion, more pure in secret retirement?

3. Jesus Christ died, thoroughly persuaded of the immortality of the soul. When a man has passed his life in atheism, and is dying in a state of uncertainty: haunted with the apprehension of falling into a state of annihilation; reduced to exclaim, with Adrian, "O my soul, whither art thou going?" Nature shudders; our attachment to existence inspires horror, at the thought of existing no longer. But when we have a distant knowledge of what man is; when we are under a complete conviction that he consists of two distinct substances, of spirit, and of matter; when we become thoroughly persuaded, that the destruction of the one does not imply the destruction of the other; that if "the dust return to the earth as it was, the spirit shall return unto God who gave it," Eccles. xii. 7; when we know that the soul is the seat of all perception; that the body is merely a medium of intelligence; that the soul, when disengaged from matter, may retain the same ideas, the same sentiments, as when united to the body; that it may be capable of perceiving the sun, the stars, the firmament, death is no longer formidable. This, too, was the case with Jesus Christ. If ever any one enjoyed a persuasion of the immortality of the soul, and of the resurrection, it undoubtedly was this divine Saviour. He it was who had derived all

the stores of knowledge from the bosom of the Father, and who had "brought life and immortality to light," 2 Tim. i. 20.

IV. Finally, Jesus Christ died in the perfect assurance of that felicity which he was going to take possession of. When the dying person beholds hell opening under his feet, and begins to feel the gnawings of "the worm which dieth not, and the torment of the fire that is never to be quenched," Mark ix. 44, it is not astonishing that he should die in terror. But when he can say, as he looks death in the face, "there is the termination of all my woes, and the reward of all my labours; I am going to restore my soul into the hands of my Creator; I behold heaven open to receive it;" what transports of delight must not such a prospect impart! Such, too, was the case with Jesus Christ. If ever any one could have enjoyed a foretaste of the paradise of God; if ever any one could conceive sublime ideas of that glory and blessedness, still it was Jesus Christ. He knew all these things by experience: he knew all the apartments of the kingdom of his Father: from God he had come, and to God he was returning. Nay there must have been something peculiar in his triumph, transcendently superior to that of the faithful in general. Because "he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; God was about highly to exalt him, and to give him a name that is above every name," Phil. ii. 8, 9. A cloud was going to serve him as a triumphal car, and the church triumphant was preparing to receive their King in these rapturous strains: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in," Ps. xxiv. 7.

What, then, shall Jesus Christ do? shall he meet death with joy? shall he say with St. Paul, "I have a desire to depart?" shall he exclaim with the female celebrated in ecclesiastical history: this is the day that crowns are distributed, and I go to receive my share? No, Jesus Christ trembles, he grows pale, his sweat becomes "as great drops of blood," Luke xxii. 44, he cries out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Add to these reflections, the promises of divine assistance, which all the faithful have a right to claim, in the midst of tribulation, and which Jesus Christ must have had a far superior right to plead, had he died a mere ordinary death; but of the consolation flowing from these he seems entirely deprived.

Add, in a particular manner, the example of the martyrs. They met death with unshaken fortitude: they braved the most cruel torments: their firmness struck their very executioners with astonishment. In Jesus Christ we behold nothing similar to this.

Nay, I will go farther, and say, that even the penitent thief discovers more firmness, in his dying moments, than the Saviour himself. He addresses himself to Jesus Christ, he implores his mercy, and, set at rest by the promises given to him, he expires in tranquillity: Jesus Christ, on the contrary, seems equally to despair of relief from heaven and from the earth.

The opposers of the satisfaction of Jesus

Christ will find it absolutely impossible to resolve these difficulties: the doctrine of the satisfaction is the only key that can unlock this mystery. "Innumerable evils have compassed me about," is the prophetic language of the psalmist, "mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up: they are more than the hairs of mine head, therefore my heart faileth me," Ps. xl. 12. "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him:" as Isaiah expresses himself, chap. liii. 5. "God spared not his own Son," Rom. viii. 32, "he hath made him to be sin for us," 2 Cor. v. 21, "being made a curse for us," Gal. iii. 13, to use the language of St. Paul: this is what we undertook to prove; and this is the first idea under which we proposed to represent the dying Saviour of the world.

SERMON LXXIII.

THE CRUCIFIXION.

PART II.

MATTHEW xxvii. 45—53.

Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias. And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink. The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him. Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom: and the earth did quake; and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of saints which slept, arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.

HAVING represented the death of Christ under the idea, 1. Of an expiatory sacrifice, in which the victim was charged with the sins of the whole world; we proceed,

2. To consider it, as the body of all the shadows, the truth of all the types, the accomplishment of all the predictions of the ancient dispensation, respecting the Messiah. In fact, on what state or period of the Old Testament church can we throw our eyes, without discovering images of a dying Jesus, and traces of the sacrifice which he offered up?

If we resort to the origin of all our woes, there also we find the remedy. You will discover that Adam had no sooner by transgression fallen, than God promised him a "seed, whose heel the seed of the serpent should bruise," but who, in the very act of suffering, should "bruise the serpent's head," Gen. iii. 15. You will find this same promise repeated to Abraham; that seed announced anew to the patriarchs, and, taking St. Paul for your

instructor, you will discover that this seed is Jesus Christ, Gal. iii. 16.

If you contemplate the temporal wonders which God was pleased to work in favour of the Jewish nation, you will discover every where in them an adumbration of the spiritual blessings which the death of Jesus Christ was to procure for the church. You will there see the blood of a lamb on the doors of the Israelites. It was the shadow of that "Lamb without blemish and without spot, foreordained before the foundation of the world," 1 Pet. i. 19, 20. You will there behold a rock, which when smitten, emitted a stream sufficient to quench the thirst of a great people. This was a shadow of Jesus Christ. St. Paul tells us that it was Christ himself, who refreshes us with "living water, springing up into everlasting life," 1 Cor. x. 4, and John iv. 14. You will there behold a serpent lifted up, the sight of which healed the deadly wounds of the Israelites. It was a shadow of him who was to be lifted up on the cross.

If you look into the Levitical worship, you will perceive through the whole types of this death, a perpetual sacrifice, the type of him "whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood," Rom. iii. 25. You will there behold victims, the types of him "who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, to purge the conscience from dead works, to serve the living God," Heb. ix. 14; a scape-goat, bearing "on his head all the iniquities of the children of Israel," Lev. xvi. 21. The type of him who "suffered for us without the gate," Heb. xiii. 13.

If you run over the predictions of the prophets, you will find them, as with one mouth, announcing the death of Jesus Christ. Now it is Isaiah who lifts up his voice, saying, "He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows . . . who made his soul an offering for sin . . . who is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth . . . who was oppressed, and was afflicted . . . who was cut off out of the land of the living," chap. liii. 3, &c. Now it is Daniel who holds up the same object: "Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself," chap. ix. 26. Now Zacharias takes up the subject, and under the influence of prophetic inspiration, gives animation to the sword of "the Lord of Hosts: Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man who is my fellow: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered," chap. xiii. 7. Now the prophetic David, minutely describing his sufferings, in such affecting terms as these: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the day time but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent: . . . I am a worm and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people: all they that see me laugh me to scorn; they shoot out the lip, and shake the head," Ps. xxii. 1, 2, 6, 7; and, in another place: "Save me, O God, for the waters are come in unto my soul: I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters,

where the floods overflow me. I am weary of my crying, my throat is dried: mine eyes fail while I wait for my God . . . for thy sake I have borne reproach, shame hath covered my face. . . . Reproach hath broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none; they gave me also gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink," Ps. lxxix. 1, 2, &c.

Such good reason have we to consider the death of Jesus Christ under this second idea: it is in our text. The Saviour appropriates to himself the prediction in the twenty-second psalm: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" and, in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled, he gives occasion to his executioners to present him with vinegar, which preceded his expiring exclamation, "It is finished," as it is related by another of the evangelists.

3. The death of Jesus Christ is, on the part of the Jews, an atrocious crime, which has roused the indignation of Heaven, and armed universal nature against them. But where shall we find colours black enough to depict it? Here the most ardent efforts of the imagination must fall far below the reality, and the most lively images come short of truth.

Supposing we possessed the faculty of collecting, into one point of view, all that was gentle in the address of Jesus Christ, all that was fervent in his piety, humble in his deportment, pure in his conduct: supposing us capable of making an enumeration of all the benefits which he accumulated on the heads of those monsters of ingratitude; the gracious exhortations which he addressed to them; the miracles of goodness which he performed among them, in healing the sick, and raising the dead: supposing we could display to you those malignant calumnies with which they loaded him, those abominable and repeated falsehoods, those cruel and remorseless importunities for permission to put him to death, worthy of the severest execration had they been employed even against the most detestable of mankind; could we represent to you all that was barbarous and inhuman in the punishment of the cross; by telling you that it was a huge stake crossed by another piece of wood, to which they bound the body of the person condemned to terminate his life upon it; that the two arms were stretched out upon that cross beam, and nailed, as well as both the feet, to the tree, so that the body of the sufferer, sinking with its own weight, and suspended by its nerves, was speedily reduced to one vast wound, till the violence and slowness of the torment at length delivered him, and the blood drained off drop by drop, thus exhausted the stream of life: supposing us to have detailed all the ignominious circumstances which accompanied the death of Christ; that crown of thorns, that purple robe, that ridiculous sceptre, that wagging of the head, those insulting defiance to save himself, as he had saved others—supposing, I say, all this could be collected into one point of view, we should still believe that we had conveyed to you ideas much too feeble, of the criminality of the Jews.

Nature convulsed, and the elements con-

founded, shall supply our defects, and serve, this day, as so many preachers. The prodigies which signalized the death of Jesus Christ shall persuade more powerfully than all the figures of rhetoric. That darkness which covers the earth, that veil of the temple rent in twain, that trembling which has seized the solid globe, those rocks cleft asunder, those yawning graves, those reviving dead, they, they are the pathetic orators who reproach the Jews with the atrocity of their guilt, and denounce their impending destruction. The sun shrouds himself in the shades of night, as unable to behold this accursed parricide, and what courtly poets said in adulation, namely, that the orb of day clothed himself in mourning, when Julius Cesar was assassinated in the senate house, was here realized under special direction of divine Providence. The veil of the temple is rent asunder, as on a day of lamentation and wo. The earth trembles, as refusing to support the wretches, whose sacrilegious hands were attacking the life of him who "fastened the foundations thereof," Job xxxviii. 6, and "founded it upon its bases," Ps. civ. 5. The rocks cleave, as if to reprove the Jews for the hardness of their hearts. The dead start from their tombs, as coming to condemn the rage of the living.

4. The death of Jesus Christ is a system of morality, in which every virtue is clearly traced. If the divine justice be an object of fear, where is it more powerfully inculcated than on the cross of Jesus Christ? How very terrible does that justice there appear! It goes in pursuit of its victim into the very heaven of heavens. It extends on the altar a Divine Man. It spares not the Son of God, his own Son. And thou, miserable sinner, who canst present nothing to the eyes of thy judge but what is odious and abominable, how shalt thou be able to escape his vengeance, if violating the laws of the gospel thou renderest thyself so much the more worthy of condemnation, that thou hadst, in that very gospel, the effectual means of deliverance?

If vice is to be held in detestation, where is this lesson so forcibly taught as from the cross of Jesus Christ? Let the man who makes light of sin, who forms to himself agreeable images, and feeds on flattering ideas of it, learn, at the cross of Christ, to contemplate it in its true light: let him form a judgment of the cause from the effects; and let him never think of sin, without thinking at the same time, on the pangs which it cost the Saviour of the world.

If we wish for models to copy, where shall we find models so venerable as on the cross of Christ? Let the proud man go to the cross of Christ; let him there behold the Word in a state of humiliation; let him there contemplate the person who made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and condescended to submit to the punishment of a slave: the person who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: let the proud man look to him, and learn to be humble. Let the voluptuous repair to the cross of Christ; let him there behold the flesh crucified, the senses subdued, pleasure mortified, and learn to bring forth fruits meet

for repentance. Let the implacable repair to the cross of Christ; let him there contemplate Jesus Christ dying for his enemies, praying even for his murderers, and learn to put on bowels of mercies. Let the murderer go to the cross of Christ; let him go and study that complete submission which this divine Saviour yielded to the most rigid commands of his Father, and learn to resign himself in all things to the will of God.

If we are bound to love our lawgiver, where can we learn this lesson better than at the cross of Christ? From that cross we hear him crying aloud to the guilty and the wretched: "Behold, O sinners, behold the tokens of my affection: behold my hands and my feet: behold this pierced side: behold all these wounds with which my body is torn: behold all those stripes of the justice of my Father, which I endure for your salvation." At a spectacle so moving, is there an obduracy so invincible as not to bend? Is there a heart so hard as to refuse to melt? Is there a love so ardent as not to kindle into a brighter flame?

5. The death of Jesus Christ is a mystery inaccessible to reason, but which all the difficulties that reason can muster, are unable to impair.

It is a mystery inaccessible to reason: let it explain to me that wonderful union of greatness and depression, of ignominy, and glory, of an immortal God with a dying man.

Let reason explain to me, how it comes to pass, that though God is unsusceptible of suffering and dying, the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ should, however, derive all their efficacy from his nature as God.

Let reason explain to me, how Jesus Christ could satisfy divine justice, and be, at the same time, if the expression be lawful, the Judge and the party condemned, the Avenger and the party avenged, he who satisfied, and he to whom satisfaction was made.

Let reason explain to me, how Jesus nailed to the cross, is nevertheless worthy of the adoration of men and of angels, so that the Jew who crucifies him, is at once his executioner and his creature.

Let reason explain to me, above all, that mystery of love which we see displayed on the cross of Jesus Christ, and how God, who is so great, and so highly exalted, should have vouchsafed to perform, in behalf of man, a being so low and contemptible, wonders so astonishing. Bend, bend, proud reason, under the weight of these difficulties, and from the extent of these mysteries, learn the narrowness of thy own empire.

"It is the wisdom of God in a mystery, which none of the princes of this world knew," 1 Cor. ii. 7, 8. It is "the great mystery of godliness," 1 Tim. iii. 16. These are "the things of the Spirit of God, which the natural man receiveth not," 1 Cor. ii. 14. This is the "stumbling block of the Jew:" this is "to the Greek foolishness," 1 Cor. i. 23. "These are the things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man," 1 Cor. ii. 9. This is a mystery inaccessible to reason, but it is a mystery, whose truth and importance all the difficulties which reason can muster, are unable to impair.

The gospel tells us not that greatness and depression, that ignominy and glory, that the mortal, and the immortal nature, were confounded in the person of Jesus Christ. It simply informs us that God, in the depths of his infinite wisdom, knew how to unite depression to greatness, glory to ignominy, the mortal to the immortal nature. This is a mystery inaccessible to reason, but against which reason has no title to murmur.

The gospel does not tell us that God, who is unsusceptible of either suffering or death, suffered and died, but that the subject susceptible of suffering united to the impassable, suffered; that the mortal, united to the immortal subject, died; and that, in virtue of this union, his sufferings and death possess an infinite value. This is a mystery inaccessible to reason, but against which reason has no title to repine.

The gospel does not tell us that Jesus Christ considered as nailed to a cross, as suffering, as dying, is worthy of adoration, but, in virtue of his intimate union with Deity, that he is an object of adoration to men and to angels. This is a mystery inaccessible to reason, but against it reason has not a title to reclaim.

The gospel does not tell us that man, a being so mean, vile, grovelling, could have merited this prodigy of love; but that God has derived it from himself, as an independent source, and that he considers it as essential to his glory, to acknowledge no other foundation of his benefits, but the misery of those to whom he is pleased to communicate them.— This is a mystery inaccessible to reason, but against which reason has not a title to reclaim.

6. There remains only one idea more, under which we wish to represent the death of the Saviour of the world. It is the triumph of Jesus Christ over death, and the consolation of the dying believer. Death may be considered in three points of view. (1.) It throws us into the darkness of gloomy night. (2.) It summons us to appear before a tremendous tribunal. (3.) It strips us of our dearest possessions. Jesus Christ expires on the cross, triumphs over death, in these three several respects.

But it would be necessary to possess the art of renewing your attention, in order successfully to undertake the task of pressing these ideas upon your minds, for they are more than sufficient to furnish matter for a complete new discourse.

I must confine myself, at present, to one consideration, founded on the rending of the veil of the temple, mentioned in the text. We have already pointed it out as a token of the vengeance of heaven against the Jewish nation. It may likewise be considered in another point of view, conformably to the decision of St. Paul, and to the ideas of the Jews. That people looked on their temples as a figure of the universe. We have, on this subject, passages expressly to the purpose, in Philo and Josephus. All that was on the outside of the most holy place, represented, to them, nature and the elements. The scarlet colour of the sanctuary represented fire. The hyacinthine represented the air. The seven branches of the candlestick represented the seven planets.

The twelve cakes of show bread represented the signs of the Zodiac, and the twelve months of the year. But they said, that the most holy place had been set apart for God: that the Propitiatory was his throne, that the cherubim were his chariot.*

On this principle, the veil, which separated the holy place from the Holy of Holies, was an image of the obstacles which interposed between the creature and the heavenly habitation, in which God resides. This veil is rent asunder at the death of Jesus Christ; these obstacles are removed; access into the abode of the blessed is open to us: and this is the spirit of the ceremonial observance prescribed in the Levitical worship: "Into the second went the high priest alone, once every year, not without blood," says St. Paul in his epistle to the Hebrews; "The Holy Ghost thus signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: but Christ being come, a high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, by his own blood, entered into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us," Heb. ix. 7, &c.

Death, then, has nothing, henceforward, formidable to the Christian. In the tomb of Jesus Christ are dissipated all the terrors which the tomb of nature presents. In the tomb of nature, O sinner, thou beholdest thy frailty, thy subjection to the bondage of corruption: in the tomb of Jesus Christ thou beholdest thy strength and thy deliverance. In the tomb of nature the punishment of sin stares thee in the face: in the tomb of Jesus Christ thou findest the expiation of it. From the tomb of nature thou hearest the dreadful sentence pronounced against all the posterity of Adam: "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return," Gen. iii. 19: but from the tomb of Jesus Christ issue those accents of consolation: "I am the resurrection, and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live," John xi. 25. In the tomb of nature thou readest this universal, this irrevocable doom written: "It is appointed unto men once to die," Heb. ix. 27; but in the tomb of Jesus Christ, thy tongue is loosed into this triumphant song of praise: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ," 1 Cor. xv. 55, 57.

All that now remains is to conclude with a few reflections by way of recapitulation. My brethren, for some weeks past, there have been traced before your eyes the successive particulars of the passion and death of the Saviour of the world. You have seen him betrayed, apprehended, arraigned, condemned, and expiring under the most shameful, and the most cruel of all punishments.

Do you comprehend all that is sublime in these truths? Do you feel, in all its extent, the value of these benefits? Have you, at least, made the attempt to take the dimensions of the love of God, and "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 you

* Consult Joseph. Antiq. lib. iii. cap. 5, and Phil. de Vita Mosis, lib. iii. p. 667, &c.

may be filled with all the fullness of God?" Eph. iii. 18, 19.

Ah! let us beware, my beloved brethren, that we deceive not ourselves as to this; after so many distinguished tokens of the grace of God, we are going to become the most wretched, or the happiest, of all creatures. Our condition admits not of mediocrity. The two interesting extremes present themselves to view—the extreme of justice, and the extreme of mercy. We are going to prove all that is mild and gentle in the peace of God, or all that is tremendous in his indignation: and that blood which we have seen poured out, must be upon our heads either to attract, or to repel, the thunder.

"His blood be upon us, and on our children," Matt. xxvii. 25. This was the imprecation of those barbarous Jews, who with impurity demanded the death of Jesus Christ, and glutted themselves with his sufferings. But it was, in a far different sense, the interior voice of those believing souls, who entered into the design of God, who, by faith, sprinkled themselves with this blood, which was to form the bond of union between heaven and earth.

"His blood be on us, and on our children." This is the voice which now resounds from ear to ear, and which must be accomplished on this assembly, in one sense or another. Yes, this blood shall be upon you, in vengeance and malediction, as it was upon ungrateful Jerusalem, in your families to trouble their peace, in your plans to defeat them, in your establishments to sap them to the foundation, in your consciences to harrow them up, in your deaths to darken it with horror and despair, and through all the periods of eternity, demanding the expiation of the crime, of having trampled under foot the blood of the Son of God, and of having crucified afresh the Lord of glory. Or it will be upon you, yes, this blood will be upon you, to strengthen you under all your infirmities, to preserve you in the hour of temptation, to console you under the pressure of calamity, to speak peace to the troubled conscience, to support you in dying agony, to render your death blessed, and eternity triumphant.

I dwell for a moment on these last ideas, and under an illusion of charity, I apply them to all those who compose my audience. Happy they, to whom they are applicable of a truth! To have been attentive to the history of the sufferings and death of the Saviour of the world, which, for some time past, has been the great subject of our address, to have traced it through all its successive circumstances, to have felt the necessity, and to have penetrated into the design of the whole; to have applied to ourselves the lessons which it inculcates, the consolations which it supplies, the hope which it inspires; to deduce, from those grand objects, consequences affecting the conduct of life, tending to promote sanctity of manners, superiority to the world, love to God so rich in mercy, desire of possessing that in perfection, of which displays so astonishing, convey ideas so sublime—

After that, to come next Lord's day to the table of Jesus Christ, with the understanding convinced, the heart overflowing, the soul

penetrated: to discern, in the bread and the wine of which we are to partake, the symbols of that death, whose memorial the church is celebrating: to promise unto God, over those august pledges of his love, to render to him love for love, and life for life: to expand the heart in such emotions; to communicate in such a disposition, and to wait for death under such impressions—these are the loftiest objects which man can propose to his meditation. This is the highest point of perfection which we are capable of attaining, in the course of this mortal pilgrimage. This is the purest delight that we can taste in this valley of tears.

I trust, my dearly beloved brethren, that these sublime objects shall not have been presented to you in vain. I trust that so many exhortations will not fall to the ground totally without success. I trust that these first emotions, which it is impossible to withhold from an expiring Saviour, will not be “as the early cloud, and as the morning dew,” Hos. vi. 4; which appear for a moment, and are dissipated in a moment. I trust they will henceforward engage your heart, your mind, your whole life, and that they will accompany you to the bed of death. I trust, that when this awful period comes, instead of that mortal reluctance, instead of those insupportable forebodings which unrepented guilt inspires, the image of Jesus Christ crucified, present to your eyes; what do I say, of Jesus Christ crucified? of Jesus Christ raised from the dead, glorious, sitting at the right hand of his Father; of Jesus Christ, presenting continually before his eyes the value of that blood which he shed for the salvation of the human race; of Jesus Christ extending his arms to receive your departing spirit, that he may bind it up “in the bundle of life:” I trust that this image will dispel all the terrors of death, and thus prepare you to pass from the dispensation of grace, to the dispensation of glory.

In the dispensation of grace, you have beheld the Son of God invested with “the form of a servant;” in the dispensation of glory, you shall behold him arrayed in all splendour and magnificence. In the dispensation of grace, you have beheld the King of kings attended by an humble train of disciples of but mean appearance: in the dispensation of glory, you shall behold him accompanied by the heavenly hosts, legions of angels and archangels, of the cherubim and of the seraphim. In the dispensation of grace, you have beheld Jesus Christ expiring ignominiously upon the cross: in the dispensation of glory, you shall behold him in the clouds of heaven, judging the quick and the dead. In the dispensation of grace, you have heard the lips of your Saviour thus speaking peace to your soul: “Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee:” in the dispensation of glory, you shall hear this decision from his mouth; “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world,” Matt. xxv. 34. May God of his infinite mercy grant it! To him be honour and glory now and for ever. Amen.

SERMON LXXIV.

OBSCURE FAITH;

OR,

THE BLESSEDNESS OF BELIEVING, WITHOUT HAVING SEEN.

JOHN XX. 29.

Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

STRANGE is the condition in which Providence has placed the Christian. He is ever walking in the midst of darkness and obscurity. He is placed between two periods of gloominess; between the cloudy night of the past, and the still darker night of futurity. Does he wish to ascertain the truths which are the object of his faith? They are founded on facts; and in order to be assured of those facts, he must force his way backward, through more than eighteen hundred centuries: he must dig truth and falsehood out of the rubbish of tradition; out of the captious systems of the enemies of Christianity; nay, sometimes out of the pious frauds, on which an indiscreet zeal has attempted to establish it.

If he wishes to ascertain the reality of that blessedness which is the object of his hope, he must plunge himself, in quest of it, into periods which do not as yet subsist. He must “walk by faith and not by sight,” 2 Cor. v. 7, he must depart, as Abraham did, and leave “his kindred and his father’s house, without knowing, precisely, whither he goes,” Heb. xi. 8. It is necessary that his persuasion, if I may so express myself, should form a new creation of things, which have no real existence as to him; or, to use the expression of St. Paul, his “faith” must be “the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen,” Heb. xi. 1. Now, it is to such obscurity, it is to such darkness, that a man is called to sacrifice all that the human mind is taught to consider as the greatest reality and certainty, I mean the decisions of reason, and the felicities of a present world. What a situation! What a strange situation!

But be it as it may, we, this day, place ourselves, my brethren, between these two dark clouds; between the night of the past, and the night of futurity. In what are the duties of this day to terminate? What is the language suitable to the day which is now passing? *I believe: I hope. I believe that the Word was made flesh, that he suffered, that he died, that he rose again: this is the night of the past. I hope that, in virtue of this incarnation, of these sufferings, of this resurrection, “an entrance shall be ministered unto me abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,” 2 Pet. i. 11, and that I shall partake in the felicity of the ever blessed God: this is the night of futurity. I believe, and to*

that belief I immolate all the ideas of my intellect, all the systems of my reason. *I hope*, and to those hopes I immolate all the attractions of sensual appetite, all the charms of the visible creation: and were "all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them," Matt. iv. 8, to be put in my offer, on the condition that I should renounce my hopes, I would consider the former "but dung," Phil. iii. 8, and cleave to the latter as the only real and solid good.

Who is there among you, my brethren, who feels himself capable of this effort of mind! I acknowledge him to be a true disciple of Jesus Christ. He may rest assured that he shall be received as a worthy partaker at that mysterious table, which sovereign wisdom is once more, this day, furnishing before our eyes. But he may likewise rest assured, that his felicity, veiled, invisible as it is, shall remain more firm and unshaken, than all those things which are the idols of the children of this world. To meditation on this interesting subject I devote the present discourse, to which you cannot apply an attention too profound.

The occasion of the words of our text it would be unnecessary to indicate. Which of my hearers can be such a novice in the gospel history as to be ignorant of it? Thomas was not present with the other apostles, when Jesus Christ appeared unto them, after he had left the tomb. His absence produced incredulity. He refuses to yield to the united testimony of the whole apostolic college. He solemnly protests that there is but one way to convince him of the certainty of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, namely, to produce him alive. "No," says he, "except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe," John xx. 25. Jesus Christ is pleased to adapt his condescension to the weakness of this disciple, and to gratify a pretension so arrogant and rash: he appears to Thomas, and says to him: "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing," ver. 27. Thomas is drawn different ways; by the shame of having disbelieved, and the joy which he felt in being convinced by the testimony of his own senses, and exclaims, "My Lord and my God!" upon this Jesus Christ addresses him in the words of the text: "Thomas, because thou hast seen me thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

You perceive from the occasion on which the words were spoken, that they point, in the first instance, to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We shall take care, accordingly, not to lose sight of this object. Nevertheless, as the proposition of our blessed Lord is general, we shall take it in all its generality: and shall discourse to you of that obscure faith which reverts to periods long since passed, and looks forward into periods hidden in a remote futurity. The *nature* of obscure faith; the *excellency* of obscure faith: this is the simple division of my present discourse. Or, to convey a still clearer idea of my design, under the first head, I shall endeavour to unfold the ambiguity of that expression; "to believe without having seen:" in the second, I shall evince the

truth of this proposition; "blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

I. Let us, in the first place, endeavour to explain the *nature* of obscure faith: or, as we have announced the subject of this first branch of our discourse, let us attempt to unfold the ambiguity of the expression, "Thomas, because thou hast seen, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." By obscure faith we here mean, that which is founded, not on what a man has seen with his own eyes, not on what he has discovered to be true by the powers of his own reason, but on testimony worthy of credit.

Let this definition be carefully remarked: and let this be constantly kept in sight, that though the faith of which we are speaking, has not a certainty resting on the evidence of the senses, or on the conclusions of right reason, it has a certainty perfect in its kind, that which rests on a testimony worthy of credit. Take care, therefore, not to confound an obscure faith with a fluctuating, unsettled, ill-founded faith. They are two things perfectly distinct, and it is impossible to distinguish them too carefully. The obscurity of which we are going to treat, is by no means incompatible with evidence.

In order to comprehend it fully, it is necessary to distinguish two species of evidence: evidence of the object, and evidence of testimony. We call *evidence of the object*, that which rests, as I have said, either on the deposition of the senses, or on the discernment of sound reason. I believe that you are now assembled within the walls of this church: I believe it, because I see it is so. The evidence which I have on this subject, is that species of evidence which I have denominated *evidence of the object*, and which is founded on the deposition of the senses. In like manner, I believe that so long as you remain within these walls, you are not in your own habitations. The evidence which I have to support this belief, is still that which I have denominated *evidence of the object*, namely, that which is founded on the light of my own reason, whereby I am assured, in a manner which leaves me not the liberty of so much as doubting, that so long as you remain within this temple, you cannot possibly be in any other place.

But if there be *evidence of object*, there is likewise *evidence of testimony*. I believe there is a vast region on the globe, called the kingdom of Persia. I have evidence to support this belief: not the *evidence of object*, but the *evidence of testimony*. I believe that there is such a kingdom, though I have not seen it with my own eyes: but there is such a cloud of witnesses, of undoubted credit, who assure me of it, that the evidence of testimony supplies the evidence of object. In like manner, I believe that a vessel of such or such a construction, and of so many tons burden, requires such a depth of water. I believe this, not because my reason has by its own powers made the discovery, for I never made mechanism of this kind my study; but the unanimous deposition of all who understand the art of ship-building, gives me full assurance of the fact, fills the place of my own intimate perception, and the evidence of testimony supplies the evidence of object.

Having thus explained our meaning, when we say that faith is obscure, when we say that the Christian believes what he sees not, we do not by this understand that he believes in what is destitute of proof, we only mean that he believes the truth of facts, of which he has not been an eye-witness, that he believes in truths which he could not have discovered by his own reason, and that he hopes for a felicity of which he has not a distinct idea: but he believes those facts, on the unanimous testimony of a great number of witnesses, who could not possibly have acted in concert to deceive him: he believes those truths on an infallible testimony: he hopes on that same testimony, namely, on the word of God himself. In all these things, the evidence of testimony supplies the evidence of object.

That it is of this kind of faith, we are to understand these words in our text, "Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed," the occasion on which they were pronounced permits us not to doubt. Of what was Jesus Christ speaking to Thomas? Of his own resurrection. Who are the persons he had in view, whom Providence was afterward to call to believe, without having seen? Those who could not possibly be the eye-witnesses of that resurrection. But were the persons, who should be called to believe the doctrine of the resurrection, to believe it without satisfying reasons of its truth and certainty? By no means. Call to your recollection, a part of what we submitted to your consideration, on this subject, upon another occasion.* We have in confirmation of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 1. Presumptions. 2. Proofs. 3. Demonstrations.

I. The circumstances of the death of the Saviour, and of his burial, furnish us with *presumptions* on this subject. Jesus Christ died: his body was deposited in the tomb; but a few days afterward it was not to be found there. We thence presume that Jesus Christ is risen again. If Jesus Christ be not risen, his body must have been conveyed away: but how is it possible to maintain such an assertion? To whom shall we impute such conveyance? Not surely to his enemies. Could they be suspected of a design to contribute to his glory, by giving currency to the report of his resurrection? It can as little be imputed to his disciples. They had no inclination to do so: for how could men so notoriously timid, have formed an enterprise so daring and dangerous, and that in favour of a man (I go on the supposition that Jesus Christ did not rise again,) who had thus abused their credulity? But had their inclination been ever so strong, was it in their power either to surprise or to discomfit a guard forewarned of the design? These I call *presumptions*.

II. The testimony of the apostles furnishes us with *proofs* of the resurrection. This testimony possesses no less than eight distinct characters, which raise it beyond the reach of all suspicion: 1. The nature of the witnesses, who had neither the credit, nor the riches, nor the eloquence necessary to practise an impos-

ture on mankind: 2. The number of those witnesses, amounting to more than five hundred: 3. The nature of the facts which are the subject of their evidence, things in which it was impossible they should deceive themselves, things which they had seen, heard, and perceived in the most sensible and palpable manner: 4. The uniformity of their testimony, which in no one instance ever contradicted itself: 5. The judges before whom their evidence was given; judges expert in the art of involving cheats in self-contradiction, but who never could detect any, in the witnesses of whom we are speaking: 6. The place where their testimony was published; for had the apostles gone and published the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, in regions remote from that where the fact could be completely sifted, they might have fallen under suspicion; but they attest it to the face of the whole city of Jerusalem itself: 7. The time when this testimony was published, respecting which the same reasoning applies which does to the circumstance of place: 8. The motives by which those witnesses were actuated, and which could be no other but the satisfying of their own consciences, as, so far from having a temporal interest to promote, by the publication of this event, every temporal interest pressed in the opposite direction.

But we have, likewise, of this truth, demonstrations properly so called. With these we are furnished in the miraculous gifts communicated to those who attest it; of which we cannot entertain any doubt, without taxing with extravagance three sorts of persons equally clear of all ground of suspicion on such an occasion: 1. The apostles, who gave the history of those miracles, and relate in a manner the best adapted to expose imposture, on the supposition of their having been impostors: 2. Their enemies, who in their writings against them, have not denied that they wrought miracles, but that these miracles were a proof of the truth of their doctrine: 3. Finally, their proselytes, who had the greatest imaginable interest in examining whether it were true that the apostles wrought miracles, who had all possible opportunities of ascertaining the fact, and who sacrificed their property, their reputation, their life, for a religion entirely resting on this truth—The apostles work miracles. These we call so many demonstrations.

This recapitulation sufficiently instructs us, that we are not called upon to believe an event so very extraordinary, as if it were destitute of proof: on the contrary, we believe it on proofs clear, cogent, and decisive. When, therefore, Jesus Christ says, "Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed," he means not to say, that it is blessed to believe things destitute of evidence: he speaks only of things which have not the evidence of object, but which have that of testimony.

Let us pursue this thought a little farther. The idea which we have suggested of obscure faith, distinguishes it from three kinds of conviction, which are but too frequently confounded with it: the faith extorted by tyranny; the faith generated in the brain of the enthusiast; and the faith of the superstitious.

1. The faith of which we speak, must be

* The reader is referred to the sermon on *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, of Mr. Robinson's Selection.

carefully distinguished from the faith which is extorted by tyranny. We do not here understand that which violence would attempt to produce by the terror of punishment. Never did racks, gibbets, and stakes, produce in the soul, any thing like conviction in favour of a religion which pretended to establish itself by arguments so odious and detestable. But there is a tyranny of a different kind, which has produced believers not a few. By dint of attesting fictions, men have forced them into credit: by dint of insolent pretensions to infallibility, the simple have sometimes been prevailed upon to admit it: and the simple generally constitute the bulk of mankind.

We denominate that the *faith extorted by tyranny*, which is yielded to the insolent decisions of a doctor, who gives himself out as infallible, without proving it; or to fabulous legends, unsupported by any respectable testimony. How, under the pretext that I am bound to believe facts, which I may never have seen with my own eyes, am I laid under an obligation to swallow every thing that a legendary is pleased to tell me? How, under the pretext that I am bound to believe truths which are above the reach of my reason, am I laid under an obligation to believe every thing proposed to me by a man, who may be practising upon my credulity? And upon my refusing to believe on such a foundation, shall I be taxed with being incredulous like Thomas, and with saying as he did, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe!"

If you would have me believe the facts which you propose, produce me the proofs which support them, if not as complete as those which assure me of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, at least, such as are somewhat of a similar nature; and if you wish I should consider you as infallible, like the apostles, produce me proofs of your infallibility, equivalent to those which the apostles produced of theirs. But if on examining such pretended facts, I discover that they are fictions merely; if on examining the foundation upon which your infallibility rests, I find that the men who gave themselves out for infallible, while they lay claim to the infallibility of the apostles, are undermining the doctrine of the apostles, I shall not reckon myself obliged to pay the slightest deference to their decisions. The faith which these decisions attempt to produce, will be faith extorted by tyranny, and which will have no relation whatever to that faith which Jesus Christ expects from his disciples, and which is, in truth, obscure, but nevertheless, well founded; which is destitute indeed, of the evidence of object, but which is ever accompanied with the evidence of testimony.

2. In the second place, the faith, of which we are treating, must be distinguished from that of the enthusiast; I mean that of certain Christians, who found the reasons which induce them to believe, entirely on such and such impulses, which they pretend to be the operation of the Spirit of God: impulses destitute of illumination, and which determine the person thus agitated, to yield his assent to a proposition unsupported by proof, or, at most,

recommended by an air of probability. One of the marks which distinguish false zeal from true, is, that this last, I mean true zeal, sacrifices its own glory to that of religion, and is infinitely better pleased to acknowledge its own error, than to spread the slightest cloud over that pure and genial light in which religion is arrayed. A man, on the contrary, who is actuated by a false zeal, sacrifices without hesitation, the glory of religion to his own: and maintains, at the expense of truth itself, the errors which he has advanced.

This has been found to be the case with certain eminent names, on the subject of our present discussion. The vehemence of the controversies which have been carried on, respecting the operation of the Holy Spirit on the souls of believers, has frequently carried some of the disputants farther than they themselves intended. In the heat of argumentation they have asserted, that the action of the Holy Spirit, which operates in the faithful, is carried so far as to give them a degree of faith, superior to the reasons which they have for believing. When pressed by their adversaries, they ought to have acknowledged this to be one of the propositions which one is tempted to advance in the warmth of dispute, and which candour, without hesitation, is disposed to retract, after the heat is subsided. But this was a sacrifice too great for self-love to make: it is deemed better that religion should suffer from the intemperate zeal of the sophist, than that the sophist should correct his hasty position, by the illumination of religion.

Thus, in order to support one absurdity, a still greater absurdity has been advanced. It has been maintained, not only that the following proposition is true, namely, The impulse of the Holy Spirit gives us a faith superior to the reasons which we have for believing; but this is absolutely necessary; for, it has been alleged, that the Christian religion being destitute of proofs which enforce assent, all those who should refuse to believe what is destitute of this kind of proof, must, in so doing, refuse to believe the Christian religion.

God forbid that we should attempt to defend with weapons so poisoned, the truths of religion! It was not thus that they were defended by Jesus Christ and his apostles. They called on men to believe, but they at the same time, adduced proof of what they wished to be received as the object of faith. The Spirit of God undoubtedly, operates on the soul of every one who implores his assistance, but it is by making them feel the force of the proofs, not by convincing them of what it is impossible to prove. And who could be condemned for not having believed, were Christianity destitute of sufficient proof? would not the infidel be warranted in alleging: "I am not to blame, if I withhold my assent to such a proposition: I do not feel that impulse which engages one to believe what cannot be proved?" But the notion which we have given of faith, confounds every one who refuses to believe. We say, with Jesus Christ of the unbelievers of his time: "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil," John iii. 19.

3. Finally, the notion which we have given of faith, distinguishes it from that of the superstitious. To believe, in the view of doing honour to religion, a doctrine weakly proved, whatever may be the origin of that doctrine, is to have a *superstitious faith*. Under this description may be ranked what has been denominated "faith extorted by tyranny, and faith generated in the brain of the enthusiast." But we have, under this particular, a different kind of superstition in view. To believe a truth completely proved, but without having examined the proofs which support it, is to have the faith of superstition. A truth of which I perceive not the proofs, is no truth with respect to me. What renders my disposition of soul acceptable in the sight of God, when I receive what he is pleased to reveal to me, is my reception of it as an intelligent being, after having weighed the motives which induced me to give it welcome; after having discovered, on putting them in the balance with the opposite motives, that the first had greatly the preponderancy over the others. But to believe a truth with precipitation, to believe it without knowledge, is mere superstition. If it should determine you to declare yourself on the side of truth, it must be entirely by chance, and, which may, to-morrow, plunge you into error, as it induces you, to-day, to embrace the truth.

Obscure faith, then, is not a persuasion unsupported by proof, it is, in truth, destitute of the proofs which constitute the evidence of object; but not of those which constitute the evidence of testimony, as was from the beginning affirmed, and which it was necessary oftener than once to repeat.

SERMON LXXIV.

OBSCURE FAITH;

OR,

THE BLESSEDNESS OF BELIEVING, WITHOUT HAVING SEEN.

PART II.

JOHN XX. 29.

Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

WE have endeavoured to explain the nature of obscure faith: and now proceed, as was proposed,

II. To point out the *excellency* of this obscure faith. After having attempted to unfold the ambiguity of the expression in my text, "to believe without having seen," we must endeavour to evince the truth of it, by demonstrating this proposition, announced by our blessed Lord, "Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed."

These words admit of a very simple, and very natural commentary, which we shall first produce, in order to explain them. The point in question is the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: Thomas is to be convinced of the certainty of it, by nothing short of the testimony of his own eyes: this mode of producing conviction,

was going, henceforward, to cease. Jesus Christ was shortly to leave the world: a cloud was soon to receive him out of the sight of the inhabitants of this earth: "The heavens must now receive him, until the times of the restitution of all things," Acts iii. 21. The angels had declared to the apostles, as they stood rapt in astonishment at beholding their beloved Master disappear: "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come, in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven," Acts i. 11. The disposition of Thomas's mind, therefore, was going henceforth, to become universally fatal. Every one who should say with him, "except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe," must die and perish in unbelief. There was to be, henceforward, no other way but this, of believing without having seen, no other means of arriving at a participation in the felicity of believers: "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

This commentary contains much good sense. It does not, however, seem to me to have exhausted the whole meaning of Jesus Christ. God is supremely good: nothing appeared to him too dear for the salvation of the human race: he has made choice of means the best adapted to the execution of this great work. If he has made choice of means the best adapted to the salvation of the human race, he has likewise made choice of the properest method of enabling us to avail ourselves of the appointed means, and that method is obscure faith. Why so? This is the point which we must attempt to elucidate: and some time ago, you will please to recollect, we undertook this task. For when that difficulty was urged against us, which unbelievers make the subject of their triumph, "Wherefore did not Jesus Christ show himself alive after his passion, to his judges, to his executioners?" We made this reply, that the gift of working miracles bestowed on the apostles, and on the first Christians, constituted a proof more irresistible of his resurrection, than if he had shown himself then, nay, than if he were still to show himself risen at this day.

It might be retorted upon us, "That these two proofs, that of miracles performed by his disciples, and that of his personal manifestation, were not incompatible with each other: Jesus Christ might first have shown himself alive after his resurrection; here would have been one kind of proof: he might afterward, upon his ascension, have sent the Holy Spirit to his apostles; this would have constituted a second kind of proof. These two kinds of proof united, would have placed the truth of his resurrection far beyond the reach of all suspicion. Wherefore did he not employ them? Wherefore did he not give to a truth of his religion so interesting, and of such capital importance, every species of proof of which it is susceptible?" To this we still reply, that obscure faith was a method far more proper to conduct us to salvation than a clear faith. founded on the testimony of the senses, or on the personal discoveries of the believer him-

self: "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

A principle which we have, on other occasions, laid down, will justify this reply. God has placed us in this world, as in a place of probation and sacrifice. It is his will that the manner in which we correspond to this view of his Providence, should determine our everlasting destiny. Let us try clearly to explain this principle, before we apply it to the subject in hand.

In strictness of speech, God will not proportion the celestial felicity, which he reserves for us, to the exertions which we make to attain it. Did God observe the rules of an exact distribution in this respect, there is not a single person in the world, who durst flatter himself with being a partaker in that felicity: because there is no one, I speak of even the greatest saints, who does all that he ought, and all that he might do, towards the attainment of it. Much more, supposing us to have done all that we could, and all that we ought to do, to be admitted to a participation in this blessedness, our utmost efforts never could bear any proportion to it. We must still say of every thing we undertake in order to salvation, what St. Paul says of the most cruel sufferings of the martyrs: "They are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us," Rom. viii. 18. The most extravagant thought, accordingly, that ever could find its way into the mind of man, is that of the persons who maintain the possibility of meriting heaven by their good works, nay, the possibility of a man's meriting the kingdom of heaven for others, after having earned it for himself.

But though there is not a proportion of rigorous justice, between the heavenly felicity, and the efforts which we make to attain it, there is a proportion of equity and of establishment. Permit me to explain what I mean by these words: God will not save mankind unless they exert themselves to obtain salvation.—Had it been his will to extend indiscriminating favour, he had only to open, without reservation, the path to heaven; he had only to exert the supreme power, which he possesses over our souls, to infuse into them virtue and illumination, and to put us in possession of a felicity already completely acquired, without subjecting us to the necessity of employing indefatigable and unintermitting efforts, in order to our acquiring it. But his views respecting man are altogether different from this. Hence it is that he is pleased to represent the life of a Christian, as a narrow path, in which he must walk; as a race which he must run; as a task which he must perform; as a warfare which he has to accomplish. For this reason it is, that salvation is represented to us, as a victory to be won, as a prize to be gained, as a kingdom which can be *taken* only by the *violent*. God, then, has placed us in this world, as in a place of probation and sacrifice: it is his sovereign good pleasure, that the manner in which we correspond to his gracious views, shall decide our everlasting destination.

Let us apply this principle to the subject under discussion; to that obscure faith, which discerns, in the darkness of the past, those

facts on which the great truths of religion rest, as the building on its foundation; to that obscure faith, which penetrates into the darkness of futurity, there to discover the blessedness which religion proposes to us as the object of hope.

1. Let us apply the principle laid down, to that obscure faith, which discerns, in the darkness of the past, those facts on which the great truths of religion rest. There is more difficulty in attaining a discernment of the truth through the darkness of the past, than in beholding the object with a man's own eyes. It is admitted. Had Jesus Christ appeared alive to his judges and executioners, after his resurrection: were he to appear to us, at this day, as risen from the dead, we should have much less difficulty in believing the certainty of an event on which the whole Christian religion hinges. It is admitted. There would be no occasion, in order to attain the conviction of it, to employ extensive reading, to consult doctors, to surmount the trouble of profound meditation, to suspend pleasure, to interrupt business. It is admitted. But the very thing which constitutes your objection furnishes me with a reply. The trouble which you must take, before you can acquire conviction of the resurrection of the Saviour of the world, the extensive reading that is necessary, the consultation of learned men, those efforts of profound meditation which you must employ, that suspension of your pleasures, that interruption of your worldly business—all, all enter into the plan of your salvation: it is the will of God that you should exert yourselves diligently for the attainment of it.

Let us suppose the case of two Christians: the first shall be St. Thomas; the second a Christian of our own days. Let us suppose both the two equally convinced of the resurrection of the Saviour of the world; but acquiring their conviction in two different ways: Thomas convinced by the testimony of his senses; the modern Christian, by the attentive examination of the proofs which establish the truth of it: Whether of these two Christians, according to your judgment, expresses the greater love of the truth? Whether of these two Christians makes the greatest sacrifice in order to arrive at the knowledge of it? The one has only to open his eyes, the other must enter on a course of deep and serious reflection. The one has only to reach forth his hand, to touch the print of the wounds of Jesus Christ; the other must exert all the powers of his mind, in sifting the proofs, on which the doctrine is established. The one expects that the Saviour should present himself to him, and say, "Be not faithless but believing," John xx. 27. The other goes forth seeking after the Lord Jesus, through the darkness in which he is pleased to involve himself. Is it not evident that this last expresses incomparably greater love for the truth, and offers up to it greater sacrifices than the first? This last, then corresponds better to the idea of probation and sacrifice, to which we are called, during the time which, by the will of God, we are destined to pass in this world. *Blessed* therefore, with respect to the obscurity of the past, "blessed is he who has not seen, and yet has believed."

2. The same principle is applicable to what concerns the night of futurity. It would require but feeble efforts, and would exhibit no mighty sacrifice, for a man to deny himself the delights of a present life, if the joys of the paradise of God were disclosed to his eyes.

But how great is the magnanimity of the Christian, how wonderful the fortitude of the martyr, and, in propriety of speech, all Christians are martyrs, who, resting on the promises of God alone, immolates to the desire of possessing a future and heavenly felicity, all that is dear and valuable to him upon the earth? The present, usually, makes the most powerful impression on the mind of man. An object, in proportion as it becomes exceedingly remote, in some measure loses its reality with respect to us. The impression made upon the mind by sensible things engrosses almost its whole capacity, and leaves little, if any portion, of its attention, for the contemplation of abstract truths. Farther, when abstract meditations dwell on well known objects, they possibly may fix attention, but when they turn on objects of which we have no distinct idea, they are little calculated to arrest and impress.

A Christian, a man actuated by that obscure faith, whose excellency we are endeavouring to unfold, surmounts all these difficulties. I see neither the God who has given me the promises of an eternal felicity: nor that eternal felicity which he has promised me. This God conceals himself from my view. I must go from principle to principle, and from one conclusion to another, in order to attain full assurance that he is. I find still much greater difficulty in acquiring the knowledge of what he is, than in rising up to a persuasion of his existence. The very idea of an infinite Being confounds and overwhelms me. If I have only a very imperfect idea of the God who has promised me eternal felicity, I know still less wherein that felicity consists.

I am told of a "spiritual body," 1 Cor. xv. 44: a body glorious, incorruptible: I am told of unknown faculties; of an unknown state; of an unknown economy: I am told of "new heavens and a new earth;" I am promised the society of certain spirits, with whom I have never enjoyed any kind of intercourse; I am told of a place entirely different from that which I now inhabit: and when I would represent to myself that felicity under ideas of the pleasures of sense, under ideas of worldly magnificence, I am told that this felicity has no resemblance to any of these things. Nevertheless, on the word of this God, of whom I have a knowledge, so very imperfect, but whose existence and perfections are so certain, I am ready to sacrifice every thing, for a felicity of which I have a still more imperfect knowledge than I have of the God who has promised it to me.

There is nothing more delightful to me, than to live in the bosom of my country and kindred: my native air has in it something congenial to my constitution; nevertheless, were God to call me as he did Abraham: were he to say to me in the words which he addressed to that patriarch; "Get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house," Gen. xii. 1. I will, without hesita-

tion, obey: I will depart, without delay, for the land which he shall please to show me.

Nothing can be more delightful to me, than the possession of an only and beloved son: nothing appears to me so dreadful, as separation from a person so dear to me; but, above all, there is nothing which inspires so much horror, as the thought of plunging, with my own hand, the dagger into his bowels. Nevertheless, when it shall please God to say to me, "Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, and offer him for a burnt-offering, upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of," Gen. xxii. 2, I will take that son, that object of my tenderest affection, that centre of my desires, and of my complacency; I will bind him; I will stretch him out upon the pile; I will lift up my arm to pierce his side, persuaded that the favour of God is a blessing, beyond all comparison, more precious than the possession of even that beloved portion of myself.

There is nothing capable of more agreeably flattering my ambition and self love, than to talk with authority; than to govern a whole world with despotic sway: than to rule over the nations, which look up to their sovereigns as to so many divinities; nevertheless, were a competition to be established between a throne, a crown, and the blessedness of the heavenly world, I would "esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." I would "choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season," Heb. xi. 25.

There is nothing to which my nature is more reluctant, than the suffering of violent pain. The idea of the rack, of being burnt at a stake, makes me shudder. I am convulsed all over at sight of a fellow-creature exposed to torture of this kind. What would it be, were I myself called to endure them? Nevertheless, the lofty ideas I have conceived of a felicity which I have not seen, will elevate even me, above the feelings of sense and nature: I will mount a scaffold; I will extend myself upon the pile which is to reduce me to ashes: I will surrender my body to the executioners to be mangled; and amidst all these torments, I will still cry out with triumph, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us," Rom. viii. 18, "for our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," 2 Cor. iv. 17. "Blessed be the Lord, my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight," Ps. cxliv. 1.

I ask, my brethren, does not a man in such circumstances, correspond incomparably better to the idea of probation and sacrifice, than the person who should behold with his own eyes, the eternal recompense of reward which God has prepared for his children? The proposition of our blessed Lord, therefore, is verified with regard to periods still future, as with regard to periods already past. The vocation of the Christian, then, is to pierce through all those clouds, in which God has been pleased to envelop the religion of Jesus Christ: the vocation of the Christian is to pierce through the obscurity of the past, and the obscurity of the

future; it is to make study to supply the want of experience, and hope the want of vision. The felicity of the Christian depends on the manner in which he corresponds to his high vocation: "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." This was the point to be demonstrated.

It highly concerns us, my brethren, to fulfil this twofold engagement, and thus to attain at length, supreme felicity, in the way which it has pleased God to trace for us. Let us,

1. Pierce through the obscurity of the past. Let us learn to make study supply the want of experience. Let us diligently apply ourselves to acquire the knowledge of our religion, by seeking after assurance of the truth of those facts, on which it is established. Of these, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is one of the chief: for "if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain, . . . ye are yet in your sins," 1 Cor. xv. 14. 17. But thanks be to God, this fact, of such capital importance, is supported by proofs which it is impossible for any reasonable man to resist.

But it requires a considerable degree of attention, of serious recollection, to study these with advantage. To this study there must, of necessity, be sacrificed some worldly employment, some party of pleasure: a man must sometimes retire into his closet, and get the better of that languor which deep thought, and close reading naturally produce. But, O how nobly is he rewarded for all his labour, by the copious harvest which it yields! What delight in discovering that God has proportioned the weight of the proofs by which his religion is supported, to the importance of each of its parts! What consolation to see that this truth, "Jesus Christ is risen," this truth which gives us the assurance that God has accepted the sacrifice of his Son, that the work of our salvation is accomplished, that access to the throne of grace is opened to us, that the disorders introduced by sin are repaired! What consolation to see that a truth of such high importance is so completely ascertained, and that so many presumptions, so many proofs, so many demonstrations concur in establishing it!

What satisfaction is it, thus to transport ourselves, in thought, into the apostolic ages, there to contemplate the wonders of redemption! For this is the effect which study produces, of those exquisitely conclusive and irresistible proofs which demonstrate the truth of this great event: it transports us into the apostolic ages; it enables us to behold with the mind's eye what we cannot behold with the eyes of the body. After having thus torn up incredulity by the roots, with what an ecstasy of holy delight may the Christian approach the table of the Lord, with full conviction of soul, and say to him with Thomas: "My Lord and my God." The heart-affecting persuasion I have of what thy love has done for me, elevates, penetrates, overwhelms me. It will render easy to me the most painful proofs which it may please thee to prescribe to my gratitude. "My Lord and my God, my Lord and my God, I regret all the time I have devoted to the world and its pleasures: henceforward I will think of thee, and thee only: I will live to

thee, and thee only. Accept the dedication which I now make. Bear with the weakness in which it is made: approve the sincerity with which I this day come to break off the remaining attachments which fetter me down to the world; and to bind closer those of my communion with thee, the only worthy object of love and desire."

How blessed shall we be, my beloved brethren, in thus penetrating through the obscurity of the past! "Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed."

2. But let us likewise penetrate through the darkness of futurity. Let hope supply to us the want of possession. How shall it, henceforward, be possible for us to entertain suspicion against the faithfulness of God's promises? Behold on that table what God is capable of doing in our behalf. Behold by what miracles of love—O miracles of the love of God, we want language to express thee, as we want ideas to conceive thee! but behold on that table, behold by what miracles of love he has prevailed to make us the rich present of his own Son, to expose him, for our sakes, to all that series of suffering which has been the subject of our meditation during the weeks which commemorate the passion.

Is it possible for us to believe that a God so gracious and so compassionate could have created us to render us for ever miserable? Is it possible to believe that a God so great, and so munificent should limit his bounty towards us, to the good things granted us here below, to that air which we breathe, to the light which illuminates this world, to the aliments which sustain these bodies? Nay, is it possible for us to believe that he should permit us to remain long in this world, exposed to so many public and private calamities; to war, to famine, to mortality, to the pestilence, to sickness, to death? Away with suspicions so injurious to the goodness of our God. "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. Let us indulge ourselves in feasting on the deliciousness of this hope: let us not destroy the relish of it, by wallowing in the pleasures of sense: let us habituate ourselves to pursue happiness in a conviction of the felicity prepared for us in another world.

This hope, it is true, replenished as it is with such unspeakable sweetness, is not without a mixture of bitterness. It is a hard thing to be enabled to form such transporting ideas of a felicity placed still so far beyond our reach. "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick," Prov. xiii. 12. But we shall not be suffered to languish long. "For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry," Heb. x. 37. Yet a few short moments more, and our great deliverer, Death, will come to our relief. Let us not stand aghast at his approach. It is not becoming in Christians, who cannot attain the perfection of happiness till after death, to be still afraid of dying. Let us, on the contrary, anticipate the hour of death, by the exercise of a holy ardour and zeal. Let us look for it with submissive impatience: "Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better," Phil. i. 23, than

any thing we can possibly enjoy in this valley of tears. "He who testifieth these things, saith, surely I come quickly:" let us cry out, in return, "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus," Rev. xxii. 20. Come, Redeemer of my soul: I adore thee amidst the clouds in which thou concealest thyself: but vouchsafe to scatter them. After I have enjoyed the felicity of believing, without having seen, let me likewise have the felicity of seeing and believing. Let me see with my eyes him whom my soul loveth: let me contemplate that sacred side, from whence issue so many streams of life for the wretched posterity of Adam: let me admire that sacred body which is the redemption of a lost world: let me embrace that Jesus who gave himself for me; and let me behold him, never, never to lose sight of him more." God, of his infinite mercy, grant us all this grace. To him be glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON LXXV.

THE BELIEVER EXALTED TOGETHER WITH JESUS CHRIST.

PART I.

EPHESIANS ii. 4—6.

God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved,) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

ON studying the history of the lives of those eminent saints of God, whose memory Scripture has transmitted to us, we can with difficulty refrain from deploring the extreme difference which God has been pleased to make between their privileges and ours. Nay, we are sometimes disposed to flatter ourselves, that if these privileges had been equal, our attainments in virtue might have made a nearer approach to those which have rendered them so respectable in the church. Who would not surmount the difficulties of the most painful career, if he were to enjoy, like Moses, intimate communications with Deity; if his eyes were strengthened to behold that awful majesty which God displayed on mount Sinai? Who could retain the slightest shadow of incredulity, and who would not be animated to carry the gospel of Christ to the uttermost boundaries of the globe, had he, like Thomas, seen the Lord Jesus after his resurrection; had Jesus Christ said to him, as he said to that apostle: "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands: and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless but believing." John xx. 27. Who could remain still swallowed up of the world, had he seen, with the three disciples, Jesus Christ transfixed on the holy mount; or had he been, with St. Paul, "caught up into the third heaven, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter?" 2 Cor. xii. 2. 4

I have no intention, my brethren, to inquire how far this conception may be illusory, and how far it may be founded in truth: but I

wish you attentively to listen to the declaration made by the apostle, in the words of my text. They stand in connexion with the last verses of the preceding chapter. St. Paul had advanced, not only that God bestows on every believer, the same privileges in substance, which he had vouchsafed to saints of the first order, but that he actually works in them the same wonders which he operated in Jesus Christ when he restored to him that life which he had laid down for the salvation of mankind, and when, amidst the acclamations of the church triumphant, he received him into paradise.

In the text, our apostle expresses in detail, what he had before proposed in more general terms. He says, that as Jesus Christ, when dead, was restored to life, and raised from the tomb; in like manner we, who "were dead in trespasses and sins," have been "quickened," and "raised up," together with him: and that as Jesus Christ, when raised up from the dead, was received into heaven, and "seated on his Father's right hand," in like manner we, after our spiritual resurrection, are admitted to a participation of the same glory. Let us view these two texts in their connexion, in order to comprehend the full extent of the apostle's idea: God, as we read in the conclusion of the preceding chapter, the "God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, has displayed what is the greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power; which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, . . . and put all things under his feet." And in the words of the text, "God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved,) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," Eph. ii. 4—6.

This proposition, I acknowledge, seems to present something hyperbolical, which it is not easy to reconcile to the strictness of truth: but the difficulties which prevent our comprehending it, do not so much affect the understanding as the heart. It would be much more intelligible, were the love of the creature less predominant in us, and did it less encroach upon the feelings necessary to our perception of a truth, which is almost altogether a truth of feeling. We should accordingly, have been cautious how we ventured to treat such a subject, at our ordinary seasons of devotion; but, on this day, we believe all things possible to your pious affections. We believe that there can be nothing too tender, nothing too highly superior to sense, on a solemnity,* when it is to be presumed, that, with the apostles, you are "looking steadfastly towards heaven," after an ascending Saviour, that you are following him with heart and mind, and saying, "Draw us, Lord, we will run after thee."

Before we enter farther into our subject, there are a few advices which we would beg leave to suggest, which may predispose you more clearly to comprehend it.

1. Learn to distinguish the degrees of that

* Ascension Day.

disposition of mind, which our apostle is describing. He represents the Christian as a man on whose heart divine grace has made impressions so lively, that he is already "quicken'd," already "raised up," already "made to sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." This disposition, in whatever it may consist, (which we shall endeavour presently to explain with greater precision,) this disposition admits of degrees; I mean to say, that it is possible to be a Christian not only in name, and by profession, but a Christian in truth and reality, without having as yet attained it in the most eminent degree. It was necessary to make this observation, by way of prevention of a mental malady, as commonly to be met with in these provinces as any where else.

Certain circumstances peculiar to yourselves, have constrained your preachers frequently to inculcate the doctrine of the efficacy of divine grace, and of the sentiment which it impresses on the heart. This doctrine has sometimes been misunderstood. Some have considered certain rapturous emotions, excited in the souls of a few highly favoured Christians, by the power of the Holy Spirit, as the essential character of Christianity. It has been erroneously supposed, that to be destitute of these was to be abandoned of God. Hence have arisen those gloomy and desponding ideas which weak minds form respecting their own state, especially at those seasons when the Lord's Supper is administered. The books generally read, as a preparation for participating in this solemn service, tell us, that it is at the table of the Lord, in a particular manner, the communicant experiences those communications of the fulness of joy, Ps. xvi. 11, "that joy unspeakable and full of glory," 1 Pet. i. 8, that "peace of God which passeth all understanding," Phil. iv. 7, that "white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it," Rev. ii. 17, that anticipated resurrection, that heaven upon earth.

What has been written on this subject is liable to misconception on the part of the reader, as it may have been expressed with too much precision by the composers of such manuals of devotion. Hence it comes to pass, that real Christians, who, notwithstanding the imperfection which cleaves to their best services, have most sincerely devoted the remainder of life to God, are haunted with the apprehension of having communicated unworthily, because they are not conscious of having felt, at the Lord's table, all those effects of the presence of the Holy Spirit.

To Christians of this description it is, that I address my first advice, that they distinguish the degrees of that disposition of mind of which our apostle speaks in the text. A man may be quickened, may be raised up, may be made to sit together with Christ Jesus in heavenly places, without having all the joy which results from this blessed state. The most infallible mark of our being made partakers in the exaltation of the Lord Jesus, is our striving in good earnest, to fulfil the conditions under which that participation is promised us. Let us fortify ourselves in this disposition of mind, and wait patiently till it shall please God to

smooth the difficulties which we encounter in this work, by the pleasure derived from a consciousness of having surmounted them in part, and by the assurance which we have of at length surmounting them altogether.

2. The second advice which I presume to suggest is this, be on your guard against the love of the marvellous. It is far from being impossible that a man should confound the effects of an imagination heated by its own visionary workings, with those which the Holy Spirit produces in a soul of which he has taken entire possession. A person animated by the spirit of God, can easily distinguish his state from that of an enthusiast: but the enthusiast cannot always distinguish his state from that of one animated by the Spirit of God. In general, the road of discussion is incomparably more sure and direct to reach the conscience, and to form a right judgment of it, than the road of feeling. I know that there are certain feelings superior to discussion. I know that the Holy Spirit sometimes diffuses his influence through the soul, in such abundance, with so much fervour, with so much activity, that it is not possible the persons thus highly favoured should be ignorant that they are the objects of his tenderest and most particular care. But in order to our being warranted to promise ourselves such communications, the practice of piety must have been carried farther, beyond all comparison, than is commonly the case with most of those who flatter themselves that they have been favoured with singular communications of the Spirit. And, once more, the method of discussion is by much the surer, to arrive at a true judgment of the real dispositions of the conscience, than the test of feeling; in which the temperament, or the imagination have frequently a larger share than real illumination.

Weigh in the balance the proofs on which the ideas you have formed of yourselves are founded. Compare your thoughts, your words, your actions, with the august rules and decisions which God has laid down in his holy word. Regulate your hopes and your fears, according to the characters which you may have discovered in yourselves, after you have studied the subject in this manner. So much for the second advice, which I thought it of importance to suggest.

3. Permit me to subjoin a third. Under pretence of guarding against the reveries of the enthusiast, and against the love of the marvellous, presume not to call in question certain extraordinary operations of the Holy Spirit, and neglect not the means of obtaining them. Dispute not with saints of a superior order what they know by experience to be real. Presume not to establish that measure of grace which you may have received, as the standard for determining that which God is pleased to grant to persons more devoted than you are to his service. Form not your judgment from the pleasure which you may at present derive from religion, of that which you may hereafter enjoy, when religion shall have acquired a more powerful influence over your heart. Be not discouraged by the dryness and discomfort which you may now find in the practice of virtue; in time you will experience it to be a pe-

ennial source of delight. This is my third advice.

Having premised these necessary precautions, let us attempt to justify the idea which is here given us of the Christian. Let us place in contrast, the condition in which he was, previous to his being converted to Christianity, and that which he has attained in virtue of his having become a Christian. Before he embraced the religion of Jesus Christ, he was "dead in trespasses and sins." This is a figurative expression, denoting, that sinners are as incapable of themselves, to shake off the dominion of sin, and the misery inseparable from it, as a dead person is to defend himself against corruption, and to restore his own life. But by becoming a Christian, the believer is, through the mercy of God, not only set free from the dominion of sin, but is put in possession of the highest recompense of reward that justice ever bestowed on the most perfect virtue which ever existed, namely, that of Jesus Christ.

If "never man spake like this man," John vii. 46, never man lived and acted like this man. Accordingly, never was there a man exalted to such a height of felicity and glory. Now to this very height of felicity and glory the grace of God exalts the Christian. How? In more ways than we are able to indicate, in the time now left us. I satisfy myself with pointing out three of these. The believer is "quicken'd, he is rais'd up, he is made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

I. By the proofs which assure him of the exaltation of Jesus Christ.

II. By the means supplied to satisfy him that he is fulfilling the conditions under which he may promise himself, that he shall become a partaker of that exaltation.

III. By the foretaste which he now enjoys of it on the earth.

I. By the proofs which assure him of the exaltation of Jesus Christ. It is not necessary here to detail them in their full extent. This has been already done on former occasions.* We have shown you, that, in support of the truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ (and the same reasonings apply, with nearly the same force, to all the particulars of his exaltation,) we have presumptions, proofs, demonstrations. But, as I have just said, it is not necessary here to make a minute recapitulation.

But I would wish to unfold under this head, the true causes which prevent those proofs, irresistible as they are, from producing, on the mind of the greater part of Christians, that lively impression which would justify the hyperbolic language employed by our apostle, that Christians have a conviction as complete of the truth of the exaltation of Jesus Christ, as if they had been "quicken'd," as if they had been "rais'd up," as if they were "made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." The following are the principal causes of this sore evil.

I. The proofs of the exaltation of Jesus Christ, do not produce impressions so lively as they ought, from the abuse of a distinction

between *mathematical evidence*, and *moral evidence*. A scruple in point of precision, has given rise to this distinction. We call that *mathematical evidence*, which is founded on the clear idea of a subject. I have a clear idea of two even numbers. This proposition, from the addition of two even numbers, there results an even number, is founded upon an evidence which arises from the clear idea of that number. That is called *moral evidence*, which is founded on testimony worthy of credit. I have, naturally, no idea of the city of Constantinople. I can decide the question of its existence, only upon testimony of a certain kind. This distinction is undoubtedly a real one. But it is making a strange abuse of it to pretend, that what is founded on the evidence denominated *moral* is not so certain as that which is founded on what is denominated *mathematical evidence*. Two reasons persuade me of this, which I submit to your consideration.

1. It involves no less contradiction, that a complex concurrence of circumstances should unite with respect to a false testimony, than that there should be falsehood in a consequence deduced immediately from the nature of a subject. It involves no less contradiction to affirm, that all the witnesses, who assure me there is a city called Constantinople, have agreed to impose upon me, that it involves a contradiction to allege, that this proposition is illusory, from the addition of two even numbers there results an even number.

2. The second reason is still more forcible. It is taken from the nature of God himself. We have mathematical evidence for this, that God cannot take pleasure in leading men into error. But God would take pleasure in leading men into error, if after having made the truth of their religion to rest on the existence of certain facts, which are susceptible only of proofs of fact, he had bestowed on imaginary facts, the same characters of truth which he has impressed on such as are real. The truth of our religion is founded on these facts: Jesus Christ is risen, and has ascended into heaven: but this exaltation is supported by all the evidence of which facts are susceptible. If the exaltation of Jesus Christ is merely imaginary, God has permitted imaginary facts to assume all the evidence of real facts. God, therefore, betrays him into error. But we have mathematical evidence that it is impossible for God to betray men into error. It is clear, therefore, as I think, that moral evidence, when carried to a certain degree, ought to be ranked in the same class with mathematical evidence. The truth of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, therefore, will not produce the lively impressions which we have mentioned, so long as men abuse, which is the case with certain philosophers, the distinction between moral evidence, and mathematical evidence.

2. The proofs of the exaltation of Jesus Christ produce not impressions so lively as they ought, because the mind is under the influence of a prejudice, unworthy of a real philosopher, namely, that moral evidence changes its nature, according to the nature of the things to which it is applied. What is demonstration of a fact, which is in the sphere of natural things, seems to cease to be such respecting

* Consult the Sermon on *Christ's Resurrection*, of Mr. Robinson's selection.

facts of a supernatural kind. A certain species of proof will be sufficient to demonstrate that Cesar existed: and that same species of proof shall be deemed insufficient to ascertain that Moses existed. What a strange disposition of mind! The truth of a fact, which does not in itself imply a contradiction, depends not on the nature of that fact, but on the proofs by which it is supported.

I am ready to admit, that stronger proof will be expected, in order to produce belief of extraordinary events, than is necessary to establish the truth of what happens every day; to produce belief, for instance, that a great scholar is humble, calls for stronger proof than that he is vain; to produce belief, that a friend is as faithful in adversity as he was in prosperity, than that he is less so. But what is evidence with respect to ordinary facts, is likewise so with respect to such as are extraordinary. What is evidence with respect to natural things, is likewise so with respect to such as are supernatural. Nothing more unreasonable can be conceived than the disposition expressed by the apostle Thomas. All the members of the apostolic college, unanimously assure him that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. They adduce this proof of it, that they had beheld him with their own eyes. No, says he, "except I see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my fingers into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe," John xx. 25. Wherefore does that which would have been evidence to him on another occasion, cease to be so on this? It is because the matter in question is something supernatural. But the question is not, whether the resurrection of Jesus Christ be within the sphere of natural things, but whether it is founded on proofs sufficient to constitute satisfying evidence.

3. The proofs of the exaltation of the Lord Jesus produce not impressions sufficiently lively, because the necessary discrimination has not been employed in the selection of those proofs, on which some have pretended to establish it. This remark has a reference to certain of the learned, who imagined that they were rendering essential service to the church, when they multiplied proofs, with an indiscreet zeal, and produced every thing which they deemed favourable to the Christian religion. Fraud, fair dealing, all, all appeared equal in their eyes, provided it would contribute to this end. Wretched method! Why was it not confined to the propagators of falsehood; and why has it been so frequently adopted by the partisans of truth! I pretend not to determine whether there be much solidity in the idea of some who have alleged, that the reason why Jesus Christ so strictly prohibited the demons to publish that he was the Messiah, was an apprehension that a testimony borne to his mission by lying spirits, might render the truth of it suspected. But I am well assured that if any thing could have excited a suspicion in my mind unfavourable to the exaltation of the Son of God, it would have been that medley of proofs, solid and without foundation, which we find in the writings of certain ancient doctors of the church on this subject. No one will ever attain to a complete conviction of the exaltation

of Jesus Christ, so long as he neglects to discriminate the proofs on which the truth of it rests. The discovery of the slightest falsehood in those which we had believed to be true, will go far towards invalidating the proof of those which we had good reason to believe founded in truth.

4. The proofs of the exaltation of Jesus Christ produce not impressions sufficiently lively, because we are too deeply affected by our inability to resolve certain questions, which the enemies of religion are accustomed to put, on some circumstances relative to that event. The evangelists have recorded all those which are necessary to convince us of the truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Their silence respecting circumstances of another kind, and our inability to satisfy the demands of those who insist upon them, present nothing to excite suspicion against the fidelity of their narration. They do not tell us, for example, what Jesus Christ did immediately after his resurrection, and before his appearing to the devout women, and to the apostles. They do not tell us what he did during the forty days which he passed upon the earth before his ascension. They do not tell us to whom those dead persons appeared, who came into the holy city to attest his resurrection, nor what became of them after their apparition. The Holy Spirit, perhaps, was not pleased to reveal such things to those inspired men. Perhaps they did not think proper to declare them, though they might have had perfect information on the subject. But is there any thing in this, to invalidate the proofs on which the truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is founded? Is there any one ancient history, I say any one without exception, that goes into a certain detail of circumstances? Are we acquainted with all the circumstances of the life of Alexander, or of Darius? Does our ignorance respecting such and such particulars suggest a doubt whether those persons ever existed? Do we know all the circumstances attending the battle of Cannæ, and that of Pharsalia. Does our ignorance of these suggest a doubt whether such battles were actually fought? Is it fair to prescribe to the sacred authors rules which we readily dispense with in the case of profane authors?

5. The proofs of the exaltation of Jesus Christ produce not impressions sufficiently lively, because we suffer ourselves to be intimidated more than we ought, by the comparison instituted between them and certain popular rumours, which have no better support than the caprice of the persons who propagate them. Unbelievers tell us that the multitude is credulous, that it is ever disposed to be practised upon by impostures, from the idea of the marvellous. They accumulate all those noted instances of credulity which ancient and modern history abundantly supply, for it costs very little trouble indeed, to make the collection ample. They avail themselves of those instances to invalidate the argument which we adduce from the unanimity of that testimony which evinces the truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. But let them show us, among what they call "popular rumours," let them show us among these any thing of the same

kind with those which we have produced: and then we shall feel ourselves called upon to defend, in another way, the doctrine in question. But under the pretext that mankind is credulous, obstinately to resist the force of proofs which have been admitted by judges the most rigid and acute, is wilfully to shut the eyes against the truth.

6. Finally, the proofs of the truth of the exaltation of our blessed Lord and Saviour, produce not impressions sufficiently lively, because they are not sufficiently known. The preceding particulars chiefly relate to the learned, and the philosophic part of mankind, of whom the number, undoubtedly, is on comparison very inconsiderable. This relates to the multitude, of which the far greater part of our audiences is composed. I am well aware that those proofs have been carried farther in the present age, than ever had been done, perhaps, since the days of the apostles. I have oftener than once, adored the conduct of divine Providence, in that the objections of unbelievers, of which it may likewise be affirmed, that they have been carried farther in the present age, than they had been since the times of the earliest antagonists of the Christian religion: I have oftener than once, I say, adored the conduct of divine Providence, in that those objections have furnished occasion to scrutinize the proofs of the facts, on which the truth of Christianity rests.

In proportion as events are more remote, the more difficult it becomes to ascertain them. If the spirit of superstition and blind credulity had continued to be the reigning folly of mankind, men would have neglected to study the proofs of the facts of which I have been speaking, and we should have had in later ages, much greater trouble in demonstrating the truth of them. But infidelity is the reigning folly of the age in which we live, and has, as it were, succeeded the spirit of superstition and blind credulity, the reigning folly of ages past. Now Providence has so ordered the course of things, that this very infidelity should prove the occasion of placing, in their clearest point of light, those illustrious proofs which we have of the facts, whereon the Christian religion is founded. But though they have been stated with so much clearness and precision, it is undoubtedly certain that they are not hitherto sufficiently known by the generality of professing Christians.

Would you be thoroughly convinced of the exaltation of the Saviour of mankind, devote to the study, which I am recommending, a part, I do not say only of that time which you so liberally bestow on the world and its pleasures, but a part of even that which you have thrown away upon useless controversies, on the speculative questions, and the bold researches, with which most books, on the subject of religion, are filled. Let the mind be, deeply impressed with that series of presumptions, of arguments, of demonstrations, of which the resurrection, and the other particulars of the exaltation of the Son of God are susceptible. Do all diligence to discern the whole evidence of those facts, without which, to use the apostle's expression, "your faith is vain, and our preaching also is vain," 1 Cor. xv. 14. Then

you will perceive, that the truth of the exaltation of the Saviour is founded upon proofs, which it is impossible for any reasonable man to resist. You will be, in some measure, as much convinced that he is raised up from the dead, and ascended into heaven, as if you had seen him with your own eyes bursting asunder the bars of the grave, and assuming his seat at the right hand of the Father: you will be in this first sense, "quicken'd together with Christ, and raised up, and made to sit together in heavenly places with him."

SERMON LXXV.

THE CHRISTIAN A PARTAKER IN THE EXALTATION OF JESUS CHRIST.

PART II.

EPHESIANS ii. 4—6.

God who is rich in mercy, for his great love where-with he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quicken'd us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved,) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

HAVING given a few preliminary advices relative to my subject, I went on to justify the accuracy of the apostle's idea, by showing, that the Christian is "quicken'd, raised up, seated in heavenly places, together with Christ."

I. By the reasons which persuade him of the certainty of the exaltation of Jesus Christ. I now proceed to justify St. Paul's idea by showing,

II. The Christian's participation in the glory of Jesus Christ, by the means with which he is furnished of knowing himself, and of attaining assurance that he is fulfilling the conditions under which he is enabled to promise himself an interest in that exaltation. I do not mean to insinuate, that this knowledge is of easy attainment. I maintain, on the contrary, that it is one of the most difficult which can be proposed to man. And without entering here into a detail of the reasons which evince the difficulty of it, it is sufficient for me to adduce a single one; it is the smallness of the number of those who know themselves. The judgments which men form of their own character, is an inexhaustible source of ridicule. The world is crowded with people totally blind, especially where they themselves are concerned.

What illusions do they practise upon themselves, with respect to the body! How many are there whom Nature has sadly degraded in point of person: forms which you would say were only blocked out, and of which, if I may use the expression, God seems to have erected only the first scaffoldings, conceive of themselves ideas directly opposite to the truth. Talk of the corporeal qualities of such and such persons, and they will be among the first to make them an object of derision, and discover this to be too slim, that to be too gross; falling foul of the whole human race, and showing tenderness to no one but themselves. If we are thus subject to blindness, where

things sensible, palpable, are concerned, how much greater must be the danger, where matters of a very different complexion address themselves to our self love.

We practise illusion upon ourselves, on the score of our understanding. How many ignorant, dull, stupid people betray a conceit that they are intelligent philosophers, profound politicians; that they possess a judgment accurate, enlightened, uncommon; and are so powerfully prepossessed with the belief of this, that the combined universe could not drive them out of it. Hence it comes to pass, that they are for ever taking the lead in society, exacting attention, courting admiration, pronouncing, deciding peremptorily, and seeming to say at every turn, am not I a most extraordinary personage? But you have never had the advantage of a course of education, or of regular study. No matter; talents supply every deficiency. But no one presents incense to you, yourself only excepted. Still it signifies nothing: it is the wretched taste of the present age. But you are actually a laughing-stock to mankind. No matter still: it has always been the lot of great men to be the object of envy and calumny.

We practise illusion upon ourselves in favour of our heart. Should you chance to be in a circle of slanderers, and bear your testimony against slander, the whole company will instantly take your side. The most criminal will endeavour to pass for the most innocent. They will tell you that it is the most odious, abominable, execrable of vices. They will tell you that the severest punishments ought to be adjudged against the offender, that he ought to be excluded from all human society. And the very persons who are themselves actuated by this detestable passion, who are themselves diffusing the baleful poison of their malignity, apprehend not that they are, in the slightest degree, chargeable with such a vice. Have you no knowledge, my brethren, of such a portrait? Have I been depicting to you manners which have no existence in real life? If there be any among you incapable of discovering himself under such similitudes as these, it is a demonstration of what I wished to prove, that it is a very difficult thing for a man to know himself.

But though this knowledge be extremely difficult, it is by no means impossible of attainment. The believer employs two methods, principally to arrive at it. 1. He studies his own heart. 2. He shrinks not from the inspection of the eyes of another.

1. First, the believer studies his own heart. Let it not appear matter of astonishment that the generality of mankind are so little acquainted with themselves. They are almost always from home; external objects engross all the powers of their mind; they never dive to the bottom of their own conscience. Does it deserve the name of searching the heart, if a man employs a rapid and superficial self-examination, by reading a few books of preparation, on the eve of a communion solemnity: if he devote a few moments attention to the maxims of a preacher, much more with a design to apply them to others, than to make them a test of his own conduct? How is it

possible, by means of an examination so cursory, to attain a knowledge which costs the most eminent saints so much application?

A real Christian studies himself in a very different manner. With the torch of the gospel in his hand, he searches into the most secret recesses of conscience. He traces his actions up to their real principles. When he has performed an act of virtue, he scrupulously examines whether he had been actuated by some merely human respect, or whether it proceeded from a sacred regard to the law of God. When he unhappily is overtaken, and falls into sin, he carefully examines whether he was betrayed into it by surprise, or whether, by the prevalence of corruption in his heart, and from the love of the world still exercising dominion over him. When he abstains from certain vices, he examines whether it proceeded from real self-government, or merely from want of means and opportunity; and he asks himself this question, what would I have done, had I been placed in such and such circumstances? Would I have preserved my innocence, with Joseph, or lost it, as David did? Would I, with Peter, have denied Jesus Christ, or have endured martyrdom in his cause, like Stephen?

2. The second method which the believer employs to arrive at the knowledge of his own heart, is to permit others to unveil it to his eyes: this is done particularly, either by the public instructions of the faithful ministers of the gospel, or by the private admonitions of a judicious and sincere friend: two articles very much calculated to explain to us the reasons why most men attain such an imperfect knowledge of themselves.

It is with difficulty we can digest those addresses from the pulpit, in which the preacher ventures to go into certain details, without which it is impossible for us to acquire self-knowledge. We are fond of dwelling on generals. Our own portrait excites disgust, when the resemblance is too exact. It is a circumstance well worthy of being remarked, that what we admire the most in the sermons of the dead, is the very thing which gives most offence in the sermons of the living. When we read, in discourses pronounced several ages ago, those bold strictures in which the preachers unmasked the hypocrites of their times, reprov'd the vices of the great as freely as those of the little, attacked adultery, extortion, a tyrannical spirit, in the very presence of the offenders, we are ready to exclaim, What zeal! What courage! What firmness! But when a preacher of our own days presumes to form himself after such excellent models; when he would copy the example of Elijah, who said to Ahab, "I have not troubled Israel; but thou and thy father's house," 1 Kings xviii. 18, when he would follow the example of Nathan, who said to David, "Thou art the man," 2 Sam. xii. 7, or that of John Baptist, who said to Herod, "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife," Mark vi. 18, then the cry is, What audacity! What presumption! It would be improper, my brethren, to extend any farther my remarks on this subject at present; but I may be permitted, at least, to borrow the words of Jesus Christ, addressed to his disciples; "I have yet many things to say

unto you, but ye cannot bear them now," John vi. 12.

If we are unable to digest public discourses of the description which we have been giving, much less are we disposed to bear with the private admonitions of a judicious and sincere friend, who is so faithful as to unveil to us our own heart. What a treasure is a friend, who keeps constantly in view, I do not say our honour only, our reputation, but more especially our duty, our conscience, our salvation! What a treasure is a man, who employs the influence which he may have over us, only for the purpose of undeceiving us when we are in an error; of bringing us back when we have gone astray; of assisting us to unravel and detect the pretences which the deceitfulness of the human heart uses to justify to itself its wanderings and weaknesses! What a treasure is a man, who has the honesty to say to us, according as circumstances may require: "Here it was your want of experience that misled you; there, it was the prejudice of a faulty education: on that occasion you was betrayed, through the seduction of those flatterers, in whose society you take so much delight: on this, it was the too favourable opinion which you had formed of yourselves, which would persuade you, that you are ever sincere in your conversation; ever upright in your intentions; ever steady in your fellowships!"

Nevertheless, we usually look upon this precious treasure not only with disdain, but even with horror. It is sufficient to make us regard a man with an eye of suspicion, that he has discovered our weak side. It is sufficient for him to undertake to paint us in our true colours, to be perfectly odious to us. A real Christian employs all the means with which he is furnished, to unveil his own heart to himself. By dint of study, he acquires the knowledge of himself. Having acquired this important knowledge, he seriously and resolutely sets about personal reformation; and he makes progress in it. He examines this new state into which divine grace has introduced him; and finding within himself the characters of Christianity, he lays hold of its promises. He becomes assured of his being in the class of those to whom they are made. And what is it to possess such assurance? It is to have an anticipated possession of all the blessings which are the object of it. It is to be already quickened, already raised up, already made to sit in heavenly places together with Jesus Christ.

III. Finally, the believer is quickened, he is raised up, he is made to sit together in heavenly places, by means of the foretastes which he enjoys of his participation in the exaltation of the Saviour of the world. Should any one accuse me, of myself running under this head, upon that rock of the marvellous, against which I cautioned my hearers, under a preceding branch of my discourse, I would request his attention to the following series of propositions, which I barely indicate in so many words.

1st Proposition. God possesses a sovereign empire over all perceptions of our souls; he is able to excite in them such as he pleases, either with the concurrence of external objects, or without that concurrence.

2d Proposition. In the order of nature, God

has united the compendious road of sensation to the more circuitous one of reasoning, for the preservation of our body. What is noxious to the body, makes itself known to us, not only by a process of reasoning, but by certain disagreeable sensations, which warn us to keep at a distance from it. Whatever contributes to its preservation, makes itself known by pleasurable sensations, and thereby engages us to make use of it.

3d Proposition. It by no means involves a contradiction, to say, that if it was the will of God, in the order of nature, that the compendious road of sensation should supply the more circuitous one of reasoning, he may sometimes be pleased to conform to the same economy, in the order of grace.

4th Proposition. We are assured not only by reason, that God may adopt this mode of proceeding, but Scripture and experience teach us, that he actually does so, in the case of certain Christians of a superior order.

I compare those sensations of grace to the movements by which the prophets were animated, and which permitted them not the power of doubting whether or not it was the effect of the presence of God in their souls; movements which produced conviction that God intended to make use of their ministry, and constrained them in many cases to act in contradiction to their own inclinations. Never was mission more glorious than that of Jeremiah. Never was mission more difficult and more burdensome. He was called to open his mouth in maledictions, levelled against his fellow-citizens, and to be himself exposed as a butt to the execrations of that people. Overwhelmed under the pressure of a ministry so distressful, he exclaims, "Wo is me, my mother, that thou hast born me a man of strife, and a man of contention to the whole earth," chap. xv. 10. He does more. He forms the resolution of renouncing a ministry which has become the bitterness of his life: "The word of the Lord is made a reproach unto me, and a derision daily; then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name," chap. xx. 8, 9. But God lays hold of him, by invisible bonds, and which he finds it impossible to shake off: "the word of the Lord is made a reproach unto me, and a derision daily; then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name: but his word was in mine heart, as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay," ver. 9. "O Lord, thou hast deceived" (enticed) "me, and I was deceived," (enticed:) "thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed," ver. 7.

I am persuaded that many among you have experienced in your vocation, something similar to what the prophet experienced in his. I am persuaded that many of you have been attracted by those irresistible bands, and have felt that sacred flame kindle in your soul, which the Holy Spirit communicates to the regenerated, and which puts these words into the mouths of the disciples, who were travelling to Emmaus, "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?" Luke xxiv. 32.

Now, if you call upon me to go into a more particular detail on this subject, I will say to you, that however mysterious this operation of the grace of God may be; whatever difficulty may appear in exactly ascertaining the time of its communication, it is imparted to believers, in five situations chiefly. 1. When shutting the door of his closet, and excluding the world from his heart, the Christian enjoys communion with Deity. 2. When Providence calls him to undergo some severe trial. 3. When he has been enabled to make some noble and generous sacrifice. 4. When celebrating the sacred mysteries of redeeming love. 5. Finally, in the hour of conflict with the king of terrors.

1. When shutting the door of his closet, and excluding the world from his heart, he is admitted to communion and fellowship with Deity, in retirement and silence. There it is that a commerce is instituted, the charms of which I should to no purpose undertake to display, unless they were known to you by experience. There it is that the believer compensates to himself the time of which he has been constrained to defraud his God; and there it is, that God compensates to the believer, the delights of which the commerce of the world has deprived him. There it is that the believer pours out into the bosom of his Father and his God, the sorrow excited by the recollection of his offences, and that he sheds the tears of a repentance which love has enkindled, and expresses in terms such as these:

"My God, I know that love is thy predominant character, and that it cannot be thy will I should perish: but I am ashamed of my own weakness; I am ashamed of the little progress I have made in religion, since the time thou hast been pleased to grant me a revelation of it. I am ashamed to reflect that such an accumulation of benefits as thou hast conferred upon me, should have still produced so slight an impression upon my heart."

And there it is that God wipes the tear from the believer's eye, and heals up the wounds of the penitent, saying unto him, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions, for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins," Isa. xliii. 25. There it is that the believer avails himself of the tender access which God condescends to grant to those precious moments, and that conversing with him, "as a man speaketh unto his friend," Ex. xxxiii. 11, he asks him to bestow communications more endearing, more intimate: "Lord, I beseech thee to show me thy glory," ver. 8. "Lord, scatter that darkness which still veils thy perfections from my view; Lord, dispel those clouds which still intervene between me and the light of thy countenance." There it is that God takes pleasure to gratify desires so nobly directed: "Poor mortals, how unrefined, how debased is your taste! How much are you to be pitied, with that relish for the meagre delights of this world!" Is there any one that can stand a comparison with that which the believer enjoys in such blessed intercourse as this?

2. When Providence calls him to encounter some severe trial. I speak not here of trials to which appetite prompts a man to expose himself, under the specious pretext of promis-

ing himself the glory of a triumph, but in reality from the fatal charm which betrays him into defeat. We have no encouragement to expect divine support to resist and overcome temptation, when we rashly throw ourselves in the way of it: "He that loveth danger," says the Wise Man, "shall perish therein." I speak of those trials, which the believer is called to encounter, either from some supernatural interpositions, or simply from the duty imposed by his Christian vocation. How often do they appear to him so rude, as to awaken despair of overcoming? How often, when abandoned for a moment to his frailty, he says within himself, "No, I shall never have the fortitude to bear up under that painful conflict: no, it will be impossible for me to survive the loss of that child, far dearer to me than life itself: no, I shall never be able to fulfil the duties of the station to which Providence is calling me. How can I give my heart to what I hate, and tear it away from what I love?" Christian, be of good courage. See that thy resolution be upright and sincere, "to him that believeth all things are possible," Mark ix. 23.

There are resources of grace with which thou art yet unacquainted; but which thou shalt know by experience, if thou pray for them, and make it thy unremitting and sincere endeavour to walk worthy of such exalted expectations. God himself will descend into thy soul with rays of light, with fresh supplies of strength, with impressions so lively, of the promised recompense of reward, that thou shalt not feel the pains of conflict, and be sensible only to the pleasure of victory; that thou shalt raise the shout of victory, whilst thou art yet in the hottest of the battle.

3. I said that those transporting foretastes are communicated to the believer, after he has been enabled to offer up some noble and generous sacrifice. I can conceive no transports once to be compared with those which Abraham felt, on his descent from Mount Moriah. What conflicts must he have undergone from the awful moment that God demanded his Isaac! What a dreadful portion of time, I was going to say, what an eternity was the three days which passed between his departure from his habitation, and his arrival at the place where this tremendous sacrifice was to be offered up! What emotions must that question of Isaac have excited in a father's bosom; "behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?" Gen. xxii. 7. Abraham comes off victorious in all these combats; Abraham binds his son with cords; he stretches him out on the wooden pile; he lifts up his hand to pierce the bosom of this innocent victim. God arrests his uplifted arm. Abraham has done his duty: he carries back his son with him; what a transport of delight!

But this is not all. Will God be outdone in generosity by Abraham? He crowns the obedience of his servant: he accumulates upon him new marks of favour; he promises himself to immolate his own Son for the man who could summon up the resolution to devote his son at God's command. This is, according to St. Paul, the sense of those mysterious words; "by myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, because thou hast done this thing, and hast

not withheld thy son, thine only son; that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed, as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; . . . and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," Gen. xxii. 16—18; Gal. iii. 8. Christians, true posterity of the father of believers, you have a reward similar to his.

4. While he is partaking in the sacred mysteries of redeeming love, likewise, the believer feels himself quickened, raised up, seated, together with Jesus Christ." I cannot refrain, however, from here deploring the superstition of certain Christians, which mingles with this part of our religious worship, and from repeating one of the advices which I suggested at the opening of this discourse. Make not the success of your communion to depend on certain emotions, in which mechanism has much more to do than piety has. It but too frequently happens, that a man shall apprehend he has communicated worthily, or unworthily, in proportion as he has carried to a less or greater degree the art of moving the senses, and of heating the imagination, while he partakes of the Lord's Supper. The touchstone by which we ought to judge whether we brought to the Lord's table the dispositions which he requires, is the sincerity with which we have renewed our baptismal engagements, and the exertions which we shall afterward make punctually to fulfil them.

It is true, nevertheless, that a participation of the sacrament of the supper is one of the situations in which a believer most frequently experiences those gracious operations of which our apostle is speaking in the text. A soul, whose undivided attention the Holy Spirit fixes on the mystery of the cross; and on whom he is pleased to impress, in a lively manner, the great events which the symbolical representation in the Eucharist retraces on the heart; a soul, which, through grace, loses itself in the abyss of that love which God has manifested towards us in Jesus Christ; a soul which has learned to infer, from what God has already done, what is still farther to be expected from him; a soul, which feels, and, if I may use the expression, which relishes the conclusiveness of this reasoning, "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. Is not a soul in such a state, already "quickened, already raised up, already seated in heavenly places, together with Christ Jesus?"

5. But it is particularly when the believer is grappling with the king of terrors, that he experiences those communications of divine grace, which transport him into another world, and which verify, in the most sublime of all senses, the idea which the apostle conveys to us of it, in the words of the text. Witness that patience and submission under sufferings the most acute, and that entire acquiescence in the sovereign will of God: "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it," Ps. xxxix. 9. Witness that supernatural detachment from the world, which enables him to resign, without murmuring, and without reserve, all that he was most tenderly united to:

"henceforth know I no man after the flesh," 2 Cor. v. 16. I have no connexion, now, save with that "Jesus, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named," Eph. iii. 15. Witness that immovable hope, in the midst of universal desertion; "though he slay me, yet will I trust in him," Job xiii. 15, "yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me," Ps. xxiii. 4. Witness that faith which pierces through the clouds, which the devil, and hell, and the world spread around his bed of languishing: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another," Job xix. 25—27. Witness that holy impatience with which he looks forward to the moment of his dismissal: "I have waited for thy salvation, O God," Gen. xlix. 18. "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly," Rev. xxii. 20. Witness those songs of triumph, amidst the very sharpest of the conflict: "Thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ," 2 Cor. ii. 14. "Blessed be the Lord, my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight," Ps. cxliv. 1.

Witness, once more, those tender, those instructive, those edifying conversations which take place between the dying Christian and his pastor. The pastor addresses to the dying person these words on the part of God: "Seek my face;" and the dying believer replies, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek," Ps. xxvii. 8. The pastor says, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon thee," 1 John iii. 1, and the dying person replies; "the love of God is shed abroad in my heart, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto me," Rom. v. 5. The pastor says, "Seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God;" the dying person replies, "I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ," Phil. i. 23. "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" Ps. xlii. 2. The pastor says, "Run with patience the race that is set before thee, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of thy faith," Heb. xii. 1, 2. The dying believer replies, "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 against that day," 2 Tim. i. 12. "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. iv. 7, 8. "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God," Acts vii. 56.

Such are the wonders which the grace of God displays, in favour of those who are in earnest to obtain it, and give themselves up to its direction. And such are the treasures, unhappy worldlings, which you are sacrificing to a transient world, and its lying vanities. Such is the felicity which you experience, which you have already experienced in part, happy, happy Christians, whose condition is so far preferable to that of all the rest of mankind.

What now remains for me to do, after having employed my feeble efforts to draw you to God, by attractions so powerful: what remains, but to address my most fervent prayers to him, and to entreat that he would be pleased to make known those pure and exalted delights, to those who are, as yet, utter strangers to them; and that he may, powerfully confirm, even unto the end, those to whom he has already graciously communicated them. With this we shall conclude the solemn business of a day of sacred rest. We are going, once more, to lift up to heaven, in your behalf, hands purified in the blood of the Redeemer of mankind. Come, my beloved brethren, support these hands, should they wax heavy: perform for us the service which Aaron and Hur rendered to Moses, as we are attempting to render the service of a Moses unto you. Assist us in moving the bowels of the God of mercy.— And graciously vouchsafe, blessed Jesus, who, on the memorable day, of which we are now celebrating the anniversary, wert “made higher than the heavens; set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;” and who presentest unto God, in “a golden censer, the prayers of all saints:” vouchsafe, blessed Jesus, to give energy to those which we are about to put up, and to support them by thy all-powerful intercession. Amen.

SERMON LXXVI.

FOR A COMMUNION SABBATH.

PART I.

MALACHI i. 6, 7.

A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of Hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name? Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the Lord is contemptible.

THOUGH the spectacle, which the solemnity of this day calls to our recollection, did not directly interest ourselves, it would, nevertheless, be altogether worthy, separately considered, of detaining our eyes, and of fixing our attention. Men have sometimes appeared, who, finding their last moments approaching, collected their family, summoned up their remaining strength, expressed a wish, in a repast of love and benevolence, to take a last, a long farewell of the persons who were most dear to them, and to break asunder, by that concluding act of social attachment, all the remains of that human affection which tied them down to the world.

What an object, my brethren, what a heart-affecting object does that man present, who, beholding himself on the point of being removed from all those to whom he was most tenderly united, desires to see them all assembled together for the last time, and, when assembled, addresses them in terms such as these: “It was to you, whose much loved society constituted the joy of my life, it was to you I

took delight in disclosing the most secret emotions of my soul: and if it were still possible for any thing to call me back, now that my God is calling me away, it would be the inclination I feel, to prolong the happy days which we have passed together. But though the hands which unite us are close and endeared, they must not be everlasting. It was in the order of human things, either that you should be called to close my eyes, or that I should be called to close yours. Providence is now declaring the supreme command, that I should travel before you, the way of all the earth: it was my wish, before I undergo the irreversible decree, once more to behold the persons whom I have ever borne on my heart, to call to remembrance the sweet counsel which we have taken together, the connexions which we have formed: and thus too it is, that I would take leave of the world. After having given away, for a moment, to the expansions of my love for you, I rise above all the objects of sense; I am swallowed up of the thoughts which ought to employ the soul of a dying person, and I hasten to submit to the will of the Sovereign Disposer of life and death.”

Jesus Christ, in the institution of this holy ordinance, is doing somewhat similar to the representation now given. His disciples were undoubtedly his most powerful attachment to the earth. The kind of death which he was about to suffer, demanded the undivided attention of his mind: but before he plunges into that vast ocean of thought which was to carry him through the sharp conflicts prepared for him, he wishes to behold again, at his table, those tender objects of his affection: “With desire,” says he to them, “I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer,” Luke xxii. 15. Had I not good reason for expressing myself as I did? Though this spectacle did not directly interest ourselves, it would be highly worthy, considered in itself, of detaining our eyes, and of fixing our attention.

But what closeness of attention, what concentration of thought does it not require of us, if we consider it in the great and comprehensive views, which animated the Saviour of the world, when he instituted the sacrament of the supper! Behold him prepared, that divine Saviour, to finish the great work, which heaven has given him to do. He comes to substitute himself in the room of those victims, whose blood, too worthless, could do nothing towards the purification of guilty man. He comes to fulfil that mysterious prediction: “Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire, mine ears hast thou opened; Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me; I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart,” Ps. xl. 6—8. He comes to deliver up himself to that death, the very approaches of which inspire the soul with horror, and constrain him to cry out, “Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say?” John xii. 27. “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death,” Matt. xxvi. 36.

What shall he do to support himself in the prospect of such tremendous arrangements? What buckler shall he oppose to those envenomed arrows, with which he is going to be transfixed? Love, my brethren, formed the ge-

nerous design of the sacrifice which he is ready to offer up; and love will carry him through the arduous undertaking. He says to himself, that the memory of this death which he is going to endure, shall be perpetuated in the churches, even unto the end of the world; that, even to the end of the world, he shall be the refuge of poor perishing sinners. He says to himself, that through the whole world of believers, whom the preaching of the gospel is going to subdue to his love and obedience, this death shall be celebrated. He himself institutes the memorial of it, and taking that bread and that wine, the august symbols of his body broken, and of his blood shed, he gives them to his disciples; he says to them, and, in their person, to all those who shall believe in him through their word, "Take, eat, this is my body; this is my blood of the New Testament, Drink ye all of it," Matt. xxvi. 26—28. "This do in remembrance of me: For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come," 1 Cor. xi. 24—26.

O shame to human nature! O the weakness, shall I call it? or the hardness of the human heart! And must it needs be; must the sweet composure of this holy exercise, be this day marred, by the cruel apprehension, that some among you may be in danger of profaning it, while they celebrate it? Must it be, that in inviting you to that sacred table, we should be checked by the humiliating reflection, that some new Judas may be coming there to receive the sentence of his condemnation? It is in the view of doing our utmost, to prevent the commission of a crime so foul, and a calamity so dreadful; that we wish, previously to our distributing unto you the bread and the wine which sovereign wisdom has prepared for you, to engage you in deep and serious reflection on the words which have been read. You will be abundantly sensible how well they are adapted to my purpose, when you shall have placed yourselves, in thought, in the circumstances wherein the Jews were placed, at the time they were addressed to them. With this I open my subject.

The prophet Malachi, whose voice God is here employing on a message to his people, lived a few years after the return from the captivity. He succeeded Haggai and Zechariah. These two prophets had been raised up, chiefly for the purpose of stimulating the Jews to undertake the rebuilding of the temple. Malachi was specially destined to urge them to render unto God, in that magnificent edifice, a worship suitable to the majesty of him to whose service it was consecrated. The same difficulties, which the two first of those holy men had to encounter in the discharge of their ministry, he encountered in the exercise of his. What desire more ardent could animate men, who had lived threescore and ten years without a temple, without altars, without sacrifices, without a public worship, than that of beholding in the midst of them, those gracious signs of the divine presence? This was, however, by no means the object of general ambition and pursuit. They looked to the rearing and embellishing of their own houses, and left to God the care of building that which belonged to him.

We find traces of this shameful history, in the prophecies of the two first whom we named, particularly in those of Haggai. There we have displayed, the excuses made by that wretched people, to serve as a colour to their criminal negligence: "Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built," chap. i. 2. We have a censure of this spirit and conduct, proportioned to their enormity, in ver. 4, "Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste?" But, what is still more awful, we behold the tremendous judgments, by which God avenged himself of guilt so atrocious, in ver. 9—11. "Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home I did blow upon it. Why? saith the Lord of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house. Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit. And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labour of the hands."

How awfully respectable is a preacher, my brethren, when the indignation of Heaven seconds his voice! When the pestilence, mortality, famine, add weight to the threatenings which he denounced! Haggai, supported by this all-powerful aid, at length attained the object of his ministry. The Jews did that from constraint which they ought to have done from a principle of piety and zeal: you might now see them labouring with emulous fervour, to raise the august edifice, and the temple arose out of its ruins.

But scarcely was the house of the Lord rebuilt, when they profaned the sanctity of the place, and violated the laws which were there to be observed. The observation of those laws was burdensome. It required not only great mental application, but was likewise attended with very considerable expense. The avarice of their sordid spirits made them consider every thing which they dedicated to such purposes, as next to lost. They durst not, at the same time, venture entirely to shake off the yoke of religion. They did what men generally do, when the laws of God clash with their inclinations: they neither yielded complete submission, nor dared to avow open rebellion. They attempted to reconcile the dictates of their own passions with the commands of heaven. To comply with the commands of heaven, they presented offerings; but to gratify the cravings of passion, they presented offerings of little value.

This idea of the circumstances in which the Jews were at the time when our prophet flourished, is one of the best keys for disclosing the real sense of the words of the text. If it unfolds not to us the whole extent of its signification, it furnishes at least a good general explanation. Malachi severely censures the priests of his day, that called, as they were, to maintain good order in the church, they calmly overlooked, or avowedly countenanced the open violation of it. He reproaches them for

this misconduct, by the example of what a son owes to his father, and a servant to his master. He employs this image, because the priests were, in an appropriate sense, considered as belonging unto God; in conformity to what God himself says in chap. viii. of the book of Numbers: "Thou shalt separate the Levites from among the children of Israel: and the Levites shall be mine: . . . for they are wholly given unto me, from among the children of Israel . . . instead of the first-born of all the children of Israel, have I taken them unto me: . . . on the day that I smote every first-born in the land of Egypt, I sanctified them for myself." It is to you, O ye priests, says he to them, that I address myself; "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts. unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, wherein have we despised thy name? Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, the table of the Lord is contemptible."

If any difficulty still remain, respecting the general sense of the passage, it can be of no considerable importance, as it prevents not our discerning the principal aim and design of the Holy Spirit. It is not perhaps easy, I admit, to determine with exact precision, what we are to understand by "the table of the Lord," by that contempt which was expressed for it, and by the "polluted bread" which those unworthy ministers offered upon it. There are two opinions on this subject, but which both issue in the idea we have suggested to you, of our prophet's sentiment.

It is the opinion of some commentators, that by the table, of which Malachi speaks, is to be understood the table which corresponded to that placed by Moses, by the command of God, in the part of the tabernacle denominated the "holy place."* The law enjoined that there should always be upon that table twelve loaves, or cakes, which we denominate the "show-bread," otherwise called "the bread of faces," not because these cakes were moulded into several sides, or raised into small protuberances, according to the opinion of certain Jewish doctors, but because they were continually exposed in the presence of Jehovah, who was considered as residing in the holy place. The law which enjoined the offering of them, had likewise prescribed the rites which were to be observed in presenting that offering. They were to be placed on the holy table, to the number of twelve: they were to be composed of fine flour kneaded into a paste: each cake was to contain an omer of flour. The Jews tell us,† that it must have passed eleven times through the searse; and if St. Jerome‡ is to be credited, it belonged to the priests to sow, to reap, and to grind the corn, of which the cakes were made, and to knead the dough. Whatever may be the truth as to some of these particulars, to treat the table of the Lord as *contemptible*, to offer unto God "polluted bread,"

is, conformably to the sentiment which I have detailed, to violate some of the rites which were to be observed in the offering of the cakes, placed, by divine command, on the table which was in the holy place.

The generality of interpreters have adopted another opinion, which we have no difficulty in following. By "the table of the Lord," they here understand the altar of burnt-offerings. It is denominated "the table of the Lord," in some other passages of Scripture: particularly in chap. xli. of the prophecies of Ezekiel. There, after a description of the altar of burnt-offerings, it is added, "This is the table that is before the Lord," ver. 22. On this altar were offered cakes of fine flour, as we see in various passages, particularly in the first verses of chap. ii. of the book of Leviticus. These cakes are represented as if they were the bread of God. The same name was given to every thing offered to Deity on that altar. All was called "the bread of God," or "the meat of God," for reasons which will be better understood in the sequel. I shall, at present, satisfy myself with quoting a single passage in justification of this remark. It is in chap. xxi. of the book of Leviticus, the 6th verse. Moses, after having laid down the duties of the priests, adds these words: "they shall be holy unto their God, and not profane the name of their God; for the offerings of the Lord made by fire, and the bread of their God do they offer; therefore they shall be holy." You see that in the Levitical style, they denominated "the meat of God," or "the bread of God," not only the cakes which were offered upon the altar, not only the loaves of the show-bread which were presented on the table in the holy place, but all the victims which were consumed by fire on the altar of burnt-offering.

Now, the manner in which those offerings were to be presented, had likewise been laid down with singular precision. There was a general law respecting this point, which you will find in chap. iv. of Leviticus: it enjoined that the victim should be "without blemish;" and if you wish for a more particular detail on this subject, you may farther consult chap. xxii. of the same book. There we have enumerated ten imperfections, which rendered a victim unworthy of being offered unto God. Some* place in this class, not only bodily but mental imperfections, if this last epithet may be applied to brutes. For example, they durst not have presented unto God animals of an obstinate, petulant, capricious disposition, and the like. Scruples, by the way, which the pagans themselves, and particularly the Egyptians entertained, respecting the victims which they offered to their gods. They set apart for them the choicest of the flock and of the herd. Herodotus informs us,‡ that in Egypt, there were persons specially appointed to the office of examining the victims.

Let us no longer deviate from the principal object of our text. If by "the table of the Lord," we are to understand, as it is presumable we ought, the altar of burnt-offerings, "to

* See Exodus xxv. 23, &c.

† See Mischna, tom. v. tit. de munere, cap. vi. sec. vii. p. 95. Edit. Amst.

‡ Hieron. tom. iii. in Mal. i. 6. p. 1810. Edit. Bened.

* See Bochart Hieroz, Part I. Book II, chap. 46. p. 522.

† In Euterpe, cap. xxviii. p. 104. Edit. Francof.

offer unto God polluted bread," in the style of Malachi, to say, "the table of the Lord is contemptible," is to violate some of the rites prescribed, respecting the offerings which were presented unto God upon that altar. More especially, it is to consecrate to Deity, victims which had some of the blemishes that rendered them unworthy of his acceptance.

But was it indeed, then, altogether worthy of God to enter into details so minute? But of what importance could it be to the Lord of the universe, whether the victims presented to him were fat or lean, and whether the bread consecrated to him were of wheat or of barley, of fine or of coarse flour? And though the Jews were subjected to minuteness of this kind, what interest can we have in them, we who live in ages more enlightened; we who are called to serve God only "in spirit and in truth," John iv. 24, and to render him none but a "reasonable service," Rom. xii. 1. We shall devote the remainder of the time, at present permitted to us, to the elucidation of these questions; we shall endeavour to unfold the great aim and object of our text, and apply it more particularly to the use of our hearers. For this purpose it will be necessary to institute a twofold parallel.

I. We shall institute a parallel between the altar of burnt-offerings, or the table of the show-bread, and the table of the Eucharist: and shall endeavour to unfold the mystical views of both the one and the other.

II. The second parallel shall be, between the profanation of the altar, or the table of the show-bread, and the profanation of the Christian sacramental table: we shall indicate what is implied, with respect to the Jews, and with respect to Christians, in offering to God "polluted bread," and in looking on "the table of the Lord as contemptible;" and we will endeavour to make you sensible of the keenness of the reproach conveyed by the mouth of the prophet: "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name? Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, the table of the Lord is contemptible."

SERMON LXXVI.

FOR A COMMUNION SABBATH.

PART II.

MALACHI i. 6, 7.

A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name? Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the Lord is contemptible.

HAVING endeavoured to remove the difficulties in which the text may seem to be involved,

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and shown what we are to understand by "polluted bread," by "the table of the Lord," and by calling "the table of the Lord contemptible," we proceed to institute the twofold parallel proposed.

I. Let us state a parallel between the altar of burnt-offerings, the table of the show-bread, and the sacramental table of the Lord's Supper; the offerings which were presented to God on the first, and those which we still present to him on the second. The sacramental table of the supper, as the altar of burnt-offerings, and as the table of the show-bread, is "the table of the Lord." The viands, presented on both the one and the other, are, "the meat of God," or "the bread of God." And those sacred ceremonies, however they may differ as to certain circumstances, have been, nevertheless, destined to the same end, and represent the same mysteries: namely, the intimate union which God wishes to maintain with his church and people.

You will be convinced that this was the destination of the altar of burnt-offerings, and of the table of the show-bread, if you have formed a just idea of the temple, and of the tabernacle. The tabernacle was considered to be the tent of God, as the Leader and Commander of Israel, and the temple was considered as his palace. For this reason it is, that when God gave commandment to construct the tabernacle, he said to Moses, "Let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell amongst them," Exod. xxi. 8. And when Solomon substituted the temple in room of the tabernacle, he was desirous of conveying the same idea of it: "I have surely built thee a house to dwell in, a settled place for thee to abide in for ever." The following are the words of a very sensible Rabbi on this subject: "God, to whom be all glory inscribed, gave commandment to build for him a house, similar to the palaces of the kings of the earth. All these things are to be found in the palaces of kings; they are surrounded by guards; they have servants to prepare their victuals; musicians who sing to them, and play on instruments. There are likewise chambers of perfumes; a table on which their repasts are served up; a closet into which favourites only are admitted. It was the will of God, that all these things should be found in his house, that in nothing he might yield to the potentates of the earth. And all these things are designed to make the people know, that our King, the Lord of hosts, is in the midst of us."

This general idea of the tabernacle justifies that which we are going to give of the altar of burnt-offerings, and of the table of the show-bread.

1. That of the altar of burnt-offering: it was denominated "the table of the Lord," and the viands served upon it were denominated "the meat" or "the bread of Jehovah," because the end of the sacrifices there offered up by his command, was to intimate, that he maintained with his people an intercourse as familiar as that of two friends, who eat together at the same table. This is the most ancient, and the most usual idea of sacrifice. When alliances

* Rabbi Schem Job Comment. in Mere Neroch. Part III. cap. xlv. fol. 171. Venet. 521.

were contracted, victims were immolated: and the contracting parties made a common repast on their flesh, to express the intimate union which they formed with each other.

This was the reason of all the rites which were served between God and the people of Israel, in the alliance formed previous to the promulgation of the law. They are recorded in the twenty-fourth chapter of the book of Exodus. Moses represented God; Aaron, Nadab and Abihu his two sons, and the three-score and ten elders represented the whole congregation of Israel. Altars were reared; sacrifices were offered up; they feasted together on the flesh of the victims. It is expressly related that Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and those other venerable personages whom I have mentioned, went up into the mountain, "also they saw God, and did eat and drink," ver. 11. And to make it apparent that the divine presence intervened, the history adds, that God vouchsafed to bestow sensible tokens of his presence: "And they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire-stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness," ver. 10. A work paved with stars, resembling a composition of sapphire-stones: a symbol which, perhaps, God preferred to any other, because the sapphire was, among the Egyptians, the emblem of royalty, as may be seen in their hieroglyphics, which the industry of the learned have preserved to us.

The pagans, likewise, had the same ideas of the sacrifices which they offered up. They did eat together the flesh of the victims, and this they called *eating* or *feasting with the gods*.^{*} They sometimes carried off part of it to their houses; sometimes sent a portion of it to their friends; sometimes they partook of it in the temples themselves, in which tables were placed for the express purpose of celebrating festivals of this kind. Homer, in the *Odyssey*,[†] introduces Alcinoüs, speaking to this effect: "The gods render themselves visible to us, when we immolate hecatombs to them; they eat with us, and place themselves by us at the same table." The same poet, speaking of a solemn festival of the Ethiopians, says,[‡] that Jupiter had descended among them, to be present at a festival which they had prepared for him, and that he was attended thither by all the gods." In another place[§] he tells us, that Agamemnon sacrificed an ox to Jupiter, and that he invited several of the chieftains of the Grecian army, to eat the flesh of that victim. He relates something similar respecting Nestor.||

Hence it comes to pass that the phrase *to make a feast*, is very frequently employed both by sacred and profane authors, to express performing acts of idolatrous worship. In this sense it is that we are to understand it, in that passage of the prophet Ezekiel, where, enumerating the characters of the just man, this is laid down as one, "He hath not eaten upon the mountains," chap. xviii. 6;[¶] that is, who

has not been a partaker in the sacrifices of the idolatrous. In burnt-offerings, the part of the victim consumed by fire, was considered as the portion of Deity. Of this I shall adduce only a single instance, that I may not load my discourse with too many quotations. Solinus relates,^{*} that those who offered up sacrifices to idols on Mount Etna, constructed their altars on the brink of its crater: that they placed bundles of dried sprigs upon those altars, but that they applied no fire to them. They pretended, that when the Divinity, in honour of whom these rites were performed, was pleased to accept the sacrifice, the bundles of sprigs spontaneously caught fire; that the flame approached the persons who were celebrating this sacred festivity; that it encompassed them round and round, without doing them any harm; and thus was declared the acceptance of their oblation.

In like manner, in the sacrifices which were offered upon the altar of burnt-offerings, one part of the victim was for the people, another part for the priests, and another part was consumed by fire; this last was considered as the portion of God; this was particularly denominated the *meat* or the *bread of God*; and the whole solemnity was intended, as has been said, to represent the intimate union, and the familiar intercourse, which God wished to maintain between himself and his people.

2. The same was likewise the design of the table of the show bread. It was natural that in the tabernacle, which was considered as the tent of Jehovah, and in the temple which was afterwards considered as his palace, there should be a table replenished with provision for himself and for his ministers. It was the command of God, that twelve of those cakes should be exhibited continually on the table of the sanctuary, to denote the twelve tribes of Israel. This same number was kept up even after the revolt of the ten tribes; because there were always worshippers of the true God, scattered over the whole twelve tribes. These cakes, exposed continually in the presence of Jehovah, were an invitation given to the revolted tribes, to maintain his worship, and to serve him conformably to the rites, which he himself had been pleased to prescribe by the hand of Moses. This was likewise the grand motive urged by Abijah, king of Judah, to bring back the Israelites to their allegiance," 2 Chron. xiii. 9, &c.

In this same sense is the table of the Eucharist, likewise, the table of the Lord. In this same sense, we consider as the *meat of God*, or as the *bread of God*, these august symbols which are presented to us in the holy sacrament of the supper. These two solemn ceremonies have exactly one and the same end in view. The end proposed by the table of the Eucharist, as by that of the altar of burnt-offerings, or by the table of the *show bread*, is to form, and to maintain between God and us, an intercourse of familiar friendship; it is to form between God and us the most intimate union which it is possible to conceive as subsisting between two beings so very different as are the Creator and the creature. What proofs of love can be

^{*} Plato, tom. II. de Legibus II. p. 653. Edit. Steph. 1578.

[†] Book V. ver. 202.

[‡] Iliad I. ver. 433.

[§] Iliad II. ver. 429, &c.

^{||} Odys. III. ver. 428, &c.

[¶] See other examples, Exod. xxxii. 6.

interchanged by two friends united in the tenderest bonds, which God and the believer do not mutually give and receive at the Eucharistical table.

Two friends intimately united, become perfectly reconciled to each other, when some interposing cloud had dimmed the lustre of friendship, and they repair, by warmer returns of affection, the violence which love had suffered under that fatal eclipse. This is what we experience at the table of the holy sacrament.— That august ceremony is a mystery of reconciliation between the penitent sinner and the God of mercy. On the one part, the penitent sinner presents unto God “a broken and contrite heart,” Ps. li. 17, for grief of having offended him: he pours into the bosom of his God the tears of repentance; he protests that if the love which he has for his God has undergone a temporary suspension, it never was entirely broken asunder; and if the flame of that affection has been occasionally smothered under the ashes, yet it was never entirely extinguished: he says to him with Thomas, recovered from his paroxysm of incredulity, “My Lord and my God; my Lord and my God,” John xx. 28, and with Peter, restored to favour after he had denied his Master, “Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee,” John xxi. 17. And on the other part, the God of mercy extends his bowels of compassion towards the believer; he gives him assurance that his repentance is accepted, and speaks peace inwardly to his conscience, saying, “Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee,” Matt. ix. 2.

Two friends intimately united, lose sight, in some sense, of the difference which there may be between their respective conditions. This too, is what the believer experiences at the Lord's table. On the one part, though there must ever be an immeasurable abyss between God and us, we go to him as to our brother, as to our friend; shall I presume to add, as to our equal? And on the other part, God is pleased to lay aside, in condescension to our weakness, if the expression be lawful, the rays of his divinè majesty, with which the eyes of mortals would be dazzled into blindness. Jesus Christ clothes himself with our flesh and blood: and of that community of nature makes up a title of familiarity with us; according to those words of the apostle; “both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren,” Heb. ii. 11, 12.

Two friends intimately united, blend their goods and fortune, in blending their condition. This likewise the believer experiences in the holy sacrament of the supper. On the one hand, we devote to God all that we are; we promise him that there is no band so tender but what we shall be ready to break asunder; no passion so dear, but that we are determined to sacrifice it; no possession so precious but that we are cheerfully disposed to resign, whenever his glory requires it at our hands. And on the other hand, God draws nigh to us with his grace, with his aid, and to say all in one word, he comes to us with his son: he gives us this Son, as the Son gives himself to us, “God so

loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son,” John iii. 16. “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends,” John xv. 13.

Two friends intimately united, however well assured they may be of reciprocal tenderness, take pleasure in making frequent repetition of the expressions of it. Friendship has its high festivals, its overflowings, its ecstasies. This too is the experience of the saints at the table of the Lord. There the soul of the believer says to his Redeemer, “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. And there it is, on the other hand, that God communicates to the soul of the believer the full assurance of his love: “For 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, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee,” Isa. liv. 10.

Thus it is, my brethren, that the altar of burnt offerings, or the table of the show bread, and the Eucharistical table of the Lord's supper, present the self-same mysteries to the eye of faith. Thus it is that both the one and the other are “the table of the Lord,” and that the repast served upon it, is “the meat of God,” or the bread of God. Thus it is, that in both the one and the other of those solemn ceremonies, the end which God proposes to himself is to form with men a union the most intimate and the most tender.

Having thus stated the first parallel proposed, that of the altar of burnt offerings, or the table of the show bread, and the sacramental table of the Lord's Supper, we now proceed,

II. To state the parallel between the *profanation* of the altar, or the table in the ancient sanctuary, and the *profanation* of the sacramental table of the Eucharist: that is, to state the parallel between the duties prescribed to the ancient Jews, and those which are prescribed to Christians, when they draw nigh to God in the holy ordinance of the supper. As they trace the same important truths, they enforce the same practical obligations. What made the ancient Jews profane the table of the Lord? How came they to say, “the table of the Lord is contemptible?” How durst they offer “polluted bread” on his altar? It was, 1. Because they formed not just ideas of the end which God proposed to himself, when he enjoined the observance of those solemnities. It arose, 2. From their unwillingness to fulfil the moral engagements which the ceremonial observance imposed. Finally, 3. It proceeded from their wanting a just sense of the value of the blessings communicated by these. Now the sources of unworthy communicating, so common in the Christian world, are precisely the same. Want of illumination; want of virtue; want of feeling. Want of illumination, which prevents their knowing the meaning and design of our sacred mysteries. Want of virtue, which prevents their immolating to God all the vices which separate between him and them. Want of feeling, which prevents their being kindled into gratitude, and

love, and holy fervour, when God discloses to them, at his table, all the treasures of felicity and glory. Three heads of comparison between the priests of Malachi's days, and many who bear the Christian name among ourselves. Three touchstones furnished to assist you in the examination of your own consciences. "Thus saith the Lord of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name: and ye say, wherein have we despised thy name? Ye offer polluted bread upon my altar: and ye say, wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, the table of the Lord is contemptible."

1. Want of illumination. The priests of Malachi's days did not form ideas sufficiently just of the end which Jehovah promised to himself, when he enjoined the presenting of offerings, on the altar of burnt offerings, and on the table of the show bread. Expressly set apart for teaching those great truths to others, they remained themselves in a state of ignorance. They had no other qualification to be the ministers of religion, except the tribe from which they descended, and the habit which they wore. Our prophet upbraids them with this gross and criminal ignorance: "The priests' lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts: but ye are departed out of the way: ye have caused many to stumble at the law," chap. ii. 7, 8. They had not only conceived false ideas of religion themselves, but they communicated these to the people. The prophet does not indicate precisely respecting what points the ignorance of those unworthy ministers was most conspicuous: but if we may form a judgment of the case from the character of their successors, it was impossible to entertain ideas of religion more false than those which they propagated. How wretched was the doctrine of the Rabbins who were contemporary with our blessed Lord, and of those of modern times! Miserable conceits; insipid allegories; imaginary mysteries; puerile relations. These constituted the great body of the Rabbinical theology. Would to God that such whims were to be found only among Rabbins! But we must not pursue this reflection. Nothing more is wanting, many a time, but a single ignorant, prejudiced pastor, to perpetuate ignorance, and transmit prejudice, for ages together in a church. This was evidently the case in the times of our prophet: and this it was which dictated these keen reproaches: "ye are departed out of the way: ye have caused many to stumble at the law: ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the Lord of hosts," chap. ii. 8.

Want of illumination: the first head of comparison between the criminality of the priests of Malachi's day, who said, *the table of the Lord is contemptible*, and the criminality of professing Christians, who profane the sacramental table. To profane the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, is to partake of the symbols there presented, without having maturely considered the great truths which they represent. To profane the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, is to communicate, without having any other ideas of the mysteries of the incarnation of the Son of God, which are there unfolded, than those which we had of them in the days of our

childhood. To profane the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, is to believe, on the faith of a man's pastor, or of his ancestors, that God sent his Son into the world, to redeem the human race, and to take no pains to be informed on what principles that doctrine is established.

To present "polluted bread on the altar of God;" to say, "the table of the Lord is contemptible:" it is the crime of that young man, who would account himself degraded by applying to the study of his catechism, by acquiring more perfect knowledge of his religion; who would rather continue to grovel in ignorance, than employ the means necessary to the attainment of instruction. It is the crime of that head of a family, who is so far from being in a condition to communicate religious instruction to his children, that he himself is a stranger to it. It is the crime of that magistrate, who, under pretence of a load of public business, will not take time seriously to examine, whether there be a God in heaven, and whether the Scriptures are of divine origin and authority. It is the crime of that female, who, under pretence of the weakness of her sex, debases the dignity of her nature, and devotes her whole attention to the management of her domestic concerns. Look well to it, examine yourselves carefully. Is there no one among you who can discern his own resemblance in any of these characters? Is it a knowledge of the truth, or the power of prejudice, or compliance with custom, which induces you to assume the livery of Christianity? Is it the decision of a learned divine, and the authority of your fathers; or is it the fruit of serious study, and an enlightened persuasion? Want of illumination; this is the first article of comparison between the profane priests of Malachi's days, and profane Christians of our own times: "ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar: ye say the table of the Lord is contemptible."

2. The priests of Malachi's days profaned the table of the Lord, in refusing to fulfil the moral engagements which the ceremonial observance imposed, in the symbols of a sacred union with Deity. While they were professedly uniting themselves to the *Holy one of Israel*, they entertained sentiments the most criminal, and were chargeable with practices the most irregular and impure. They participated in the table of the Lord, while their hands were defiled with the *accursed thing*; and they presumed, by offering to God a part of what they had forcibly or fraudulently taken away from their neighbours, to make in some measure, an accomplice in their injustice and rapacity. With this they are reproached in the 12th and 13th verses of the chapter from which our text is taken: ye have polluted my table, in presenting on it that which is *torn or stolen*. They were partakers of the table of the Lord, at the very time when they were avowedly living in forbidden wedlock with pagan women. With this they are upbraided in the second chapter of this prophecy, at the eleventh verse: "Judah had dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem: for Judah hath profaned the holiness of the Lord which he loved, and hath married the

daughter of a strange god." They were partakers of the table of the Lord, at the very time when they were practising criminal divorces, and indulging themselves in sentiments the most barbarous and inhuman, towards persons whom the laws of marriage ought to have rendered dear and respectable to them. With this they are reproached in the 13th verse of the same chapter: "This have ye done again, covering the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping, and with crying out, insomuch that he regardeth not the offering any more, or receiveth it with good will at your hand. Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously; yet she is thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant." They were partakers of the table of the Lord, while they impiously dared to accuse him, not only of tolerating vice, but of loving and approving it. With this, too, they are reproached, in the 17th verse of that chapter: "Ye have wearied the Lord with your words: yet ye say, wherein have we wearied him? When ye say, every one that doth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighteth in them: or, where is the God of judgment?"

Want of virtue: a second point of comparison between the priests who said, "the table of the Lord is contemptible," and professors who, to this day, profane the holy ordinance of the supper. Can any among you discern your own likeness under this character? Are you going to vow unto the Lord an inviolable fidelity; or, while you are partaking of his grace, have you a secret reservation disrespectful to his laws? Is it your determination to put in practice the great, the essential virtues of the Christian life: or do you mean to satisfy yourselves with discharging the petty duties of morality, and with attending to the formal and less important obligations of religion? Are you going to declare war against every thing which opposes the empire of righteousness in your heart, or are you reserving the indulgence of some favourite passion, some Delilah, some Drusilla? Are you disposed to prescribe to your progress in grace a fixed point, beyond which it is needless to aim; or is it your fixed resolution, through grace, to be continually advancing towards perfection? Are you going to satisfy yourselves with vague designs; or are your projects to be supported by just measures and sage precautions?

3. Finally, the priests of Malachi's days profaned the table of the Lord, from their being destitute of a just sense of the inestimable value of the blessings communicated. It seemed to them, as if God put a price too high on the benefits which he proffered: and that, every thing weighed and adjusted, it was better to go without them, than to purchase them at the rate of such sacrifices as the possession of them demanded. This injurious mode of computation is reproved in very concise, but very energetic terms, chap. i. 13. "Ye said, what a weariness is it!" and, in another place, chap. iii. 14. "Ye have said it is vain to serve God: and what profit is it, that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts?" and at

the very beginning of the book of it is prophecy: "I have loved you, saith the Lord: yet we say, wherein hast thou loved us?" This was offering an insult to Deity, if the expression be warrantable, in the tenderest part. He declares to us, that he stands in no need of our worship, and of our homage; that, exalted to the height of felicity and glory, he can derive no advantage from our obedience and submission; that his laws are the fruit of love, and that the virtue which he prescribes to us, is the only path that can conduct us to the sovereign good. The priests belied this notion of religion.

Want of feeling: a third article of comparison, between the profanation of the table of the Lord, of which those detestable wretches rendered themselves guilty, and the guilt of Christian professors who profane the holy table of the Lord's Supper. A Christian who partakes of this sacred ordinance, ought to approach it with a heart penetrated by the unspeakable greatness of the blessings there tendered to our acceptance. He ought to view that sacred table as the centre, in which all the benedictions bestowed by the Creator meet. He ought to be making unremitting efforts to measure the boundless dimensions of the love of God, to implore the aid of the Spirit, that he may be enabled to view it in all its extent, and to "comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of that love," Eph. iii. 18. He ought to be contemplating that chain of blessings which are there displayed in intimate and inseparable union: "Whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate, to be conformed to the image of his Son . . . moreover whom he did predestinate them he also called: and whom he called them he also justified: and whom he justified them he also glorified," Rom. viii. 29, 30. Under a sense of favours so numerous, and so distinguishing, he ought to cry out with the psalmist: "How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures," Ps. xxxvi. 7, 8. He ought to exclaim, with a soul absorbed in the immensity of the divine goodness: "my soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness," Ps. lxxiii. 5. He ought, above all, to be struck with the incomprehensible disproportion there is between what God does for us, and what he requires of us. He ought to make the same estimate of things which St. Paul did; "I reckon, that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us," Rom. viii. 18, every thing fairly considered, *I reckon* that the trouble which the study of his religion demands, the sacrifices exacted of God, the constraint to which I am subjected in immolating to him my sinful passions, in resisting a torrent of corruption, in struggling against the influence of bad example, in straining to rise above flesh and blood, above self-love and nature: every thing fairly considered, *I reckon* that whatever is demanded of us by God, when we come to his table, is not once to be compared with the favours which he there dispenses, with the grand objects which

he there displays, with the pardon which he there pronounces, with the peace of conscience which he there bestows, with the eternal glory which he there promises. To be destitute of such feelings as these, when we partake of the Lord's Supper, is to profane it. Examine yourselves once more by this standard. Want of feeling, this was the third head of comparison between profane Jews, and profane Christian professors: "Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; ye say the table of the Lord is contemptible."

Let each of us examine himself by an application of the truths now delivered. I shall address myself,

1. To those who, on reviewing their former communion services, see cause to consider themselves as chargeable with the guilt which God imputed to the Jews who lived in the days of Malachi. And would to God that this topic of discourse might have no reference to any one in this assembly! Would to God that no one of you might be justly ranked in any of the odious classes which we have enumerated!

But only employ a moment's reflection, on the shortness of the time usually devoted to preparation for partaking of the Lord's Supper. It is evident, as I think, from all we have said, that the preparation necessary to a worthy receiving of it, is a work, nay, a work which calls for both attention and exertion. But do we, of a truth, set apart much of our time to this work? I do not mean to examine all the cases in which a man may communicate unworthily; I confine myself to a single point, and only repeat this one reflection: Preparation for the Lord's table is a work which requires time, attention, exertion. That is enough; that proves too much against us all. For we are constrained to acknowledge, that it is by no means customary among us to retire for meditation, to fast, to engage in peculiar acts of devotion, on the days which precede a communion solemnity. It is no unusual thing to see, on those days, at many of our houses, parties formed, social festivity going on: in these we see the same games, the same amusements, the same dissipation, as at other times. I have reason to believe that in other protestant countries, though the same corruptions but too universally prevail, I believe, nevertheless, that such days are there distinguished by the suspension of parties of pleasure, by discontinuance of certain practices, perhaps abundantly innocent in themselves, but, at the same time, too foreign to the design of the holy communion, to engage our attention, when we have an immediate prospect of partaking of it. But in these provinces, we are so far from coming up to the spirit and the truth of Christianity, the exterior order and decency of it are hardly observed.

But if this reflection be insufficient to convince you of a truth so mortifying, as that there is much unworthy communicating in the midst of us; think, I beseech you, on the slightness of the changes which these solemnities produce. Here is the touchstone; this is the infallible standard by which to determine the interesting question under discussion. Four times a year we almost all of us come to the table of the Lord Jesus Christ; four times a

year we partake of the holy sacrament of the supper; four times a year, consequently, this church ought to assume a new appearance; four times a year we ought to see multitudes of new converts. But do we see them of a truth? Ah! I dare not dive to the bottom of this mortifying subject. The evil is but too apparent; we have but too good reason to allege, that there is much unworthy communicating in the midst of us.

It is with you, unhappy professors of the Christian name, with you I must begin the application of this discourse: with you who have so often found out the fatal secret of drawing a mortal poison from that sacred table: with you, who are, by and by, going once more perhaps to derive a curse from the very bosom of benediction, and death from the fountain of life.

Do not deceive yourselves; seek not a disguise from your own wretchedness; think not of extenuating the apprehension of your danger; listen, O listen to the fearful threatenings denounced by the prophet, against God's ancient people, after he had addressed them in the words of the text: "Cursed be the deceiver which . . . voweth and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing . . . if ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the Lord of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings . . . I will corrupt your seed, and spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts," chap. i. 14; ii. 2, 3.

But on the other hand, infuse not poison into your wounds, aggravate not the image of your wretchedness, but attend to the comfortable words, which immediately follow those of my text: "Now I pray you, beseech God that he will be gracious unto us . . . he will regard your persons," ver. 9. The sentence of your condemnation is not yet executed: the doom of death which has been pronounced against you is not irrevocable. I see you still blended with Christians who have communicated worthily, and who are going to repeat that delightful service: I still behold "the riches of God's goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering . . . leading you to repentance," Rom. ii. 4, and you may still become partakers in the blessedness of this day.

You must have recourse to that same Jesus whom you have so cruelly insulted: you must be covered with that very blood which you have "trampled under foot" in a manner so profane: you must flee and take refuge under the shadow of that very cross, to which you was going to nail afresh the Lord of glory: you must, by ardent and importunate supplication, avert the thunderbolt, which is ready to be launched against your guilty head; "O Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath; neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure," Ps. xxxviii. 1. "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight; . . . deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation; restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free Spirit," Ps. li. 4. 14. 12.

But, above all, resolutions sincere, determinate, efficacious, followed up by execution

from the moment you retire from this place must supply the want of preparation, and the communicating of this day must make up the defects of all that preceded it. And if God has not in mercy granted you such dispositions as these, may he inspire you, at least, with a resolution not to approach his table, for fear of arming his right hand with hotter thunderbolts to crush and destroy you! or rather, may God grant you those happy dispositions, and graciously accept them when bestowed! may it please God to be disarmed by your repentance, to gather up your tears, to regard with an eye of favour your efforts, your feeble efforts! May God grant your absolution, your salvation, to the earnest prayers of these his faithful servants, or rather, to the all-powerful intercession of the Redeemer, unprotected by which the most eminent of saints durst not lift up their eyes to heaven, and approach the throne of the divine Majesty.

2. I now turn to you, my dearly beloved brethren, who, while you reflect on communion seasons past, can enjoy the testimony of conscience, that you drew nigh to God in some state of preparation, and that you have reason to hope for a repetition of the same felicity. This ceremony is so august; the mysteries which it unfolds, are so awful; the punishment denounced against those who profane it, is so tremendous, that it is impossible to escape every emotion of fear, when engaged in the celebration of it. Study to be sensible of your own weakness. Say, in the language of repentance the most lively and sincere, and of humility the most profound, "If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities: O Lord, who shall stand?" Ps. cxxx. 3. "O Lord God, I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast showed unto thy servant," Gen. xxxii. 10. Stand in awe of the presence of the majesty of God Almighty; cry out with Jacob, "How dreadful is this place! this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven," Gen. xxvii. 17.

But while you render unto God, the homage of holy fear, honour him likewise with that of holy confidence. Think not that he loves to be always viewed as "the great, the mighty, and the terrible God," Neh. ix. 32, the God who "is a consuming fire," Heb. xii. 29. He draws nigh to you in this ordinance, not with awful manifestations of vengeance; but with all the attractions of his grace, with all the gifts of his Spirit, with all the demonstrations of his love. Bow down over the mystical ark, together with the celestial intelligences, and admire the wonders which it contains, and beholding with them "the glory" of your Redeemer, with them cry out, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory," Isa. vi. 3.

Study to know and to feel the whole extent of your felicity, and let a sense of the benefits with which God hath loaded thee, kindle the hallowed flame of gratitude in your hearts. "Hast thou ever, O my soul, been made sensible of the unbounded nature of thy happiness?"

Hast thou exerted thyself to the uttermost, to take all the immeasurable dimensions of the love of God? Hast thou reflected profoundly, on a God who was made flesh, who rescues thee from everlasting misery, who covers thy person with his own, that the arrows of divine wrath may pierce him only, without reaching thee? Hast thou seriously considered, that if God had hurried thee out of the world in a state of unrepented guilt; if he had not plucked thee, by a miracle of grace, out of the vortex of human things, instead of being surrounded, as now, with these thy fellow-believers in Christ Jesus, thou mightest have been doomed to the society of demons; instead of those songs of praise to which thy voice is now attuned, thou mightest this day have been mingling thy howlings with those of the victims, whom the wrath of God is immolating in the regions of despair. Let the blessedness which God is accumulating upon us, support us under all the ills which we are called to endure. Our life is not yet concluded; our warfare is not yet accomplished.

We are about to return into the world; we have still difficulties and dangers to encounter, bitter potions to swallow, afflictions to suffer; especially in this age of fire and of blood so fatal to the Christian name. But, supported by this grace of God, we shall be able to resist and to overcome the most violent assaults.

We are going to return into the world, amidst the snares of the wicked one; he will still aim many a blow at our souls; this flesh is not yet entirely mortified; the old man has not yet received his death's wound; evil concupiscence is not yet completely extinguished; we shall fall into sin again. Humiliating reflection to a soul which this day places all its delight in being united unto God! But, supported by this peace of God, we shall find the means of remedying the weakness with which we may be still overtaken, as it has furnished the means of deliverance from those into which we had already fallen.

We are going to return into the world, it is high time to think of our departure out of it. We are conversant with the living; we must think of being speedily mingled with the dead. We yet live; we must die. We must be looking forward to those mortal agonies which are preparing; to that bed of languishing which is already spread; to that funeral procession which is marshalling for us. But, supported by this peace of God, we shall be more than conquerors in all these conflicts: with "the Spirit of him who hath raised up Christ from the dead," we shall bid defiance to all the powers of "the king of terrors." Jesus, who "hath destroyed him who had the power of death," will deliver us from his dominion. Through that gloomy night which is fast approaching, and which is already covering our eyes with its awful shade, we shall behold the rays of "the Son of righteousness," and their divine light shall dissipate to us all the horrors of "the valley of the shadow of death." Amen. To God be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON LXXVII.

THE RAPTURE OF ST. PAUL

PART I.

2 COR. xii. 2—4.

I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) how that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

If there be a passage in the whole Bible capable of inflaming, and at the same time of baffling human curiosity, it is that which I have just now read. I do not mean a vain and presumptuous curiosity, but a curiosity apparently founded on reason and justice. One of the principal causes of our want of ardour in the pursuit of heavenly blessings, is our having no experienced witness, who, after having himself tasted the sweetness of them, conveyed to us clear and distinct ideas on the subject. It is a difficult matter to love that of which we have no knowledge.

St. Paul seems to have been reserved of God to supply this defect, and to fill up, if I may use the expression, this void in religion. By a supernatural dispensation of grace, he passes into the other world before death; and he returns thence before the general resurrection. The whole church, awakened to eager attention, calls upon him for a detail of the wonders of the world unknown. And as the Israelites, after having despatched spies into the land of promise, burned with ardent desire to see and hear them, in order that they might obtain information respecting the country, whether it merited the exertions necessary to acquire possession: in like manner, the Christian world seems to flock round our apostle, in earnest expectation of being informed what that felicity is, into which they are invited to enter by a gate so strait. They seem with one accord to ask him: What did you hear? What did you see? in the view of determining, upon his report, this all important question, whether they should still persevere in their exertions, to surmount the obstacles which they have to encounter in the way of salvation, or whether they should relinquish the pursuit.

But St. Paul fulfils not this expectation: he maintains a profound silence respecting the objects which had been presented to his mind: he speaks of his rapture, only in the view of confounding those false teachers who took upon them to set at nought his ministry: and all the description he gives of paradise, amounts to no more than a declaration of his own utter inability to describe what he had seen and heard. "I knew a man in Christ: a man in Christ," that is to say, a Christian, and by this denomination the apostle is characterizing himself, "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell: or whether out of the body, I

cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) how that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter."

We propose in the following discourse, my brethren, to attempt a solution of the difficulty which arises from this silence of the apostle. We propose to discuss this singular, but interesting question; Wherefore is the celestial felicity "unspeakable?" Wherefore should it be unlawful for a man to utter it? We shall begin with some elucidation of the expressions of our text, inquiring, 1. Into the era to which reference is here made; "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago." 2. By considering what is said respecting the manner of this rapture; "Whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body I cannot tell: God knoweth." 3. What we are to understand by *paradise*, and *the third heaven*. 4. Finally, What ideas we are to affix to those *unspeakable words* to which our apostle alludes in the text; and these will constitute the first general division of our subject.

But in the second, which we have principally in view, we shall examine the point already indicated, by inquiring, whether the silence of Scripture respecting a state of future happiness, suggests any thing tending to cool our ardour in the pursuit of it: we shall endeavour to make you sensible, that nothing is so much calculated to convey lofty ideas of the paradise of God, as that very veil which conceals it from our eyes. If you fully enter into the great aim and end of this discourse, it will produce on your minds those effects to which all our exhortations, all our importunities are adapted, namely, to kindle in your hearts an ardent desire to go to God; to put into your mouths that exclamation of the psalmist: "How great is thy goodness, O God, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee!" Ps. xxxi. 19; to place you in the very situation of our apostle, who after having been "caught up to the third heaven," could no longer endure to live upon the earth, had his eyes opened to every path that led to death, could talk no more of any thing but of dying, "but of finishing his course," 2 Tim. iv. 7, but of being "absent from the body," 2 Cor. v. 8, but of *departing*, but of "being with Christ, which was to him far better," Phil. i. 23.

I. We begin with some elucidation of the expressions of the text, and of these,

1. The first refers to the era of St. Paul's rapture, I knew a man in Christ "above fourteen years ago." But were we to enter into a complete discussion of this question, it would occupy much more time than is allotted for the whole of our present exercise. Never had preacher a fairer opportunity of wasting an hour to his hearers, in useless investigation, and impertinent quotations. We could easily supply you with an ample list of the opinions of interpreters, and of the reasons adduced by each, in support of his own. We could tell you, first, how it is alleged by some that these *fourteen years* denote the time elapsed from the conversion of St. Paul; and that his rapture

took place during those *three days* in which "he was without sight, and did neither eat nor drink," Acts ix. 9., and to this purpose we could quote Capel, Lira, Cave, Tostat, and many other authors, unknown to the greater part of my audience.

We might add, that some other commentators refer this epoch to the eighth year after St. Paul's conversion to Christianity, the forty-fourth of Jesus Christ, and the twelfth after his death.

We could show you how others insist, with a greater air of probability, that the apostle enjoyed this heavenly vision, when, after his contention with Barnabas, humiliating instance of the infirmity of the greatest saints, he prosecuted his ministry in a different track. Those who adopt this opinion, allege, in support of it, the words of St. Paul in chap. xxii. of the Acts, ver. 17. "It came to pass, that when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance." But disquisitions of this sort are unworthy of the place which I now have the honour to fill. I have matters of much higher importance to propose to you.

2. The manner of St. Paul's rapture stands in need, perhaps, of some elucidation. He has expressed it in terms very much calculated to check curiosity. "Whether in the body I cannot tell: or whether out of the body I cannot tell." We, accordingly, presume not to pursue researches on points respecting which the apostle himself professes ignorance.

Let it only be remarked, that God was pleased, in former times, to manifest himself in many different manners. Sometimes it was by a voice: witness that which issued out of the cloud, Exod. xvi. 10; witness that which addressed Moses from the burning bush, Ex. iii. 4; witness that which thundered from Mount Sinai at the giving of the law, Exod. xix. 16; witness that which answered Job out of the whirlwind, chap. xxxviii. 1; witness that from above the mercy-seat, Exod. xxv. 22.

He was pleased at other times, to reveal himself in dreams and visions of the night: as to Jacob at Bethel, Gen. xxviii. 12; to Abimelech, Gen. xx. 3; and to Pharaoh's butler, Gen. xl. 9.

He sometimes manifested himself in visions to persons awake. Thus he presented to Moses in Horeb a bush burning with fire yet unconsumed, Exod. iii. 4: to Balaam, an angel with his sword drawn in his hand, Num. xxii. 32; to Joshua, the captain of the Lord's host, Josh. v. 15.

He sometimes communicated himself to men through the medium of inspiration, accompanied with emotions which constrained them to speak out. This was the case with Jeremiah, as we read, chap. xx. 8, 9, "The word of the Lord was made a reproach unto me, and a derision daily. Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing."

But of all those miraculous dispensations, the most noble and exalted was that of *rapture* or *ecstasy*. By the term *ecstasy* we mean that powerful conflict, that concentration of thought,

that profound intensesness of mental application, under the influence of which the enraptured person is emancipated from the communications of the senses, forgets his body, and is completely absorbed by the object of his meditation.

Rapture is perhaps a degree superior to *ecstasy*. Sometimes it affects *the mind*. This is the case when God, in virtue of that sovereign power which he possesses over the soul of man, excites in it the same ideas, causes it to perceive the same objects, with which it would be struck, were the body, to which it is united, really in a place from whence it is extremely remote. It is thus that we must explain the rapture of the prophet Ezekiel, chap. viii. 3; and that of which St. John speaks in the book of Revelation, chap. i. 10.

It sometimes affects *the body*. This was the case of Philip, who, after he had converted to the faith of Christ the eunuch of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, and baptized him, was "caught away by the spirit of the Lord, that the eunuch saw him no more," Acts viii. 39.

Though St. Paul has spoken very sparingly of the manner in which God was pleased to reveal himself to him, he has said enough to show that it is holy *rapture* he means. But whether it were that which transported the body into another place, or that which transported the mind only: nay, whether there be a real difference between rapture and ecstasy, no one can pretend to determine, without incurring the charge of presumption. The apostle himself declares that it surpassed his own knowledge; "whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth, such an one caught up to the third heaven . . . caught up into paradise."

3. *The third heaven, paradise*: another subject of elucidation. The *third heaven* is the habitation of the blessed; that in which God displays the most splendid and glorious tokens of his presence: this is disputed by no one.—But the other expression employed by St. Paul, "caught up into paradise," has furnished matter for controversy among the learned. It has long been made a question whether *paradise* and the third heaven denote one and the same place. Certain modern interpreters have maintained the negative, with excessive warmth. A great number of the ancient fathers had adopted the same opinion. They considered *paradise* as a mansion in which the soul resided till the resurrection, and they distinguished it from heaven. Justin Martyr, disputing with Tryphon, condemns, as equally erroneous, the denying of the doctrine of the resurrection, and the opinion which supposes that the souls of men go to God immediately after death. In this they follow the prejudices of the Jews.—Many of them believe that the souls of good people are translated to the garden of Eden, to wait for the day of the resurrection: they accordingly employ this form of prayer for dying persons: "May his soul be received into the garden of Eden; may he have his part in paradise; may he repose, and sleep in peace till the coming of the Comforter, who shall speak peace to the fathers. O ye to whom the treasures of paradise are committed, open now its gates that he may enter in."

But this error, however long it may have subsisted, and by whatever great names it may have been maintained, is nevertheless an error, as might be demonstrated by more arguments than we have now leisure to adduce. You have only to read the prayer which Jesus Christ addressed to his father a little before his death, where you will find him demanding immediate admission into the heavenly felicity. He says, likewise, to the penitent thief on the cross, "Verily I say unto thee, to-day thou shalt be with me in paradise," Luke xxiii. 43. *Paradise*, therefore, is the place in which God displays the most august symbols of his presence, and is not different from the *third heaven*.

Now, if it be asked, why this name is given to the *third heaven*, it will be necessary to recur to its first original. Persons who have applied to the dry study of etymology assure us that the word is of Persian extraction, and that the Persians gave the name of paradise to the parks and gardens of their kings. It came in process of time to denote all places of a similar description. It passed from the Persians to the Greeks, to the Hebrews, to the Latins.* We find it employed in this sense in Nehemiah ii. 8, in Ecclesiastes ii. 5, in many profane authors; and the Jews gave this name to the garden of Eden in which Adam was placed. You will find it in the second chapter of the book of Genesis. But enough, and more than enough, has been suggested on this head.

4. There is but one particular more that requires some elucidation. "I knew a man," adds the apostle, "who heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." *To see things*, and *to hear words*, are, in the style of the sacred writers, frequently used as phrases of similar import, and it is not on this ground that the difficulty of the present article presses. But, what can be the meaning of the apostle, when he asserts that the words which he heard, or the things which he saw, "are unspeakable," and "which it is not lawful for a man to utter?" Had he been laid under a prohibition to reveal the particulars of his vision? Had he lost the ideas of it? Or were the things which he heard and saw of such a nature as to be absolutely inexpressible by mortal lips? There is some plausible reasoning that may be employed in support of each of the three opinions.

The first has numerous partisans. Their belief is that God had revealed mysteries to St. Paul, but with a prohibition to disclose them to the world; they believe that the apostle, after having been rapt into the third heaven, had received a charge similar to that which was given to St. John, in a like situation, and which is transmitted to us in chap. x. of the book of Revelation, 4th verse, "Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not." Thus it was that the pagans denominated certain of their mysteries *ineffable*, because it was forbidden to reveal them. Thus, too, the Jews called the name of Jehovah *ineffable*, because it was unlawful to pronounce it.

The second opinion is not destitute of probability. As the soul of St. Paul had no sensible intercourse with his body, during this rap-

ture, it is not unlikely that the objects which struck him, having left no trace in the brain, he lost the recollection of a great part of what he had seen.

But we are under no obligation to restrict ourselves to either of these senses. The words of the original translated "unspeakable, which it is not lawful for a man to utter," frequently denote that which is not of a nature to be explained: thus it is said, that "the Spirit maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered," Rom. viii. 26. Thus, too, St. Peter mentions a "joy unspeakable and full of glory," chap. i. 8., and we shall presently see that the heavenly felicity is, in this sense, unspeakable.

Again, among those who have pursued researches, respecting the things which St. Paul declares to be *unspeakable*, some have pretended to tell us, that he means the divine essence: others, that it was the hierarchal order of the celestial intelligences; others, that it was the beauty and excellency of glorified souls; others, that it was the mystery of the rejection of the Jewish nation, and of the calling of the Gentiles; others, that it was the destination of the Christian church through its successive periods. But wherefore should we attempt to affix precise limits to the things which our apostle heard and saw? He was rapt up to the very seat of the blessed; and he there, undoubtedly, partook of the felicity which they enjoy.

Had men employed their imagination only on the discussion of this question, no great harm could have ensued. But it is impossible to behold, without indignation, the inventors of fictitious pieces carrying their insolence so far, as to forge writings, which they ascribed to the Spirit of God himself, and in which they pretended those mysteries were explained. St. Epiphanius relates,* that certain ancient heretics, these were the *Gaianites* or *Cainites*, had invented a book which was afterwards adopted by the Gnostics. They gave it the name of *The Ascension of St. Paul*, and presume to allege, that this book discovered what those "unspeakable things" were, which the apostle had heard.† St. Augustine speaks of the same work, as a gross imposture. Nicephorus tells us,‡ that a story was current, under the emperor Theodosius, of the discovery, in the house of St. Paul at Tarsus, of a marble chest, buried in the earth, and which contained the *Apocalypse of St. Paul*. He himself refutes this fiction, by the testimony of a man of Tarsus, a member of the Presbytery.

The impostor, who is the author of the work ascribed to Dionysius the Areopagite, and who gives himself out as that illustrious proselyte of our apostle, boasts of his having heard him relate wonderful things respecting the nature, the glory, the gifts, the beauty of angels; and upon this testimony it is that he founds the chimerical idea which he has given us of the celestial hierarchy.

But let us have done with all these frivolous conjectures, with all these impious fictions. We are going to propose much nobler objects to your meditation, and to examine, as has

* Pollux Onomast.

* Heres. 38.

† Treatise 98. on St. John.

‡ Hist. Eccles. lib. xii. cap. 34.

been said, this singular, but interesting question, Wherefore is the celestial glory of such a nature as to defy description? Why is it "not lawful for a man to utter them?" We are going to avail ourselves of this very inability to describe these gloriously *unspeakable* things, as the means of conveying to you exalted ideas of them, and of kindling in your souls more ardent desires after the possession of them. This shall be the subject of the second part of our discourse.

SERMON LXXVII.

THE RAPTURE OF ST. PAUL.

PART II.

2 COR. xii. 2—4.

I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) how that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

HAVING presented you with some brief elucidations of the expressions of the text, namely, 1. Respecting the era to which reference is here made; "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago." 2. Respecting the manner of his rapture; "whether in the body, I cannot tell: or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;" 3. Respecting the place to which Paul was caught; "paradise, the third heaven;" and, 4. Respecting what he there saw and heard; "unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter;" we proceed to,

II. The second general head, namely, to inquire, whether the silence of Scripture on the subject of a state of future happiness, suggests any thing that has a tendency to cool our ardour in the pursuit of it; or, whether this very veil, which conceals the paradise of God from our eyes, is not above all things calculated to convey the most exalted ideas of it.

We refer the felicity of the blessed in heaven to three general notions. The blessed in heaven possess, 1. Superior illumination: 2. They are prompted by inclinations the most noble and refined: 3. They enjoy the purest sensible pleasures. A defect of genius prevents our ability to partake of their illumination; a defect of taste prevents our adopting their inclinations; a defect of faculty prevents our perception of their pleasures. In these three respects, the celestial felicity is "unspeakable;" in these three respects, "it is not lawful for a man to utter it."

1. The blessed in heaven possess superior *illumination*: a defect of genius prevents our participation of it.

While we are in this world, we are deficient in many ideas. Properly speaking, we have ideas of two kinds only: that of body, and that of spirit. The combination of those two ideas forms all our perceptions, all our speculations, the whole body of our knowledge. And what-

ever efforts may have been made by certain philosophers to prove that we are acquainted with beings intermediate between mind and matter, they have never been able to persuade others of it, and probably entertained no such persuasion themselves. But if all beings which are within the sphere of our knowledge be referrible to these two ideas, where is the person who is bold enough to affirm, that there are in fact no others? Where is the man who dares to maintain, that the creation of bodies, and that of spirits, have exhausted the omnipotence of the Creator? Who shall presume to affirm, that this infinite intelligence, to whom the universe is indebted for its existence, could find only two ideas in his treasures?

May it not be possible that the blessed in heaven, have the idea of certain beings which possess no manner of relation to any thing of which we have a conception upon earth? May it not be possible that God impressed this idea on the soul of St. Paul? May not this be one of the reasons of the impossibility to which he is reduced, of describing what he had seen? For when we speak to other men, we go on the supposition that they have souls similar to our own, endowed with the same faculties, enriched with the same sources of thought. We possess certain signs, certain words to express our conceptions. We oblige our fellow men to retire within themselves, to follow up their principles, to examine their notions. It is thus we are enabled to communicate our notions to each other. But this is absolutely impracticable with regard to those beings who may be known to the blessed above. There is in this respect, no notion in common to us and them. We have no term by which to express them. God himself alone has the power of impressing new ideas on the soul of man. All that men can do is to render us attentive to those which we already have, and to assist us in unfolding them.

Besides, so long as we are upon earth, we have but a very imperfect knowledge of the two orders of beings, to which all our knowledge is confined. Our ideas are incomplete. We have only a very imperfect perception of body, and of spirit. We have,

1. Very imperfect ideas of body. And without entering here into the discussion of the endless metaphysical questions of which the subjects admit, and, in order to convey an example of it, brought down to the level of the meanest capacity, the magnitude of bodies, and their smallness, almost equally exceed our comprehension. We begin with forming to ourselves the idea of a portion of matter; we divide it into minute particles; we reduce it to powder, till the particles become entirely imperceptible to our senses. When the senses fail, we have recourse to imagination. We subdivide, in imagination, that same portion of matter, particle after particle, till it is reduced to such a degree of minuteness, as to escape imagination, as it had eluded the senses. After the senses and the imagination have been stretched to the uttermost, we call in thought to our aid; we consult the idea which we have of matter; we subject it to a new subdivision in thought. Thought transcends imagination and the senses. But after having pursued it to

a certain point, we find thought absorbed in its turn, and we feel ourselves equally lost, whether we are disposed to admit an infinite progression in this division, or whether we are disposed to stop at a certain determinate point.

What we have said of the smallness of bodies, holds equally true of their immensity of magnitude. We are able, with the help of the senses of the imagination, and of thought, to increase a mass of matter, to suppose it still greater, to conceive it still exceeding the former magnitude. But after we have acted, imagined, reflected; and, after we have risen in thought to a certain degree of extension, were we disposed to go on to the conception of one still greater, we should at length feel ourselves absorbed in the inconceivable magnitude of matter, as it had eluded our pursuit by its minuteness. So incomplete are our ideas even of matter. And if so, then,

2. How much more imperfect still is our knowledge of what relates to mind! Who ever presumed to unfold all that a spirit is capable of? Who has ever determined the connexion which subsists within us, between the faculty which feels, and that which reflects? Who has ever discovered the manner in which one spirit is enabled to communicate its feelings and reflections to another? Who has formed a conception of the means by which a spirit becomes capable of acting upon a body, and a body upon a spirit? It is to me then demonstrably certain, that we know but in an imperfect manner, the very things of which we have any ideas at all.

The blessed in heaven have complete ideas of these; they penetrate into the minutest particles of matter; they discern all the wonders, all the latent springs, all the subtilty of the smallest parts of the body, which contain worlds in miniature, an epitome of the great universe, and not less calculated to excite admiration of the wisdom of the Creator;* they traverse that immensity of space, those celestial globes, those immeasurable spheres, the existence of which it is impossible for us to call in question, but whose enormous mass and countless multitude confound and overwhelm us. The blessed in heaven know the nature of spirits, their faculties, their relations, their intercourse, their laws. But all this is inexplicable. Is any one capable of changing our senses? Is any one capable of giving a more extensive range to our imagination? Is it possible to remove the barriers which limit thought?

While we are on the earth, we discern but very imperfectly the relations which subsist even between the things which we do know. Contracted, incomplete as our ideas are, we should, nevertheless, make some progress in our researches after truth, had we the power of reflecting, of recollection, of fixing our attention to a certain degree, of comparing beings with each other, and thus advancing from those which we already know, to those with which we are hitherto unacquainted. Men are more or less intelligent, according as they are in the habit of being more or less attentive. A man brought up in the midst of noise, in tumult; a man

whom tumult and noise pursue wherever he goes, is incapable of composed recollection, because carrying always in himself a source of distraction, he becomes incapable of profound reflection upon any one object abstracted from and unconnected with matter. But a philosopher accustomed to meditate, is able to follow up a principle to a degree totally inaccessible to the other. Nevertheless, whatever a man's attainments may be in the art of attention, it must always be contracted within very narrow limits; because we still consist in part, of body; because this body is ever exciting sensations in the soul; because the soul is continually distracted by these sensations; because that, in order to meditate, there is occasion for a great concourse of the spirits necessary to the support of the body, so that attention wearied out, exhausted, does violence to that body; to such a degree, that if, by the aid of an extraordinary concourse of spirits, we should be disposed to exert the brain beyond a certain pitch, the effort would prove fatal to us.

The blessed in heaven are not liable to have their attention disturbed by the action of the senses. St. Paul, by means of a supernatural interposition, had his soul, if not separated from the body (for he himself knows not whether his rapture were *in the body*, or *out of the body*,) at least emancipated from that continual distraction to which it is subject, in virtue of its union with matter. He could be self-collected, attentive, absorbed of the objects which God presented to his mind. He could discern the mutual relation of the designs of eternal wisdom, the harmony of the works of God, the concatenation of his purposes, the combination of his attributes; sublime objects which he could not possibly display to men incapable of that degree of attention, without which no conception can be formed of those objects.

Does not this first reason, my beloved brethren, of our apostle's silence on the subject of the heavenly felicity, already produce on your souls, the effect at which this discourse is principally aiming? Has it not already kindled within you an ardent desire to attain that felicity? Soul of man, susceptible of so many ideas, of such enlarged knowledge, of illumination so unbounded, is it possible for thee to sojourn without reluctance, in a body which narrows thy sphere, and cramps thy nobler faculties? Philosopher, who art straining every nerve, who givest thyself no rest to attain a degree of knowledge incompatible with the condition of humanity: geometrician, who, after an incredible expense of thought, of meditation, of reflection, art able to attain at most the knowledge of the relations of a circle or of a triangle: theologian, who, after so many days of labour and nights of watching, hast scarcely arrived at the capacity of explaining a few passages of holy writ, of correcting, by an effort, some silly prejudice; wretched mortals, how much are you to be pitied! how impotent and ineffectual are all exertions to acquire real knowledge! I think I am beholding one of those animals, the thickness of whose blood, the grossness of whose humours, the encumbrance of that house with which nature loads them, preventing them from moving with fa-

* For a farther illustration of this part of the subject, the Philosophical and Christian reader is referred to the Letters of Euler to a German Princess, Letter l. vol. i. published by the Translator of this volume, 1794.

cility; I think I am beholding one of those animals, striving to move over an immense space in a little, little hour. He strains, he bustles, he toils, he flatters himself with having made a mighty progress, he exults in the thought of attaining the end which he had proposed. The hour elapses, and the progress which he has made is a mere nothing, compared with the immensity of the space still untrodden.

Thus, loaded with a body replenished with gross humours, retarded by matter, we are able, in the course of the longest life, to acquire but a very slender and imperfect degree of knowledge. This body must drop: this spirit must disengage itself before it can become capable of soaring unencumbered, of penetrating into futurity, and of attaining that height and depth of knowledge which the blessed in heaven possess.

Not only from revelation do we derive these ideas, not even from reason, in its present high state of improvement; they were entertained in the ancient pagan world. We find this subject profoundly investigated, I had almost said exhausted in the *Phædon* of Plato. Socrates considers his body as the greatest obstacle in the way of seeking after truth. And this brings to my recollection the beautiful expression of a certain Anchorite, to the same purpose; extenuated, infirm, sinking under a load of years, on the point of expiring, he breaks out into singing. "He is asked, Wherefore singest thou? "Ah! I sing," says he, "because I see that wall tumbling down, which hinders me from beholding the face of God." Yes, this body is a wall which prevents our seeing God. Fall down, fall down, interposing invidious wall: fall down impenetrable wall, and then we shall see God. But to man in his present state, to man loaded with a body like this, the *illumination* of the blessed in heaven is among the things which are *unspeakable*.

2. The blessed in heaven are prompted by *inclination* the most noble and refined; a defect of taste prevents our adopting and enjoying the same inclinations.

All tastes are not similar. Men agree tolerably well in the vague notions of honour, of pleasure, of generosity, of nobility. But that which appears pleasure to one, is insupportable to another; that which appears noble, generous to one, appears mean, grovelling, contemptible to another. So that the idea which you might suggest to your neighbour, of a pleasant and desirable mode of living, might, in all probability, convey to him ideas of life the most odious and disgusting.

Who is able to make a man plunged in business to comprehend, that there is pleasure inexpressible in studying truth, in making additions to a stock of knowledge, in diving into mysteries? Who is able to persuade a miser, that there is a delight which nothing can equal, in relieving the miserable, in ministering to their necessities, in sharing fortunes with them, and thus, to use the expression of Scripture, to draw nigh to a man's "own flesh?" Isa. lviii. 7. Who is able to convince a grovelling and dastardly soul, that there is joy to be found in pursuing glory through clouds of smoke and showers of iron, in braving instant and certain

dangers, in bidding defiance to almost inevitable death? In general, what arguments are sufficient to convince a worldlying, that the purest and most perfect delights are to be enjoyed in exercises of devotion, in those effusions of the heart, in that emptying us of ourselves, of which the saints of God have given us such warm recommendations, and such amiable examples? These are the things of the spirit of God, which the natural man receiveth not, because they are spiritually discerned," 1 Cor. ii. 14: because he is destitute of that taste, which alone can enable him to relish their charms.

Now, my brethren, although the love of God be the principle of all the exalted virtues possessed by the saints in glory, as well as by those who remain still on the earth; although both agree in this general and vague notion, that to love God is the sublimity of virtue; nevertheless, there is a distance so inconceivable, between the love which we have for God on the earth, and that which inspires the blessed in heaven, that inclinations entirely different result from it.

We know God very imperfectly while we are upon the earth, and our love to him is in proportion to the imperfection of our knowledge. To come to his holy temple, to hearken to his word, to sing his praises, to administer and to partake of his sacramental ordinances; to pant after a union of which we cannot so much as form an idea, to practice the virtues which our present condition imposes; such is the taste which that love inspires; such are the particular inclinations which it excites in our souls. After all, how often are those feelings blunted by prevailing attachment to the creature? How often are they too faint to animate us to engage in those exercises? How often do we present ourselves before God, like victims dragged reluctantly to the altar? How often must a sense of duty supply the want of inclination, and hell opening under our feet, produce in our souls the effects which ought to flow from the love of God purely? But, be it as it may, our love, so long as we continue here below, can go no further than this. That complete devotedness to God, those voluntary sacrifices, that sublimity of virtue which refers every thing to God and to him alone, are wholly unknown to us; we have neither ideas to conceive them ourselves, nor terms in which to convey them to the minds of others.

The blessed in heaven know God perfectly, and have a love to him proportioned to the perfection of that knowledge, and inclinations proportioned to that love. We know what may be impressed on the heart of man, by the idea of a God known as supremely wise, as supremely powerful, as supremely amiable. The blessed in heaven take pleasure in exercises which Scripture describes in language adapted to our present capacities. To this purpose are such as the following expressions, "To cast their crowns before the throne," Rev. iv. 10; "to behold always the face of their father which is in heaven," Matt. xviii. 10, as courtiers do that of their sovereign: to "cover their faces" in his presence, Isa. vi. 2; "to sing a new song before the throne," Rev.

xiv. 3; to fly at his command with the rapidity of the "wind and of a flame of fire," Heb. i. 7; to "cry one to another, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts," Isa. vi. 3; to burn, to bear the name of *Seraphim*, that is, burning with zeal. These are emblems presented to our imagination. The thing itself cannot be brought down to the level of our capacity. We are ignorant of the effect, because the cause is far beyond our comprehension. We are strangers to the joy flowing from it, because we want the taste which alone can enable us to relish such delights.

Nay more, with the taste which we have upon the earth, such and such a joy of the blessed above would appear the severest of punishments to the greatest of saints among us. The essence of the felicity of saints in glory consists in loving God only, and all other things in reference to God. The sentiments by which they are animated relatively to other beings, are not sentiments of blood, of the spirits, of temperament, like those by which we are actuated here below, they are regulated by order; they refer all to God alone: the blessed above are affected with the felicity and the misery of others, only in so far as these relate to the great moving principles by which they are governed. But that felicity depicted to men upon earth, and applied to particular cases, would appear to them a real punishment. Could a father relish a felicity which he was told he could not possibly share with his child? Could the friend enjoy tranquillity, were he haunted by the thought, that the friend of his heart lay groaning under chains of darkness? Have we so much love for order; are we sufficiently disposed to refer all our inclinations to God, so as to have that taste, which considers objects as amiable and interesting, only as they have a relation to that order, and to that glory of the Creator? And do we not feel, that a felicity relative to a taste which we do not possess, nay, opposite to that which we now have, is a felicity *unspeakable*.

3. The third notion which we suggested to you, of the heavenly felicity, is that of *sensible pleasure*. A defect of faculty prevents our perception of their pleasures.

Be not surprised that we introduce sensations of pleasure, into the ideas of a felicity perfectly pure, and perfectly conformable to the sanctity of him who is the author of it. Do not suspect that we are going to extract from the grossly sensual notions of Mahomet, the representation which we mean to give you of the paradise of God. You hear us frequently declaiming against the pleasures of sense. But do not go to confound things under pretence of perfecting them; and under the affectation of decrying sensible pleasures, let us not consider as an imperfection of the soul of man, the power which it has to enjoy them. No, my brethren, it is, on the contrary, one of its highest perfections to be susceptible of those sensations, to possess the faculty of scenting the perfume of flowers, of relishing the savour of meats, of delighting in the harmony of sounds, and so of the other objects of sense. If we declaim against your pleasures, it is because you frequently sacrifice pleasures the most sublime, to such as are pitiful and in-

significant; pleasures of everlasting duration, to those of a moment.

If we declaim against your pleasures, it is because the attachment which you feel for those of the earth, engages you to consider them as the sovereign good, and prevents your aspiring after that abundant portion, which is laid up for you in heaven.

If we declaim against your pleasures, it is because you regard the creatures through which they are communicated, as if they were the real authors of them. You ascribe to the element of fire the essential property of warming you, to aliments that of gratifying the palate, to sounds that of ravishing the ear. You consider the creatures as so many divinities which preside over your happiness; you pay them homage; you prostrate your imagination before them; not reflecting that God alone can produce sensations in your soul, and that all these creatures are merely the instruments and the ministers of his Providence. But the maxim remains incontrovertible; namely, that the faculty of relishing pleasures is a perfection of our soul, and one of its most glorious attributes.

But what merits particular attention is, that this faculty which we have of receiving agreeable sensations, is extremely imperfect so long as we remain upon the earth. It is restricted to the action of the senses. Its activity is clogged by the chains which fetter it down to matter. Our souls are susceptible of innumerable more sensations than we ever can receive in this world. As progress in knowledge admits of infinity, so likewise may progress in the enjoyment of pleasure. In heaven the blessed have the experience of this. There God exerts the plenitude of his power over the soul, by exciting in it the most lively emotions of delight; there his communications are proportional to the immortal nature of the glorified spirit. This was produced in the soul of our apostle.

"The pleasures which I have tasted," he seems to say, "are not such as your present faculties can reach. In order to make you comprehend what I have felt, I must be endowed with the power of creating new laws of the union subsisting between your soul and your body. I must be endowed with the capacity of suspending those of nature; or rather, I must be possessed of the means of tearing your soul asunder from that body. I must have the power of transporting you in an ecstasy, as I myself was. And considering the state in which you still are, I am persuaded that I shall represent to you what my feelings were much better, by telling you that they are things *unspeakable*, than by attempting a description of them. For when the point in question is to represent that which consists in lively and affecting sensations, there is no other method left, but actually to produce them in the breasts of the persons to whom you would make the communication. In order to produce them, faculties must be found, adapted to the reception of such sensations. But these faculties you do not as yet possess. It is therefore impossible that you should ever comprehend, while here below, what such sensations mean. And it is no more in my power to con-

vey to you an idea of those which I have enjoyed, than it is to give the deaf an idea of sounds, or the blind man of colours."

You must be sensible then, my brethren, that defect in respect of *faculties*, prevents our conception of the *sensible pleasures* which the blessed above enjoy, as want of *taste* and want of *genius* prevent our comprehending what are their *inclinations*, and what is their *illumination*. Accordingly, the principal reason of St. Paul's silence, and of the silence of scripture in general, respecting the nature of the heavenly felicity, present nothing that ought to relax our ardour in the pursuit of it; they are proofs of its inconceivable greatness, and so far from sinking its value in our eyes, they manifestly enhance and aggrandize it. This is what we undertook to demonstrate.

SERMON LXXVII.

THE RAPTURE OF ST. PAUL.

PART III.

2 COR. xii. 2—4.

I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) how that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

WE have endeavoured to elucidate the expressions of our apostle in the text, and to demonstrate that the silence of Scripture, on the subject of a state of celestial felicity, suggests nothing that has a tendency to cool our ardour in the pursuit of it, but rather, on the contrary, that this very veil which conceals the paradise of God from our eyes is, above all things, calculated to convey the most exalted ideas of t. We now proceed,

III. To conclude our discourse, by making some application of the subject.

Now, if the testimony of an apostle, if the decisions of Scripture, if the arguments which have been used, if all this is deemed insufficient, and if, notwithstanding our acknowledged inability to describe the heavenly felicity, you should still insist on our attempting to convey some idea of it, it is in our power to present you with one trait of it, a trait of a singular kind, and which well deserves your most serious attention. It is a trait which immediately refers to the subject under discussion: I mean the ardent desire expressed by St. Paul to return to that felicity, from which the order of Providence forced him away, to replace him in the world.

Nothing can convey to us a more exalted idea of the transfiguration of Jesus Christ, than the effects which it produced on the soul of St. Peter. That apostle had scarcely enjoyed a glimpse of the Redeemer's glory on the holy mount, when, behold, he is transported at the sight. He has no longer a desire to descend from that mountain; he has no longer a desire to return to Jerusalem; he has forgotten

every thing terrestrial, friends, relations, engagements; "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles," Matt. xvii. 4; and to the extremity of old age he retains the impression of that heavenly vision, and exults in the recollection of it: "He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory. This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount," 2 Pet. i. 17, 18.

The idea of the celestial felicity has made a similarly indelible impression on the mind of St. Paul. More than fourteen years have elapsed since he was blessed with the vision of it. Nay, for fourteen years he has kept silence. This object, nevertheless, accompanies him wherever he goes, and, in every situation, his soul is panting after the restoration of it. And in what way was he to look for that restoration? Not in the way of *ecstasy*, not in a rapture. He was not to be translated to heaven, as Elijah, in a chariot of fire. Necessity was laid upon him of submitting to the law imposed on every child of Adam: "It is appointed to all men once to die," Heb. ix. 27. But no matter; to that death, the object of terror to all mankind, he looks forward with fond desire.

But what do I say, that death simply was the path which St. Paul must tread, to arrive at the heavenly rest? No, not the ordinary death of most men; but death violent, premature, death arrayed in all its terror. Nero, the barbarous Nero, was then upon the throne, and the blood of a Christian so renowned as our apostle, must not escape so determined a foe to Christianity. No matter still. "Let loose all thy fury against me, ferocious tiger, longing to glut thyself with Christian blood; I defy thy worst. Come, executioner of the sanguinary commands of that monster; I will mount the scaffold with undaunted resolution; I will submit my head to the fatal blow with intrepidity and joy." We said, in the opening of this discourse, Paul, ever since his rapture, talks only of dying, only of being *absent from the body*, only of *finishing his course*, only of *departing*. "We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: . . . willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord," 2 Cor. v. 4. 8. "Neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus," Acts xx. 24, "having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better," Phil. i. 23. We often find men braving death when at a distance, but shrieking from the nearer approach of the king of terrors. But the earnestness of our apostle's wishes is heightened in proportion as they draw nigh to their centre: when he is arrived at the departing moment, he triumphs, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day," 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.

My brethren, you are well acquainted with St. Paul. He was a truly great character. Were we not informed by a special revelation,

that he was inspired by the Spirit of God, we must ever entertain high ideas of a man, who had derived his extensive knowledge from the pure sources of the Jewish dispensation; who had ennobled his enlarged and capacious mind by all that is more sublime in Christianity; of a man, whose heart had always obeyed the dictates of his understanding; who opposed Christianity with zeal, so long as he believed Christianity to be false, and who bent the full current of his zeal to the support of Christianity, from the moment he became persuaded that it was an emanation from God.

St. Paul was a man possessed of strong reasoning powers, and we have in his writings many monuments which will convey down to the end of the world the knowledge of his intellectual superiority. Nevertheless this man so enlightened, so sage, so rational; this man who knew the pleasures of heaven by experience, no longer beholds any thing on the earth once to be compared with them, or that could for a moment retard his wishes. He concludes that celestial joys ought not to be considered as too dearly purchased, at whatever price it may have pleased God to rate them, and whatever it may cost to attain them. *I reckon*, says he, *I reckon* what I suffer, and what I may still be called to suffer, on the one side; and *I reckon*, on the other, the glory of which I have been a witness, and which I am still to enjoy; "I reckon, that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us," Rom. viii. 18. "Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ," Phil. i. 23.

But who is capable of giving an adequate representation of his transports, so as to make you feel them with greater energy, and were it possible, to transfuse them into your hearts? Represent to yourself a man, who has actually seen that glory, of which we can give you only borrowed ideas. Represent to yourself a man, who has visited those sacred mansions which are "in the house of the Father," John xiv. 2; a man who has seen the palace of the Sovereign of the universe, and those "thousands," those "thousand thousands," which surround his throne, Dan. vii. 10; a man who has been in that "new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven," Rev. iii. 12; in that "new heaven," and that "new earth," Rev. xxi. 1. The inhabitants of which are angels, archangels, the seraphim; of which the *lamb* is the *sun* and the *temple*, Rev. xxi. 22, 23, and where "God is all in all," 1 Cor. xv. 28. Represent to yourself a man, who has heard those harmonious concerts, those triumphant choirs which sing aloud day and night: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory," Isa. vi. 3; a man who has heard those celestial multitudes which cry out, saying, "Alleluia: salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God. . . . and the four-and-twenty elders *reply*, saying, Amen; Alleluia. . . . let us be glad and rejoice, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready," Rev. xix. 1. 4. 7. Represent to yourself a man who has been received into heaven by those angels who "rejoice over one sinner that repenteth," Luke xv. 7, and who redouble their acclamations when

he is admitted into the bosom of glory; or, to say somewhat which has a still nearer relation to the idea which we ought to conceive of St. Paul, represent to yourself a man "bearing in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus," Gal. vi. 17, and beholding that Jesus in the bosom of the Father: represent to yourself that man giving way to unrestrained effusions of love, embracing his Saviour, clinging to his feet, passing, in such sacred transports of delight, a time which glides away, undoubtedly, with rapidity of which we have no conception, and which enables the soul to comprehend how, in the enjoyment of perfect bliss, a thousand years fly away with the velocity of one day: represent to yourself that man suddenly recalled to this valley of tears, beholding that "third heaven," those archangels, that God, that Jesus, all, all disappearing; Ah, my brethren, what regret must such a man have felt! What holy impatience to recover the vision of all those magnificent objects! What is become of so much felicity, of so much glory! Was I made to possess them, then, only to have the pain of losing them again! Did God indulge me with the beatific vision only to give me a deeper sense of my misery! O moment too fleeting and transitory, and have you fled never to be recalled! Raptures, transports, ecstasies, have ye left me for ever! "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof," 2 Kings ii. 12. "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: when shall I come and appear before God?" Ps. xlii. 1, 2. "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. . . . Blessed are they that dwell in thy house; they will be still praising thee! thine altars, thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King, and my God!" Ps. lxxxiv. 1, &c.

My God, wherefore enjoy we not at this day such privileges, that we also might be filled with such sentiments! Boundless abysses, which separate between heaven and earth, why are ye not, for a season, filled up to us, as ye were to this apostle! Ye torrents of endless delight, wherefore roll ye not to us, some of your precious rills, that they may teach us a holy contempt for those treacherous joys which deceive and ensnare us!

My brethren, if ceasing from the desire of manifestations which we have not, we could learn to avail ourselves of those which God has been pleased to bestow! were we but disposed to listen to the information which the Scriptures communicate, respecting the heavenly felicity: If we would but examine the proofs, the demonstrations which we have of eternal blessedness! If we but knew how to feed on those ideas, and frequently to oppose them to those voids, to those nothings, which are the great object of our pursuit! If we would but compare them with the excellent nature of our souls, and with the dignity of our origin! then we should become like St. Paul. Then nothing would be able to damp our zeal. The end of the course would then employ every wish, every desire of the heart. Then no dexterity of management would be needful to in

roduce a discourse on the subject of death. Then we should rejoice in those who might say to us, "Let us go up to Jerusalem." Then we should reply, "our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem!" Ps. cxxii. 2. Then we should see that fervour, that zeal, that transports, are the virtues, and the attainment of the dying.

You would wish to be partakers of St. Paul's rapture to the *third heaven*, but if this privilege be denied you to its full extent, nothing forbids your aspiring after one part of it at least. When was it that St. Paul was caught up into paradise? You have been told; it was when engaged in prayer. "While I prayed in the temple," says he, "I was in a trance," Acts xxii. 17. The word *trance* or *ecstasy* is of indeterminate meaning. A man in an ecstasy is one whose soul is so entirely devoted to an object, that he is, in some sense, out of his own body, and no longer perceives what passes in it. Persons addicted to scientific research, have been known so entirely absorbed in thought, as to be in a manner insensible during those moments of intense application. *Ecstasy* in religion, is that undivided attention which attaches the mind to heavenly objects. If any thing is capable of producing this effect, it is prayer. It is by no means astonishing that a man who has "entered into his closet, and shut the door,"

Matt. vi. 6, who has excluded the world, has lost sight of every terrestrial object, whose soul is concentrated and lost in God, if I may use the expression, that such a man should be so penetrated with admiration, with love, with hope, with joy, as to become like one rapt in an ecstasy. But farther. It is in the exercise of prayer that God is pleased to communicate himself to us in the most intimate manner. It is in the exercise of prayer, that he unites himself to us in the tenderest manner. It is in the exercise of prayer, that distinguished saints obtain those signal marks of favour, which are the object of our most ardent desire. A man who prays; a man whose prayer is employed about detachment from sensible things; a man who blushes, in secret, at the thought of being so swallowed up of sensible things, and so little enamoured of divine excellencies; a man who asks of God, to be blessed with a glimpse of his glory, with a foretaste of the felicity laid up in store for him, and that he would fortify his soul against the difficulties and dangers of his career; such a man may expect to be, as it were, rapt in an ecstasy, either by the natural effect of prayer, or by the extraordinary communications which God is pleased to vouchsafe to those who call upon his name.

From this source proceeds that earnest longing "to depart," such as Paul expressed: hence that delightful recollection of the pleasure enjoyed in those devout exercises, pleasure that has rendered the soul insensible to the empty delights of this world; hence the idea of those blessed moments which occupy the mind for fourteen years together, and which produces, at the hour of death, a fervour not liable to suspicion: for, my brethren, there is a fervour which I am disposed to suspect. I acknowledge, that when I see a man who has all his life long stagnated in the world, affecting in the hour of death, to assume the language of

eminent saints, and to say, "I have a desire to depart: my soul thirsteth for God, for the living God;" becoming all at once a seraph, burning with zeal; I acknowledge myself to be always under an apprehension, that this zeal derives its birth from some mechanical play, or to the unaccountable duty which the sick impose upon themselves, even such of them as are most steadily attached to the earth, of declaring that they feel an earnest desire to leave it. But a man who, through life, has been busied about eternity, whose leading aim was to secure a happy eternity, who has, as it were, anticipated the pleasures of eternity, by habits of devotion; a man who has been absorbed of those ideas, who has fed upon them; a man who having devoted a whole life to those sacred employments, observes the approach of death with joy, meets it with ardent desire, zeal, transport, such a man displays nothing to excite suspicion.

And is not such a state worthy of being envied? This is the manner of death which I ask of thee, O my God, when, after having served thee in the sanctuary, like the high priest of old, thou shalt be pleased, of thy great mercy, to admit me into the holy of holies. This is the manner of death which I wish to all of you, my beloved hearers. God grant that each of you may be enabled powerfully to inculcate upon his own mind, this great principle of religion, that there is a third heaven, a paradise, a world of bliss over our heads! God grant that each of you may attain the lively persuasion, that this is the only desirable felicity, the only felicity worthy of God to bestow, and of man to receive! God grant that each of you, in meditation, in prayer, in those happy moments of the Christian life in which God communicates himself so intimately to his creatures, may enjoy the foretastes of that felicity; and thus, instead of fearing that death which is to put you in possession of so many blessings; you may contemplate it with holy joy and say, "this is the auspicious moment which I have so long wished for, which my soul has been panting after, which has been the burden of so many fervent prayers: Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." May God in mercy grant it to us all. To him be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON LXXVIII.

ON NUMBERING OUR DAYS.*

PART I.

PSALM XC. 12.

So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

THROUGH what favour of indulgent heaven does this church nourish in its bosom members sufficient to furnish out the solemnity of this day, and to compose an assembly so numerous and respectable? Through what distinguishing goodness is it, that you find yourselves with your children, with your friends, with

* Delivered in the church of Rotterdam, on New Year's day, 1727.

your fellow-citizens; no, not all of them, for the mourning weeds in which some of you are clothed, plainly indicate, that death has robbed us, in part of them, in the course of the year which is just terminated. But through what distinguishing goodness is that you find yourselves, with your children, with your friends, with your fellow-citizens, collected together in this sacred place?

The preachers who filled the spot which I have now the honour to occupy, and whose voice resounded through this temple at the commencement of the last year, derived, from the inexhaustible fund of human frailty and infirmity, motives upon motives to excite apprehension that you might not behold the end of it. They represented to you the fragility of the organs of your body, which the slightest shock is able to derange and to destroy: the dismal accidents by which the life of man is incessantly threatened; the maladies, without number, which are either entailed on us by the law of our nature, or which are the fruit of our intemperance; and the uncertainty of human existence, and the narrow bounds to which life, at the longest, is contracted.

After having filled their mouths with arguments drawn from the stores of nature, they had recourse to those of religion. They spake to you of the limited extent of the patience and long suffering of God. They told you, that to each of us is assigned only a certain number of days of visitation. They thundered in your ears such warnings as these: "Gather yourselves together, yea gather together, O nation not desired; before the decree bring forth . . . before the fierce anger of the Lord come upon you," Zeph. ii. 1, 2. "I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people: I will not again pass by them any more," Amos vii. 8. "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown: yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown," Jonah iii. 4.

How is it possible that we should have escaped, at the same time, the miseries of nature, and the fearful threatenings of religion? And to repeat my question once more, through what favour of indulgent heaven does this church nourish in its bosom members sufficient to furnish out the solemnity of this day, and to compose an assembly so numerous and respectable?

It is to be presumed, my brethren, that the principle which has prevented our improvement of the innumerable benefits with which a gracious Providence is loading us, prevents not our knowledge of the source from which they flow. It is to be presumed, that the first emotions of our hearts, when we, this morning, opened our eyes to behold the light, have been such as formerly animated holy men of God, when they cried aloud, amidst the residue of those whom the love of God had delivered from the plagues inflicted by his justice, in the days of vengeance: "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not: they are new every morning," Lam. iii. 22, 23. "Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah," Isa. i. 9.

Wo! wo! Anathema upon anathema! be to

him who shall dare henceforth to abuse . . . But no, let us not fulminate curses. Let not sounds so dreadful affright the ears of an audience like this. Let us adopt a language more congenial to the present day. We come to beseech you, my beloved brethren, by those very mercies of God to which you are indebted for exemption from so many evils, and for the enjoyment of so many blessings: by those very mercies which have this day opened for your admission, the gates of this temple, instead of sending you down into the prison of the tomb; by those very mercies, by which you were, within these few days, invited to the table of the Eucharist, instead of being summoned to the tribunal of judgment; by these tender mercies we beseech you to assume sentiments, and to form plans of conduct, which may have something like a correspondence to what God has been pleased to do in your behalf.

And thou, God Almighty, the Sovereign, the Searcher of all hearts! thou who movest and directest them which ever way thou wilt! vouchsafe, Almighty God, to open to us the hearts of all this assembly, that they may yield to the entreaties which we address to them in thy name, as thou hast been thyself propitious to the prayers which they have presented to thee. Thou hast reduced "the measure of our days to an hand breadth;" Ps. xxxix. 5, and the meanness of our natural faculties is sufficient to make the enumeration of them: but "so to number our days, as that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom," we cannot successfully attempt without thy all-powerful aid—"Lord, so teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." Amen.

In order to a clear comprehension of the words of my text, it would be necessary for me to have it in my power precisely to indicate who is the author of them, and on what occasion they were composed. The psalm, from which they are taken, bears this inscription, "A prayer of Moses, the man of God." But who was this Moses? And on the supposition that the great legislator of the Jews is the person meant, did he actually compose it? or do the words of the superscription, "A prayer of Moses, the man of God," amount only to this, that some one has imitated his style, and, in some measure, caught his spirit, in this composition? This is a point not easily to be decided, and which indeed does not admit of complete demonstration. The opinion most venerable from its antiquity, and the most generally adopted, is, that this psalm was composed by the Jewish lawgiver, at one of the most melancholy conjunctures of his life; when after the murmuring of the Israelites, on occasion of the report of the spies, God pronounced this tremendous decree: "As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord . . . your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number . . . shall not come into the land, concerning which I swear to make you dwell therein," Num. xiv. 21, 29, 30.

If this conjecture be as well founded as it is probable, the prayer under review is the pro-

duction of a heart as deeply affected with grief, as it is possible to be without sinking into despair. Never did Moses feel himself reduced to such a dreadful extremity, as at this fatal period. It appeared as if there had been a concert between God and Israel to put his constancy to the last trial. On the one hand, the Israelites wanted to make him responsible for all that was rough and displeasing in the paths through which God was pleased to lead them; and it seemed as if God, on the other hand, would likewise hold him responsible for the complicated rebellions of Israel.

Moses opposes to this just displeasure of God a buckler which he had often employed with success, namely, prayer. That which he put up on this occasion, was one of the most fervent that can be imagined. But there are situations in which all the fervour, of even the most powerful intercessor, is wholly unavailing. There are seasons, when, "though Moses and Samuel stood up before God," Jer. xvi. 1, to request him to spare a nation, the measure of whose iniquity was come to the full, they would request in vain. In such a situation was Moses now placed. Represent to yourselves the deplorable condition of the Israelites, and the feelings of that man, whose leading character was meekness; and who, if we may be allowed the expression, carried that rebellious people in the tenderest and most sensible part of his soul: to be excluded from all hope beyond thirty or forty years of life, and to be condemned to pass these in a desert; what a fearful destiny!

What course does Moses take? Dismissed, so to speak, banished from the throne of grace, does he however give all up for lost? No, my brethren. He was unable by entreaty to procure a revocation of the sentence pronounced against persons so very dear to him, he limits himself to imploring, in their behalf, wisdom to make a proper use of it. "Thou hast sworn it, great God; and the oath, which thy adorable lips have pronounced against us, can never be recalled. Thou hast sworn that none of us, who came out of Egypt, shall enter into that land, the object of all our hopes and prayers. Thou hast sworn that die we must, after having lingered out for forty years, a miserable existence in this wilderness, a habitation fitter for ferocious beasts of prey, than for reasonable creatures, than for men whom thou hast chosen, and called thy people. The sighs which my soul has breathed to heaven for a remission are unavailing; the tears which I have shed in thy bosom, have been shed in vain; these hands, once powerful to the combat, these hands which were stronger than thee in battle, these hands against which thou couldst not hold out, which made thee say, "let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them," Exod. xxxii. 10; these hands have lost the blessed art of prevailing with God in the conflict! Well, be it so. Let us die, great God, seeing it is thy sovereign will! Let us serve as victims to thy too just indignation; reduce our life to the shortest standard. But at least, since we had not the wisdom to avail ourselves of the promises of a long and happy life, teach us to live as becomes persons who are to die so soon.

Lord, so teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

This is a general idea of the end which our text has in view. But let us enter somewhat more deeply into this interesting subject. Let us make application of it to our own life, which bears a resemblance so striking to that which the children of Israel were doomed to pass in the wilderness. We are to inquire,

I. What is implied in numbering our days.

II. What are the conclusions which wisdom deduces from that enumeration.

I. In order to make a just estimate of our days, let us reckon, 1. Those days, or divisions of time, in which we feel neither good nor evil, neither joy nor grief, and in which we practise neither virtue nor vice, and which, for this reason, I call days of nothingness; let us reckon these, and compare them with the days of reality. 2. Let us reckon the days of adversity, and compare them with the days of prosperity. 3. Let us reckon the days of languor and weariness, and compare them with the days of delight and pleasure. 4. Let us reckon the days which we have devoted to the world, and compare them with the days which we have devoted to religion. 5. Finally, let us calculate the amount of the whole, that we may discover how long the duration is of a life consisting of days of nothingness and of reality; of days of prosperity and of adversity; of days of pleasure and of languor; of days devoted to the world, and to the salvation of the soul.

1. Let us reckon the days of nothingness, and compare them with the days of reality. I give the appellation of *days of nothingness* to all that portion of our life in which, as I said, we feel neither good nor evil, neither joy nor grief; in which we practise neither virtue nor vice, and which is a mere nothing with respect to us.

In this class must be ranked, all those hours which human infirmity lays us under the necessity of passing in sleep, and which run away with the third part of our life: time, during which we are stretched in a species of tomb, and undergo, as it were, an anticipated death. Happy at the same time in being able, in a death not immediately followed by the judgment of God, to bury, in some measure, our troubles, together with our life!

In this class must be farther ranked, those seasons of inaction, and of distraction, in which all the faculties of our souls are suspended, during which we propose no kind of object to thought, during which we cease, in some sense, to be thinking beings; seasons which afford an objection of no easy solution, to the opinion of those who maintain that actual thought is essential to mind; and that from this very consideration, that it subsists, it must actually think.

In this class must be farther ranked, all those portions of time which are a burden to us; not because we are under the pressure of some calamity, for this will fall to be considered under another head, but because they form, if I may say so, a wall between us and certain events, which we ardently wish to attain. Such as when we are in a state of uncertainty respecting certain questions, in which we feel our selves deeply interested, but which must re-

main undecided for some days, for some months, for some years. We could wish to suppress all those intervals of our existence, were God to put it in our power. Thus, a child wishes to attain in a moment, the age of youth; the young man would hasten at once into the condition of the master of a family; and sometimes the father of a family would rush forward to the period when he should see the beloved objects of his affection settled in the world: and so of other cases.

In this class we may still rank certain seasons of preparation and design: such as the time which we spend in dressing and undressing upon the road, and in other similar occupations, insipid and useless in themselves, and to which no importance attaches, but in so far as they are the means necessary of attaining an object more interesting than themselves.

Reckon, if you can, what is the amount of this first class of our days; compare them with what we have called days of reality. Whoever will take the trouble to make such a calculation with any degree of exactness, must be constrained to acknowledge, that a man who says he has lived threescore years, has not lived twenty complete: because, though he has in truth passed threescore years in the world, forty of these stole away in listlessness and inaction, and during this period, he was as if he had not been. This is the first enumeration, the enumeration of *days of nothingness* compared with *days of reality*.

2. Let us reckon the *days of adversity*, and compare them with the *days of prosperity*. To what a scanty measure would human life be reduced, were we to subtract from it those seasons of bitterness of soul which God seems to have appointed to us, rather to furnish an exercise to our patience, than to make us taste the pleasures of living.

What is life to a man, who feels himself condemned to live in a state of perpetual separation from persons who are dear to him? Collect into one and the same house, honours, riches, dignities; let the tables be loaded with a profusion of dainties; display the most magnificent furniture; let all that is exquisite in music be provided; let every human delight contribute its aid: all that is necessary to render all these insipid and disgusting, is the absence of one beloved object, say a darling child.

What is life to a man who has become infamous, to a man who is execrated by his fellow-creatures, who dares not appear in public, lest his ears should be stunned with the voice of malediction, thundering in every direction upon his head?

What is life to a man deprived of health; a man delivered over to the physicians; a man reduced to exist mechanically, who is nourished by merely studied aliments, who digests only according to the rules of art, who is able to support a dying life only by the application of remedies still more disgusting than the very maladies which they are called in to relieve?

What is life to a man arrived at the age of decrepitude, who feels his faculties decaying day by day, when he perceives himself becoming an object of pity and forbearance to all around him, or rather becoming absolutely insupportable to every one; when he imagines

he hears himself continually reproached with being an incumbrance on the face of the earth, and that he is occupying, too long, a place which he ought to resign to one who might be more useful to society?

But this is not the worst of the case. Nothing more is necessary, in many cases, than a whim, a mere chimera, to disturb the happiest and most splendid condition of human life.

Now, in which of our days shall we find those pure joys, which no infusion of bitterness has poisoned? In which of our days is it possible for us to behold the perfect harmony of glory in the state of triumph in the church, of vigorous health, of prosperous fortune, of domestic peace, of mental tranquillity? In which of the days of our life did this concurrence of felicities permit us to consider ourselves as really happy?

Farther, if, in the ordinary current of our days, we had been deprived of only a few of the good things of life, while we possessed all the rest, the great number of those which we enjoyed, might minister consolation under the want of those which Providence had been pleased to withhold. But how often would an almost total destitution of good, and an accumulation of wo, render life insupportable, did not submission to the will of God, or rather, did not divine aid enable us to bear the ills of life?

Shall I have your permission, my brethren, to go into a detail of particulars on this head? For my own part, who have been in this world during a period not much longer than that which the children of Israel passed in the wilderness; I have scarcely heard any thing else spoken of, except disasters, desolations, destructive revolutions. Scarcely had I begun to know this church, into which I had been admitted in baptism, when I was doomed to be the melancholy spectator of the most calamitous events which can be presented to the eyes, or the imagination of man. Have you forgotten them, my dear compatriots, my beloved companions in affliction, have you forgotten those days of darkness? Have you forgotten those cries of the children of Edom: "Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof!" Ps. cxxxvii. 7. Have you forgotten those dead bodies of our brethren, "given to be meat unto the fowls of heaven, the flesh of the saints unto the beasts of the earth; their blood shed like water round about Jerusalem, and none to bury them?" Ps. lxxix. 2, 3.

In order to escape calamities so many and so grievous, we were reduced to the necessity of fleeing from the place of our birth. We were constrained to drag about, from place to place, a miserable life, empoisoned by the fatal shafts which had pierced us. We were constrained to present objects of compassion, but often importunately troublesome, to the nations whither we fled in quest of a place of refuge. We were reduced to the misery of being incessantly haunted with the apprehension of failing in the supplies necessary to the most pressing demands of life, and to those of education, as dear as even the support of life.

Scarcely did we find ourselves under covert from the tempest, when we felt that we were

still exposed to it, in the persons of those with whom we were united in the tenderest bonds. "One post run to meet another, and one messenger to meet another:" to adopt the prophet's expression, Jer. li. 31, to announce dismal tidings. Sometimes the message bore, that a house had been recently demolished: sometimes that a church had just been sapped to the foundation: sometimes we heard the affecting history of an undaunted believer, but whose intrepidity had exposed him to the most cruel torments; at another time, it was of a faint-hearted Christian whom timidity had betrayed into apostacy, a thousand times more to be deplored than tortures and death in their most horrid form.

Received into countries whose charity extended their arms to embrace us, it seemed as if we carried, wherever we went, a part of those disasters from which we were striving to make our escape. For these forty years past, my brethren, what repose has Protestant Europe enjoyed? One war has succeeded to another war, one plague to another plague, one abyss to another abyss. And God knows, God only knows, whether the calamities which have for some time pressed these states around on every side; God only knows, whether or not they are to be but the beginning of sorrows! God only knows what may be preparing for us by that avenging arm which is ever lifted up against us, and that flaming sword, whose tremendous glare is incessantly dazzling our eyes! God only knows how long our bulwarks against the ocean may be able to withstand those formidable shocks, and those violent storms, which an insulted God is exciting to shatter them! God knows But let us not presume to draw aside the veil under which Providence has been pleased to conceal the destiny of these provinces from our eyes. It is abundantly evident, that were we to subtract from the number of our days, those heavy periods of existence, when we live only to suffer; were we to reckon the days of prosperity alone, our life would be reduced to an imperceptible duration; we should not discover any exaggeration in the expressions which Moses employs to trace the image of the life of the Israelites in the preceding context: "Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men: thou carriest them away as with a flood: they are as asleep: in the morning they are like grass which groweth up: in the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down and withered."

3. Let us reckon the *days of languor and weariness*, and compare them with the *days of delight and pleasure*. This particular must not be confounded with the preceding. There is a wide difference between the days which we have called those of *adversity*, and which we, under this head, call *days of languor and weariness*. By *days of adversity*, we meant those seasons of life, in which the privation of some worldly good, and the concurrence of many evils, render us actually miserable. By *days of languor and weariness* we now mean those in which exemption from the ills of life, or the possession of its good things, leaves the mind void and dissatisfied.

Let each of us here recollect the history of his own life. How often has a man found himself a prey to languor and disgust in the midst of those very pleasures of life which he had conceived to be the most lively and affecting? Objects in which we generally take the greatest delight, sometimes depress us into the most intolerable languor. It is frequently sufficient for exciting distaste in us to an object, that we once doated on it; to such a degree is the will of man capricious, fluctuating, and inconstant. Parties of pleasure are sometimes proposed and formed; the place, the time, the company, every thing is settled with the most solicitous anxiety; the hour is looked to with eager impatience, and nothing less is found than what the fond imagination had promised to itself. It is a mere phantom, which had an appearance of solidity, when viewed at a distance; we approach, we embrace it, and lo! it melts away into air, "thin air."

The believer whose taste is purified, is undoubtedly better acquainted with this languor, when, amidst the pleasures of this world, there occurs to his mind one or another of the reflections which have been suggested, respecting the vanity of all human things; when he says to himself, "Not one in this social circle, among whom I am partaking of so many delights, but would basely abandon me, if I stood in need of his assistance, did the happiness of my life impose on him the sacrifice of one of the dishes of his table, of one of the horses of his equipage, of one of the trees of his gardens." When stating a comparison between the tide of pleasure into which he was going to plunge, and those which religion has procured him, he thus reflects: "This is not the joy which I taste, when alone with my God, I pour out before him a soul inflamed to rapture with his love, and when I collect, in rich profusion, the tokens of his grace." When coming to perceive that he has indulged rather too far in social mirth, which is lawful only when restrained within certain bounds, he says within himself, "Are such objects worthy of the regard of an immortal soul? are these my divinities?" Then it is he feels himself oppressed with languor and disgust; then it is that objects, once so eagerly desired, are regarded with coldness or aversion. Hence that seriousness which overspreads his countenance, hence that pensive silence into which he falls, in spite of every effort to the contrary, hence certain gloomy reflections which involuntarily arise in his soul.

But this languor is not peculiar to those whose taste piety has refined. There is a remarkable difference, however, in this respect, between the men of the world, and believers; namely, that the disgust, which these last feel in the pleasures of life, engages them in the pursuit of purer joys, in exercises of devotion; whereas the others give up the pursuit of one worldly delight, only to hunt after a new one, equally empty and unsatisfying with that which they had renounced. From that scanty portion of life, in which we enjoy prosperity, we must go on to subtract that other portion, in which prosperity is insipid to us. Calculate, if you can, the poor amount of what remains after this subtraction.

4. Let us reckon the *days* which we have devoted to the world, and compare them with those which we have devoted to religion. Humiliating computation! But I take it for granted, that in your present circumstances, it has been rendered familiar to your thoughts. Christians who have been just concluding the year with a participation of the holy ordinance of the Lord's Supper, could hardly fail to have put this question to their consciences, when employed in self-examination, preparatory to that solemn service: *What proportion of my time has been given to God? What proportion of it has been given to the world?* And it is sufficient barely to propose the discussion of these questions, to come to this melancholy conclusion: That the portion of our life, which alone deserves to be considered as containing something solid and substantial, I mean the portion which has been given to God, is of a duration so short as to be almost imperceptible, when compared with the years which the world has engrossed.

5. I proceed to the last computation proposed. What is the amount of this total of human life which we have thus arranged in different columns? What is the sum of this compound account of days of nothingness and days of reality; of days of prosperity and days of affliction; of days of languor and days of delight; of days devoted to the world, and days devoted to religion? My brethren, it is God, it is God alone, who holds our times in his hand, to adopt the idea of the prophet, Ps. xxxi. 15; he alone can make an accurate calculation of them. And as he alone has fixed the term of our life, he only is likewise capable of knowing it. It is not absolutely impossible, however, to ascertain what shall be, in respect of time, the temporal destination of those who hear me this day. Let me suppose that the present solemnity has drawn together an assembly of eighteen hundred persons. I subdivide these 1800 into six different classes.

The 1st consisting of persons from 10 to 20 years of age, amounting to . . .	530
2d from 20 to 30 amounting to . . .	440
3d " 30 to 40	345
4th " 40 to 50	255
5th " 50 to 60	160
6th " 60 and upwards	70

1800

According to the most exact calculation of those who have made such kind of researches their study, each of these classes must, in the course of this year, present to death, a tribute of ten persons. On this computation, sixty of my present hearers must, before the beginning of another year, be numbered with the dead. Conformably to the same rate of computation, in 10 years, of the 1800 now present there will remain 1270

In 20 years, only	830
In 30	480
In 40	230
In 50 years, no more will be left than 70	

Thus you see, my brethren, in what a perpetual flux the human race is. The world is a vast theatre, in which every one appears his moment upon the stage, and in a moment disappears. Every successive instant presents

different scenery, a new decoration. I represent these vicissitudes to myself, under the emblem of what is felt by a man who is employed in turning over the pages of history. He pores over his book, he beholds on this leaf, one people, one king; he turns it, and lo, other laws, other maxims, other actors, which have no manner of relation to what preceded them!

SERMON LXXVIII.

ON NUMBERING OUR DAYS.

PART II.

PSALM xc. 12.

So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

WE have seen to what a measure human life is reduced. To be made sensible of this is a very high attainment in knowledge; but it is of still higher importance, thence to deduce conclusions, which have a tendency to regulate the workings of your mind, the emotions of your heart, the conduct of your life: and to assist you in this, is

II. The second object which we proposed to ourselves in this discourse. This is what the prophet asks of God in the text, this we would earnestly implore in your behalf, and this prayer we wish you to adopt for yourselves: "Lord, so teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

1. The first conclusion deducible from the representation given, is this: the vanity of the life which now is, affords the clearest proof of the life to come. This proof is sensible, and it possesses two advantages over all those which philosophy supplies, towards demonstrating the immortality of the soul. The proof of our immortality, taken from the spirituality of the soul, has, perhaps, a great deal of solidity; but it is neither so sensible, nor so incontestable. I am lost when I attempt to carry my metaphysical speculations into the interior of substances. I do not well know what to reply to an opponent who presses me with such questions as these: "Do you know every thing that a substance is capable of? Are your intellectual powers such as to qualify you to pronounce this decision, *Such a substance is capable only of this, and such another only of that.*" This difficulty, at least, always recurs, namely, that a soul, spiritual and immortal of its own nature, may be deprived of immortality, should it please that God who called it into existence, to reduce it to a state of annihilation.

But the proof which we have alleged is sensible, it is incontestable. I can make the force of it to be felt by a peasant, by an artisan, by the dullest of human beings. And I am bold enough to bid defiance to the acutest genius, to the most dexterous sophist, to advance any thing that deserves the name of reasoning in contradiction to it. How! Is it possible that this soul, capable of reflecting, of reasoning, of laying down principles, of deducing consequences, of knowing its Creator, and of serving him, should have been created for the pur-

pose merely of acting the poor part which man fills on the earth? How! the souls of those myriads of infants, who die before they are born, to be annihilated, after having animated, for a few months, an embryo, a mass of unfinished organs, which nature did not deign to carry on to perfection? How! the Abrahams, the Moseses, the Davids, and the multitudes of those other holy men, to whom God made so many and such gracious promises, shall they cease to be, after having been "strangers and pilgrims upon the earth?" How! that "cloud of witnesses," who, rather than deny the truth, submitted to be "stoned," to be "sawn asunder," to be "tempted," to be "slain with the sword," who "wandered about in sheep-skins, and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented?" Heb. xi. 13. 37. How! that "cloud of witnesses" evaporate into smoke, and the souls of martyrs pass into annihilation amidst the tortures inflicted by an executioner! Ye confessors of Jesus Christ, who have borne his reproach for thirty years together, who have yielded up your back to the rod of a tormentor, who have lived a life more painful than death in its most horrid form! You to have no other reward of all your labours and sufferings, except those poor gratuities which man bestows after you have finished your career? How! those noble faculties of soul bestowed on man, merely to sit for a few years upon a tribunal, for a few years to dip into arts and sciences! . . . What brain could digest the thought! What subtlety of metaphysical research, what ingeniousness of sophistry, can enfeeble the proof derived from such appearances as these! O brevity of the present economy! O vanity of human life! O miseries upon miseries with which my days are depressed, distracted, empoisoned, I will complain of you no longer! I behold light the most cheering; the most transporting, ready to burst forth from the bosom of that gloomy night, into which you have plunged me! You conduct me to the grand, the animating doctrine of immortality! The vanity of the present life, is the proof of the life which is to come. This is our first conclusion.

2. The second conclusion we deduce is this: neither the good things, nor the evil, of a life which passes away with so much rapidity, ought to make a very deep impression on a soul whose duration is eternal. Do not tax me of extravagance. I have no intention to preach a hyperbolic morality, I do not mean to maintain such a wild position as this, "That there is no reality in either the enjoyments or the distresses of life; that there is a mixture in every human condition, which reduces all to equality; that the man who sits at a plentiful table is not a whit happier than the man who begs his bread." This is not our gospel. Temporal evils are unquestionably real. Were this life of very long duration, I would deem the condition of the rich man incomparably preferable to that of the poor; that of the man who commands, to that of him who obeys; that of one who enjoys perfect health, to that of one who is stretched on a bed of languishing. But however real the enjoyments and the distresses of life may be in themselves, their transient duration invalidates that reality.

You, who have passed thirty years in affliction! there are thirty years of painful existence vanished away. You, whose woes have been lengthened out to forty years! there are forty years of a life of sorrow vanished away. And you, who, for these thirty, forty, fifty years past, have been living at ease, and drowned in pleasure! What is become of those years? The time which both the one and the other has yet to live, is scarcely worth the reckoning, and is flying away with the same rapidity. If the brevity of life does not render all conditions equal, it fills up, at least, the greatest part of that abyss which cupidity had placed between them. Let us reform our ideas; let us correct our style: do not let us call a man happy because he is in health; do not let us call a sick man miserable: let us not call that absolute felicity, which is only borrowed, transitory, ready to flee away with life itself. Immortal beings ought to make immortality the standard by which to regulate their ideas of happiness and misery. Neither the good things, nor the evil, of a life so transient, ought to make a very deep impression on a soul whose duration is eternal. This was our second conclusion.

3. But if I be immortal, what have I to do among the dying? If I be destined to a never-ending duration, wherefore am I doomed to drag out a miserable life upon the earth? If the blessings and the miseries of this life are so disproportionate to my natural greatness, wherefore have they been given to me? Wherefore does the Creator take a kind of pleasure in laying snares for my innocence, by presenting to me delights which may become the source of everlasting misery; and by conducting me to eternal felicity, through the sacrifice of every present comfort? This difficulty, my brethren, this pressing difficulty leads us to

A third conclusion: this life is a season of probation, assigned to us for the purpose of making our choice between everlasting happiness or misery. This life, considered as it is in itself, is an object of contempt. We may say of it, with the sacred writer, that it is "a shadow which passeth away;" "a vanity," which has nothing real and solid; "a flower which fadeth;" "grass" which withers and is cut down; "a vapour" which dissolves into air; "a dream" which leaves no trace after the sleep is gone; "a thought" which presents itself to the mind, but abides not; "an apparition, a nothing" before God.

But when we contemplate this life, in its relation to the great end which God proposes to himself in bestowing it upon us, let us form exalted ideas of it. Let us carefully compute all its subdivisions; let us husband, with scrupulous attention, all the instants of it, even the most minute and imperceptible; let us regret the precious moments which we have irrecoverably lost. For this *shadow* which passes, this *vanity* which has nothing real and solid, this *flower* which fades, this *grass* which is cut down and withers, this *vapour* which melts into air, this forgotten *dream*, this transient *thought*, this *apparition* destitute of body and substance, this *nothing*, this *span* of life, so vile and contemptible, is *time* which we must *redeem*, Eph.

v. 16; "a time of visitation" which we must know, Luke xix. 44; "a time accepted, a day of salvation" which we must improve, 2 Cor. vi. 2; a period of "forbearance, and long-suffering" which we must embrace, Rom. ii. 4; a time beyond which "there shall be time no longer," Rev. x. 6, because after life is finished, tears are unavailing, sighs are impotent, prayers are disregarded, and repentance is ineffectual. We proceed to deduce a

4. Fourth conclusion. A life through which more time has been devoted to a present world, than to preparation for eternity, corresponds not to the views which the Creator proposed to himself, when he placed us in this economy of expectation. We were placed in this state of probation, not to sleep, to eat, and to drink; we were placed here to prepare for eternity. If, therefore, we have devoted more of our time to such functions as these, than to preparation for eternity; if, at least, we have not adapted these functions to the leading object of eternity; if we have not been governed by that maxim of St. Paul, 1 Cor. x. 31: "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God," we certainly have not conformed to the views which the Creator proposed to himself, in placing us under this economy of expectation and trial.

We were placed in this state of probation, not merely to labour for the provision and establishment of our families; we are placed here to prepare for eternity. If, therefore, we have devoted more of our time and attention to the provision and establishment of our families, than to preparation for eternity; if, at least, we have not adapted to the leading object of eternity, our solitudes and exertions in behalf of our families, we certainly have not conformed to the views which the Creator proposed to himself, in placing us under this economy of expectation and trial.

We were placed in this state of probation, not merely to govern states, to cultivate arts and sciences; we are placed here to prepare for eternity. If, therefore, we have not directed all our anxieties and exertions, on such subjects as these, to the leading object of eternity, we certainly have not conformed to the views which the Creator proposed to himself, in placing us under this economy of expectation and trial. Imagine not that we shall be judged according to the ideas which we ourselves are pleased to form of our vocation. We are under an economy of expectation and trial: time then is given us, that we may prepare for eternity. A life, therefore, through which more time and attention have been devoted to the pursuits of this world, than to preparation for eternity; corresponds not to the views which the Creator proposed to himself, when he placed us under this economy of expectation and trial. This is the fourth conclusion.

5. We go on to deduce a fifth. A sinner who has not conformed to the views which God proposed to himself in placing him under an economy of discipline and probation, ought to pour out his soul in thanksgiving, that God is graciously pleased still to lengthen it out. Let each of you who, on taking a review of his own life, must bear the dreadful testimony against himself, that he has most miserably de-

viated from the views of his Creator, present to God this day, a heart overflowing with gratitude, that this tremendous sentence has not yet been fulminated against him: "Give an account of thy stewardship," Luke xvi. 2. It is for this that life ought to be prized as infinitely dear; for this we have unspeakable cause to rejoice, that we still behold the light of this day.

"I have been in the world these thirty, forty, threescore years; and ever since I arrived at the exercise of reason, and felt the power of conscience, I have enjoyed every advantage towards attaining the knowledge, and exhibiting the practice of religion. Every display of mercy, and every token of fatherly displeasure have been employed to reclaim me. Not a book written to convince the understanding, but what has been put into my hands; not a sermon calculated to move and to melt the heart, but what has been addressed to my ears. My corruption has proved too powerful for them all. My life has been a tissue, if not of enormous crimes, at least of dissipation and thoughtlessness. If at any time I have shaken off my habits of listlessness and inaction, it was usually only to run into excesses, which have already precipitated so many precious souls into hell. When visited with sickness, when death seemed to stare me in the face, I seemed to behold, collected into one fatal moment, all the sins of my life, and all the dreadful punishments which they deserve. I carried a hell within me; I believed myself to be encompassed by demons and flames of fire; I became my own executioner, when I called to remembrance that wretched time which I had lavished on the world and its lying vanities; and I would have sacrificed my life a thousand and a thousand times to redeem it, had God put it in my power; I would have given the whole world to bring back but one poor moment of that precious time which I had so prodigally squandered away; and God in mercy ineffable, is still prolonging that day of visitation."

6. Finally, we farther deduce a sixth conclusion. Creatures, in whose favour God is pleased still to lengthen out the day of grace, the economy of long-suffering, which they have improved to so little purpose, ought no longer to delay, no not for a moment, to avail themselves of a reprieve so graciously intended. Creatures who stand on the brink of the grave, and who have too just ground to fear that they should be thrust into hell, were the grave immediately to swallow them up, ought instantly to form a new plan of life, and instantly to set about the execution of it. I conjure you, my brethren, by the gospel of this day, I conjure you by all that is powerful, all that is interesting, all that is tender, in the solemnity which we are now assembled to celebrate, and in that of last Lord's day: I conjure you to enter in good earnest into the spirit of this reflection, to keep it constantly in view through every instant of the years which the patience of God may still grant you, to make it as it were the rule of all your designs, all your undertakings, of all your exertions. Without this we can do nothing for you. The most ardent prayers which we could address to heaven on your behalf, this day, would be as ineffectual

as those which Moses formerly presented in behalf of the children of Israel, to obtain a revocation of that awful doom; "I swear in my wrath, that they should not enter into my rest," Ps. xcv. 11. But if, on the contrary, you are wise to admit the word of exhortation, we are warranted to hold up our wishes for your salvation, as so many promises sealed, with that seal of God which standeth sure, and immediately emanating from the mouth of that God, the Lord who changeth not.

APPLICATION.

I have embraced with avidity, my dearly beloved brethren, the opportunity of contributing to the present solemnity, to come to you at a juncture so desirable, and to bring to you the word of life, at a season when I am at liberty to unfold to you a heart which has ever been penetrated with a respectful tenderness for this city and for this church. Deign to accept my affectionate good wishes, with sentiments conformable to those which dictated them.

Venerable magistrates, to whose hands Providence has committed the reins of government, you are exalted to a station which our devotions contemplate with respect! But we are the ministers of a Master whose commands control the universe; and it is from the inexhaustible source of his greatness, of his riches, of his magnificence, that we draw the benedictions which we this day pronounce upon your august heads. May God vouchsafe to inspire you with that dignity of sentiment, that magnanimity, that noble ambition, which enable the sovereigns to whom he has entrusted the sword of his justice, to found on the basis of justice, all their designs, and all their decisions! May it please God to inspire you with that charity, that condescension, that affability, which sink the master in the father! May it please God to inspire you with that humility, that self-abasement, which engage Christian magistrates to deposit all their power at the feet of God, and to consider it as their highest glory to render unto him a faithful account of their administration! That account is a solemn one. You are, to a certain degree, responsible, not only for the temporal, but for the eternal happiness of this people. The eternal happiness of a nation frequently depends on the measures adopted by their governors, on the care which they employ to curb licentiousness, to suppress scandalous publications, to procure respect for the ordinances of religion, and to supply the church with enlightened, zealous, and faithful pastors. But magistrates who propose to themselves views of such extensive utility and importance, are warranted to expect from God, all the aid necessary to the accomplishment of them. And this aid, great God, we presume to implore in behalf of these illustrious personages! May our voice pierce the heavens, may our prayers be crowned with an answer of peace!

Pastors, my dear companions in the great plan of salvation, ye successors of apostolic men in the edifying of the body of Christ, and in the work of the ministry! God has set very narrow bounds to what is called in the language of the world, our advancement and our

fortune. The religion which we profess, permits us not to aspire after those proud titles, those posts of distinction, those splendid retines which confound the ministers of temporal princes with the ministers of that Jesus whose kingdom is not of this world. But whatever we lose with respect to those advantages which dazzle the senses, is amply compensated to us in real and solid blessings; at least, if we ourselves understand that religion which we make known to others, and if we have a due sense of that high vocation with which we are honoured of God. May that God, who has conferred this honour upon us, vouchsafe to endow us with that illumination, and with those virtues, without which it is impossible for us to discharge the duties of it in a becoming manner! May he vouchsafe to bestow upon us that courage, that intrepidity, which are necessary to our effectually resisting the enemies of our holy reformation; nay, those too, who, under the name of reformed, do their utmost to thwart and to undermine it! May he vouchsafe to support us amidst the incessant difficulties and oppositions which we have to encounter, through the course of our ministry, and to animate us by the idea of those supremement degrees of glory, which await those, who, after having "turned many to righteousness, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever!"

Merchants, ye who are the support of this Republic, and who maintain in the midst of us prosperity and abundance, may God vouchsafe to continue this blessing upon your commerce! May God cause the winds and the waves, nature and the elements, to unite their influences in your favour! But above all, may God vouchsafe to teach you the great art of "placing your heart there where your treasure is; to make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness;" to sanctify your prosperity by your charities, especially on a day like this, on which every one ought to prescribe to himself the law of paying a homage of charity to God who is love, and whose love has spared us to behold the light of this day!

Fathers and mothers, with whom it is so delicious for me to blend myself, under an address so deeply interesting, may God enable us to view our children, not as beings limited to a present world, but as beings endowed with an immortal soul, and formed for eternity! May it please God to impress infinitely more upon our hearts the desire of one day beholding them among the blessed in the kingdom of heaven, than going on and prospering on the earth! May God grant us the possession of objects so endeared to the very close of life, objects so necessary to the enjoyment of life! May God vouchsafe, if he is pleased to take them away from us, to grant us that submission to his will, which enables us to support a calamity so severe!

My dearly beloved brethren, this reflection chokes my utterance. May God vouchsafe to hear all the wishes and prayers which my heart has conceived, and which my lips have uttered, and all those which I am constrained to suppress, and which are more in number than the tongue is able to declare! Amen.

SERMON LXXIX.

THE TRUE GLORY OF THE CHRISTIAN.

PART I.

GALATIANS vi. 14.

But 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.

THE solemnity which in a few days we are going to celebrate, I mean the Ascension of Jesus Christ, displays the triumph of the cross. The Saviour of the world *ascending in a cloud*, received up into heaven amidst the acclamations of the church triumphant, removes the offence given by the Saviour of the world *hanging on a tree*. The period of the crucifixion, I acknowledge, was precisely that in which he carried magnanimity to its most exalted pitch. Never did he appear so truly great as when "descended into the lower parts of the earth," Eph. iv. 9; "humbled, made of no reputation, obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," Phil. ii. 7, 8; he accomplished what was most repulsive to nature, in the plan of redemption. But how difficult is it to recognise heroism, when the hero terminates his career upon a scaffold!

The darkness which overspread the mystery of the cross, is passing away; the veils which concealed the glory of Jesus Christ, begin to withdraw; heaven, which seemed to have conspired with earth and with hell to depress and overwhelm him, declares aloud in his favour; his splendour bursts out of obscurity, and his glory from the very bosom of shame: because "he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant; because he humbled himself; because he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross: therefore 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," Phil. ii. 9, 10.

What circumstances more proper could we have selected, Christians, to induce you to seek your glory in the cross of your Saviour, than those which display it, followed by so much pomp and magnificence? I am going to propose to you as a model the man who of all others best understood the mystery of the cross: for my part, says he in the words which I have read, "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." Let us meditate on this subject with all that application of thought which it so justly merits.

And thou great High Priest, "Minister of the true tabernacle! thou holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens," Heb. vii. 26; viii. 21, graciously look down on this people, now combating under the banners of

the cross! It is impossible for us to call to remembrance the great day of thy exaltation, without fixing our eyes upon thee, with those blessed disciples of thine who were the witnesses of it, without following thee, as they did with the bodily organ, and with all the powers of thought, and without crying out, "Draw us, Lord, we will run after thee," Cant. i. 4. But in giving way to such desires, we misunderstand the nature of our vocation. We must combat as thou hast done, in order to triumph with thee. Well, be it so! "Teach my hands to war, and my fingers to fight," Ps. cxliv. 1. Teach us to make thy cross a ladder, whereon to mount to thy throne. Amen.

The text which we have announced, is, as it were, a conclusion deduced from the chapters which precede it. We cannot possibly have a clear comprehension of it, without a general recollection of the whole epistle from which it is taken. St. Paul, in writing to the Galatians, has this principally in view, to revive the spirit of Christianity which he himself had diffused over the whole province of Galatia. Never had preacher greater success than the ministry of our apostle was attended with in this city of the Lesser Asia. He himself gives this honourable testimony in favour of the Galatians, in chap. iv. ver. 15, that "they had received him as an angel of God," and, which is saying still more, "even as Christ Jesus." But the *Gauls*, of which this people was a colony, have, in all ages, been reproached with the faculty of easily taking impressions, and of losing them with equal facility. The sentiments with which St. Paul had inspired them, shared the fate of all violent sensations; that is, they were of no great duration. With this he upbraids them in the very beginning of the epistle. *I marvel*, says he to them, chap. i. 6, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ, unto another gospel." Mark the expression, *removed unto another gospel*.

We are not possessed of memoirs of the first ages of the church sufficiently ample to enable us to determine, with precision, who were the authors of a revolution so deplorable. But if we may give credit to two of the earliest historians, to whom we are indebted for the most complete accounts which we have of the first fathers of heresy, I mean Philostratus and St. Epiphanius, it was Cerinthus himself, in the first instance, and his disciples afterward, who marred the good seed which St. Paul had sown in the church of Galatia. One thing is certain, namely, that respect for the ceremonial observances which God himself had prescribed in a manner so solemn, and particularly for the law of circumcision, was the reason, or rather the pretext, of which the adversaries of our apostle availed themselves to destroy the fruits of his ministry, by exciting suspicions against the soundness of his doctrine. St. Paul goes to the root of the evil: he conveys just ideas of these ceremonial institutions; he demonstrates, that, however venerable the origin of them might be, and whatever the wisdom displayed in their establishment, they had never been laid down as the essential part of religion, much less still, as the true means of reconciling men to God. We perceive at first sight this design

of the apostle in the words of my text, and through the whole epistle from which they are taken.

But what is perhaps not so easily discoverable in it, but which ought to be very carefully observed, is, that as St. Paul was maintaining his thesis against opponents of different sorts, so he likewise supports it on different principles. Three descriptions of persons argued in favour of the *Levitical observances*. The first did so from a prejudice of birth and education. The second, from an excess of complaisance. The third from a criminal policy.

1. A part of the Jews, who had been converted to Christianity, could not help preserving a respect for the *Levitical ceremonies*, and wished to transmit the observance of them into the Christian church. These were the persons who acted from a prejudice of birth and education.

2. Some of them, more enlightened, out of complaisance to others, would have wished to retain the practice of those *rites*. In this class we find no less a person than St. Peter himself, as we learn from the second chapter of this epistle, the eleventh and following verses; and what is most to be regretted in the case, this apostle fell into such an excess of compliance, that he not only authorised by his example that respect which the Jews had for the *Levitical institutions*; but, being at Antioch when certain Jews were sent thither by St. James, he pretended to break off all intercourse with the Gentile converts to Christianity, because they had not submitted to the ordinance of *circumcision*; in this he acted from an excessive and timid complaisance. This weakness of St. Peter, to mention by the way, has been laid hold of by one of the most declared enemies of Christianity, I mean the philosopher Porphyry. The reproaches which he vents against the Christians, on this ground, appeared so galling to them, that they had recourse to a pious fraud to defend themselves. They alleged, nay, they perhaps seriously believed, that the person thus branded with timidity was not Peter the apostle, but one Cephas, who, as they are pleased to give out, was of the number of the seventy disciples of Jesus Christ, mentioned in the gospel. A most chimerical supposition! which has been latterly adopted by a celebrated Jesuit,* and which has swelled the catalogue of his extravagances.

3. But if some from prejudice wished to transmit the *Levitical ceremonies* into Christianity, and others from an excess of complaisance, there was still a third description of persons who did so, out of a criminal policy. Such were the pagan converts. Respecting which it is necessary to remark, that the Jewish religion was tolerated by the Roman laws; whereas the religion of Jesus Christ was proscribed by them, and Christians were thereby exposed to the most violent persecution. This it was which induced the pagan converts to conform to the *Levitical ceremonies*, that they might pass for Jews under this veil of Judaism.

A passage of St. Jerome to this purpose deserves to be here inserted. "CAIUS CÆSAR,"

says he,* "AUGUSTUS and TIBERIUS enacted laws, by which the Jews dispersed over the Roman empire were authorised to practise the rites of their religion, and the ceremonial institutions transmitted to them from their fathers. All those who were circumcised, though they had embraced Christianity, were considered all over the pagan world as Jews; but all those who remained in a state of uncircumcision, while they professedly received the gospel, were equally persecuted by Jews and pagans. There were teachers among them, therefore, who, in order to screen themselves from these persecutions, submitted to be circumcised, and recommended circumcision to their disciples."

These are the words of St. Jerome, and they throw much light on what our apostle says in the twelfth verse of the chapter from which I have taken my text. "As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ." And as a relaxed morality has always the most numerous supporters, we see that in the church of Galatia, the teachers who made the greatest use of this artifice, not only attracted the greatest number of disciples, but likewise made that superiority a source of vain-glorious boasting. This is the sense of the words which immediately precede our text: "For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they might glory in your flesh."

These were the three descriptions of opponents against whom Paul had to maintain the inutility of the observance of the *Levitical ceremonial*, and to assert the exclusive *doctrine of the cross*.

One of the principal causes of the obscurity of St. Paul's Epistle is this, that it is not always easy to distinguish the *general arguments* which that apostle advances in them, from certain reasonings of a different kind, which are conclusive only against some *particular adversaries*. Is it not evident, for example, that all the consequences which he deduces from the history of Hagar, whom he makes the emblem of the ancient dispensation; and from that of Sarah, whom he makes the emblem of the evangelical, could make an impression only on the minds of Jews, who were accustomed to allegory, and who particularly discovered it in the different condition of that wife, and of that handmaid of Abraham; as appears in many passages of Philo, which it would be improper at present to introduce?

Now, my brethren, it is impossible to have a clear conception of the Epistles of our apostle, without carefully distinguishing those different adversaries whom he had to combat, and the different arguments which he employs to confute them. Nay, this distinction is the very key which explains to us the different conduct observed by the apostles toward their proselytes. For they believed themselves obliged, with respect to those who had come over from Judaism, to tolerate that *Levitical ceremonial* to which they were attached by the prejudices of birth; whereas this connivance might have proved dangerous to others who conformed to

* Father Hardouin, in his Dissertation on Gallatians ii. 10.

* Hieron. tom. 9. in Galat. vi. 12.

the practice of it merely from the dastardly motive which induced them to disguise their religion, or to screen themselves from the persecution to which it exposed them who gloried in making profession of it.

But whatever difference there may be in the character of the opponents whom the apostle was combating, and in the arguments which he employed to confute them, he presses on all of them this principle, on which the whole fabric of Christianity rests. The sacrifice which Jesus Christ offered up, that of his own life, is the only one capable of satisfying the demands of divine justice, awakened to the punishment of human guilt; and to divide the glory of the Redeemer's sacrifice with the Levitical ceremonial, was, as he expresses it, to *preach another gospel*; was to *fall from grace*; was to lose the fruit of all the sufferings endured in the cause of Christianity; was a doctrine worthy of being rejected with execration, were it to be preached even by "an angel from heaven." Our apostle goes still farther; he solemnly protests that no worldly consideration should ever have power to make him renounce this leading truth of the gospel; that the more it exposed him to hatred and suffering, the more he would rejoice in the knowledge of it, and in making it known to others; in a word, he declares he will continue to preach the cross, were the consequences to be, that he himself should be nailed to it: "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." This is the general scope of the epistle to the Galatians, particularly of our text, which is the conclusion of it.

But it is of importance to descend into a more particular detail. And, in order to throw more light on my subject, I propose, as far as the limits prescribed me permit, to attempt the three following things:

I. I shall examine wherein those sentiments of the Christian consist, which enable him to say that "the world is crucified unto him, and he unto the world."

II. I shall show that in such sentiments as these true glory consists.

III. I shall demonstrate that it is the cross of Christ, and the cross of Christ alone, which can inspire us with these sentiments; from which I shall deduce this farther consequence, that in the cross of Christ alone we can find a just ground of glorying. Vouchsafe us a few moments more of your attention to the elucidation of these interesting truths.

I. What is the disposition of mind denoted by these expressions, "the world is crucified unto me; I am crucified unto the world?" In order to have just ideas of this reciprocal crucifixion, we must comprehend, 1. The nature of it. 2. The degrees. 3. The bitterness.

1. The nature of it. "The world is crucified unto me; I am crucified unto the world:" this is a figurative mode of expression, importing a total rupture with the world. Distinguish two different senses in which the term *world* may be taken: the world of nature, and the world of cupidity. By the world of nature we understand that vast assemblage of beings which the almighty arm of Jehovah has formed, but these considered as they are in themselves.

By the world of cupidity we understand those self-same beings, considered so far as by our abuse of them, they seduce us from the obedience which we owe to the Creator. Of the natural world it is said, Gen. i. 31, "God saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good." And St. Paul says, 1 Tim. iv. 4, that "every creature of God is good . . . if it be received with thanksgiving." The Christian does not break with the world in this first sense of the word. On the contrary, he makes it the object of his frequent meditation; he discovers in it the perfections of the great Being who created it: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handy work," Ps. xix. 1. Nay more, he makes it the object of his hope: *For the promise*, I quote the words of St. Paul, in chap. iv. 13, of his Epistle to the Romans, "For the promise that he should be the heir of the world was made to Abraham: and all things are yours; whether Paul or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world," 1 Cor. iii. 22.

It is the world of cupidity, therefore, that our apostle speaks in the words which I am attempting to explain, that world of which it is said, "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world," 1 John ii. 15. 17. "The friendship of the world is enmity with," or as it might have been rendered, "is hatred to God." This is the world which "is crucified" to the Christian; the Christian "is crucified" to this world. The apostle, in expressing himself thus strongly, refines upon a form of speech which frequently occurs in Scripture, that of "dying to an object." *To die* to an object, is, in the style of the sacred authors, to have no farther intercourse with that object. In this sense our apostle says, in chap. ii. of this Epistle, ver. 19, "I through the law am dead to the law;" in other words, the genius of severity which predominates in the Mosaic economy, lays me under the necessity of entirely renouncing it, "that I might live unto God;" the meaning of which evidently is this, that I may have undivided recourse to a dispensation which presents the Deity as more accessible to me. In like manner, "to die to the world of cupidity," or what amounts to the same thing, "to die unto sin," is to renounce sin; "how shall we who are dead to sin live any longer therein? likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin; but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord," Rom. vi. 2. 11. I am still quoting the words of St. Paul.

But as if a violent death were more really dying than death in a milder form, Scripture, in order to mark more decidedly the sincerity of the renunciation of the world, which is ascribed to the Christian, is not satisfied with representing him as *dead*, but holds him up as *crucified* to the world of cupidity: "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him," Rom. vi. 6. "They who are in Christ have crucified the flesh, with its lusts;" and in the text, "the world is crucified unto me, and I am crucified unto the world:" that is, illicit cupidity exists no longer with respect to me, and I subsist no longer with respect to it.

2. There is, however, a certain degree of ambiguity in these ideas of "deadness to the

world," of "crucifixion to the world," of "a total rupture with the world." For this reason it is that we said, that in order to have just ideas of this disposition of mind, it is not sufficient to comprehend the *nature* of it, but that we should also understand the *gradations* of which it admits. If, in order worthily to sustain the Christian character, an absolute renunciation of the world, in the literal sense of the words, were indisputably necessary, where is the person, alas! who durst pretend to assume that name? Would it be a Noah? would it be an Abraham? would it be a Moses? would it be a David? would it be a Peter? would it be a Paul? would it be one of you, Christians of our own days, who seem to have carried piety to its highest degree of fervour, and "who shine as lights in the world, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation?" Phil. ii. 15.

Where, then, are those saints to be found, in whom an ill-smothered cupidity emits no sparks? That female is an example of what is called virtue, by way of eminence, in her sex; and which, according to the ideas of the age in which we live, seems to constitute the whole of virtue, as far as she is concerned; but, impregnable to all the assaults which can be made upon her chastity, she succumbs under the slightest temptation that attacks her on the side of avarice; and she loses all self-government, the moment you recommend to her, to take care that her charities be in something like proportion to her opulence.

That man is a pattern of reflective retirement, and modest silence: but, unshaken by the rudest attacks made upon his spirit of reserve, he yields to the slightest solicitations of pride, he decks himself out with the names and titles of his ancestors, he admires himself in the poorest effusions of his brain. How easy would it be to multiply examples of this sort!

But if it be impossible to say, taking the expression in the strictness of interpretation, that the Christian has broken off all commerce with the world, that he is "dead to the world," that "the world is crucified unto him," and that "he is crucified unto the world;" he possesses this disposition of mind, nevertheless, in various respects, and to a certain degree. "He is crucified unto the world;" he is so in respect of intention, he has that sincere will "to pull down every strong hold, every thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God;" it is an expression of St. Paul's, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. Hence such protestations as these, "O Lord! thou hast searched me, and known me." Ps. cxxxix. 1. "Lord! thou knowest that I love thee," John xxi. 17. Hence the bitterness of regret on account of remaining imperfection, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Rom. vii. 24. Hence those prayers for the communication of fresh supplies of heavenly aid; "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law," Ps. cxix. 18. "Teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God: thy Spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness," Ps. cxliiii. 10.

"He is crucified unto the world." He is so in respect of exertion and actual progress. Hence those unremitting conflicts with the remains of indwelling corruption; "I keep under

my body, and bring it into subjection," 1 Cor. ix. 27. Hence those advances in the Christian course; "not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect, but I follow after . . . 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, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus," Phil. iii. 12—14.

"He is crucified unto the world." He is so in respect of hope and fervour. Hence those sighings after the dissolution of the body, which forms, as it were, a wall of separation between God and us. Hence those ardent breathings after a dispensation, and economy of things in which we shall be able to give an unrestrained effusion to the love of order, and be completely united to Jesus Christ. "For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; nor for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life, . . . knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord; . . . and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord," 2 Cor. v. 4. 6. 8.

3. But the Holy Spirit, in representing to us our renunciation of the world, under the idea of a *death*, of a *crucifixion*, intended to mark not only the *nature* and the *degrees* of the disposition of mind which these expressions denote, but likewise to indicate the *difficulty*, the *bitterness*, of making such a sacrifice.

In very rare instances do men die without suffering. Death, in the gentlest form, is usually preceded by violent symptoms, which some have denominated the *harbingers of death*.—These harbingers of death are mortal swoonings, feverish heats, paroxysms of pain, tortures insupportable. Crucifixion, especially, was the most cruel punishment which human justice, shall I call it? or human barbarity ever invented. The imagination recoils from the representation of a man nailed to a tree, suspended by the iron which pierces his hands and his feet, pressed downward with the weight of his own body, the blood of which is drained off drop by drop, till he expires merely from excess of anguish.

Is this frightful image overstrained, when employed to represent the pains which the Christian is called to endure, the conflicts which he has to maintain, the sacrifices which he is bound to make; agonies which he is under an indispensable necessity to undergo, before he possibly can attain that blessed state which our apostle had, through grace, arrived at, when he said, in the words of my text, "the world is crucified unto me, and I am crucified unto the world?"

Represent to yourselves a Christian, represent to yourselves a man as yet a novice in the school of Jesus Christ, called to combat, sometimes the propensities which he brought with him into the world; sometimes to eradicate a habit which has grown-up in him, till it is become a second nature: sometimes to stem the torrent of custom and example; sometimes to mortify and subdue a headstrong passion, which engrosses him, transports him, drags him away captive; sometimes to bid an everlasting farewell to the place of his birth, to his kindred,

and, like Abraham, "to go out, not knowing whither he went;" sometimes, with that same patriarch, to immolate an only son; to tear himself, on a dying bed, from friends, from a spouse, from a child, whom he loves as his own soul; and all this without murmuring or complaining: and all this, because it is the will of God; and all this, with that submission which was expressed by Jesus Christ, the author and finisher of the Christian's faith, his Redeemer and his pattern: "Not what I will, but what thou wilt," Matt. xxvi. 39.

O cross of my Saviour, how heavily dost thou press, when laid upon a man who has not yet carried love to thee to that height which renders all things easy to him who loves! O path of virtue, which appears so smooth to them who walk in thee, how rugged is the road which leads unto thee! O yoke of Jesus Christ, so easy! burden so light to him who has been accustomed to bear thee; how difficult, how oppressive to those who are but beginning to try their strength! You see it, accordingly, my brethren! you see it on the page of inspiration, *to renounce the world of cupidity*, is to present the body in sacrifice; "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice," Rom. xii. 1; it is to "cut off a right hand," it is to "pluck out a right eye," Matt. v. 29, 30; it is for a man to "deny himself," it is to "take up the cross:" for "if any one will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me," Matt. xvi. 24; it is, in a word, to be "crucified with Jesus Christ;" for "I am crucified with Christ," Gal. ii. 20; and, in the words of the text, "The world is crucified unto me, and I am crucified unto the world." My God, how much it costs to be a Christian!

SERMON LXXIX.

THE TRUE GLORY OF THE CHRISTIAN.

PART II.

GALATIANS vi. 14.

But 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.

HAVING presented you with a general view of the apostle's reasoning in this epistle; having considered it as an answer to three different classes of opponents, whom St. Paul had to combat; namely, those who maintained the observance of the *Levitical institutions*, to the disparagement of the gospel, 1. From the prejudice of birth and education: 2. From an excess of complaisance: 3. From criminal policy: we proceeded to show, that whatever difference of motive and opinion might prevail among these three descriptions of adversaries whom our apostle had to encounter, and however different the strain of reasoning which he employs, according as the character of each demanded, he supports, in opposition to them all, this principle, on which the whole of Christianity rests, namely, that the sacrifice which

the Redeemer offered up of his own life, is alone capable of satisfying divine justice, and of reconciling guilty man to God.

We then entered into a more particular detail on the subject, by proposing,

I. To examine wherein that disposition of the Christian consists, by which he is enabled, with St. Paul, to say, "the world is crucified unto me, and I am crucified unto the world."

II. To show, that in such dispositions as these, true glory consists.

III. To demonstrate that it is the cross of Christ, and the cross of Christ only, which can inspire us with these sentiments; as a foundation for this farther conclusion, that in the cross of Christ alone we can find a just ground of glorying.

The first of these three proposals we have endeavoured to execute, by considering, 1. The *nature* of this reciprocal crucifixion: 2. The *gradations* of which it admits: 3. The *difficulty*, the *bitterness*, of making a sacrifice so very painful. We now proceed to what was next proposed, namely,

II. To show, that in such dispositions as are expressed by our apostle, true glory consists.

In order to elucidate and confirm this position, I mean to institute a comparison between the hero of this world, and the Christian hero, in the view of making it evidently apparent, that this last has infinitely the superiority over the other. From what sources does the hero of this world pretend to derive his glory?

The hero of this world sometimes derives his glory, from the greatness of the master to whom his services are devoted. He congratulates himself on contributing to the glory of those men who are so highly exalted above the rest of mankind, on being the support of their throne, and the guardian of their crown. The Master, to whose service the Christian has devoted himself, is the King of kings: he it is, in whose presence all the potentates of the earth "are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance," Isa. xl. 15. He it is, by whose supreme authority "kings reign, and princes decree justice," Prov. viii. 15. It is true that the greatness of this adorable Being raises him far above all our services. It is true that his throne is established for ever, and that the united force of all created things would in vain attempt to shake it. But if the Christian can contribute nothing to the glory of so great a master, he publishes it abroad, he confounds those who presume to invade it, he makes it to be known over the whole earth.

The hero of this world sometimes derives his glory from the hatred with which he is animated, against the enemy with whom he is making war. What enemy more hateful can a man engage, than the world? It is the world which degrades us from our natural greatness; which effaces from the soul of man, those traits which the finger of Deity himself has impressed upon it; which destroys our pretensions to a blessed immortality.

The hero of this world sometimes derives his glory from the dignity of the persons who have preceded him in the same honourable career. It is considered in the world, as glo-

rious, to succeed those illustrious men who have filled the universe with the sound of their name, who have made terror to stalk before them, and who signalized themselves by exploits more than human. The Christian has been preceded in his career by patriarchs, by prophets, by apostles, by martyrs, by those multitudes of the redeemed, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, Rev. v. 9. Those holy men have been called to wage war with sin, as we are to subdue our passions; to form in their inner man, as we are, piety, charity, patience, the habit and the practice of every virtue. The Christian has been preceded in his career, by Jesus Christ himself, the author and the finisher of the faith. "Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race which is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame," Heb. xii. 1, 2.

The hero of this world sometimes derives his glory from the brilliancy of his achievements. But who has greater exploits to glory in than the Christian can display? To shake off the yoke of prejudice, to despise the maxims of men, to resist flesh and blood, to subdue passion, to brave death, to suffer martyrdom, to remain unmoved amidst the convulsions of dissolving nature, and, in the very wreck of a labouring universe, to be able to apply those exceeding great and precious promises, which God has spoken by the mouth of the prophet, Isa. liv. 10. "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, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." These, these are the achievements of the Christian.

The hero of this world sometimes derives his glory from the benefits which he has procured for others, from the blessings with which he has enriched his country, from the slaves whose chains he has burst asunder, from the monsters of which he has purged the earth. Who is, in such respects as these, a greater benefactor to society than the Christian? He is at once, its bulwark, its light and its model.

The hero of this world sometimes derives his glory from the acclamations which his exploits excite, and from the magnificence of the recompense with which his merits are to be crowned. But whence proceed the acclamations which inflate his pride? Does it belong to venal souls, to courtiers, to hireling panegyrists; does it belong to persons of this description to distribute commendation and applause? Have they any thing like the idea of true glory? Extend, Christian, extend thy meditations up to the greatness of the Supreme Being! Think of that adorable intelligence, who unites in his essence all that deserves the name of great! Contemplate the Divinity surrounded with angels, with archangels, with the seraphim! Listen to the concerts which those blessed spirits compose to the glory of his name! Behold them penetrated, ravished, transported with the divine beauties which are disclosed

to their view; employing eternity in celebrating their excellency, and crying aloud day and night: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts! The whole earth is full of his glory," Isa. vi. 3. "Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God, for ever and ever! Amen," Rev. vii. 12. "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? for thou only art holy," Rev. xv. 3, 4.

This Being, so worthy to be praised, and praised in a manner so worthy of him, he it is who has been preparing acclamations for the conquerors of the world. Yes, Christian combatant! after thou hast been treated "as the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things," 1 Cor. iv. 13, after thou shalt have mortified, subjected, crucified this flesh; after thou shalt have borne this cross, which was once "to the Jews, a stumbling block; and to the Greeks foolishness;" and which is still to this day, foolishness and a stumbling block to those who ought to consider it as their highest glory to bear it; thou shalt be called forth in the presence of men and of angels; the eye of the great God shall distinguish thee amidst the innumerable company of the saints; he shall address thee in these words: "Well done, good and faithful servant," Matt. xxv. 21. He will fulfil the promise which he this day is making to all who combat under the banner of the cross: "to him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my throne," Rev. iii. 21.

Ah! glory of the hero of this world, profane panegyrics, inscriptions conceived in high swelling words of vanity, superb trophies, diadems, fitter to serve as an amusement to children, than to engage the attention of reasonable men! what have ye once to be compared with the acclamations, and with the crowns prepared for the Christian hero? I sacrifice, my brethren, to the standard prescribed to the duration of these exercises, the delicious meditations which this branch of my subject so copiously supplies, and all I farther request of you is a moment's attention, while I endeavour to make you sensible, that it is in the cross of Jesus Christ alone, we find every thing necessary to inspire these noble dispositions; in order to deduce this consequence, that in the cross of Jesus Christ alone, the Christian must look for true glory; and in order to justify this sentiment of our apostle: "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!" Under what aspect can you contemplate the cross of Christ, that does not dispose you to break off entirely with the world?

III. If we consider that cross in respect of its harmony with the whole contradiction which Jesus Christ endured upon earth, it has a powerful tendency to awaken in us the dispositions which St. Paul expresses, so as to say with him, "the world is crucified unto me, and I am crucified unto the world." Our great Master finishes upon a cross, a life passed in contempt, in indigence, in mortification of the senses, in hunger, in thirst, in weariness, in separation from the world; would it be becom-

ing in a Christian to lull himself to sleep in the arms of indolence, to addict himself to the pleasures of sense, to suffer himself to be enchanted by the charms of voluptuousness, to breathe after nothing but ease, but convenience, but repose, but abundance? "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. Remember the word that I said unto you, the servant is not greater than his Lord," John xv. 18. 20.

If we consider the cross of Christ, in relation to the sacrifice which is there offered up to divine justice, it has a powerful tendency to produce in us the dispositions expressed by St. Paul, so as to be able to say with him, "The world is crucified unto me, and I am crucified unto the world." That worldly life, those dissipations, those accumulated rebellions against the commands of heaven; that cupidity which engrosses us, and constitutes all our delight, in what is all this to terminate? Observe the tempests which it gathers around the head of those who give themselves up to criminal indulgence. Jesus Christ was perfectly exempt from sin, but he took ours upon himself, "he bare them in his own body on the tree," 1 Pet. ii. 24, and it was for this end that he underwent, on that accursed tree, all those torments which his divinity and his innocence enabled him to support, without sinking under the load. Behold in this, O sinner, the fearful doom which awaits thee. Yes, unless thou art crucified with Christ by faith, thou shalt be by the justice of God. And then all the fury of that justice shall be levelled at thy head, as it was at his. Then thou shalt be exposed on a dying bed to the dreadful conflicts which he endured in Gethsemane. Thou shalt shudder at the idea of that punishment which an avenging Deity is preparing for thee. Thou shalt sweat as it were great drops of blood, when the eye is directed to the tribunal of justice whither thou art going to be dragged. Nay more, thou shalt then be condemned to compensate, by the duration of thy punishment, what the weakness of thy nature renders thee incapable of supporting in respect to weight. Ages accumulated upon ages shall set no bounds to thy torments. Thou shalt be accused of God through eternity, as Jesus Christ was in time: and that cross which thou refusedst to bear for a time, thou must bear for ever and ever.

If we consider the *cross of Jesus Christ*, with relation to the atrocious guilt of those who despise a sacrifice of such high value, we shall feel a powerful tendency to adopt the dispositions of St. Paul, and to say with him, "the world is crucified unto me, and I am crucified unto the world." The image which I would here trace for your inspection, is still that of St. Paul. This apostle depicts to us the love of the world, as a contempt of the *cross of Christ*, and as a renewal of the punishment which he suffered. The idea of what such a crime deserves, absorbs and confounds his spirit; he cannot find colours strong enough to paint it; and he satisfies himself with asking, after he had mentioned the punishment inflicted on those who had violated the law of Moses: "Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted

the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the spirit of grace?" Heb. x. 29.

Here, sinner, here read thy sentence! The voice of the blood of the Son of God will cry from earth to heaven for vengeance against thee. God will one day call thee to give an account of the blood of a Son so dear to him. He will say unto thee as St. Peter did to those who shed it; "Thou hast denied the Prince of Life," Acts iii. 14, 15. He will pursue thee with all his plagues, as if thou hadst imbrued thy hands in that blood, and as he has pursued those who were actually guilty of that crime.

But less us press motives more gentle, and more congenial to the dignity of the redeemed of the Lord. If we consider the *cross of Christ*, in relation to the proofs which he there displays to us of his love, is it possible we should find any thing too painful in the sacrifices which he demands of us? Is it possible for us to do too much for that Jesus who has done so much for us? When the heart feels a disposition to revolt against the morality of the gospel; when you are tempted to say, "This is a hard saying, who can hear it?" John vi. 60. When the gate of heaven seems too strait for you; when the flesh would exaggerate the difficulties of working out your salvation; when it seems as if we were tearing the heart from your bosom, in charging you to curb the impetuosity of your temperament, to resist the torrent of irregular desire, to give a portion of your goods to the poor, to sacrifice a Delilah or a Drusilla: follow your Saviour to Calvary: behold him passing the brook Kidron, ascending the fatal Mount on which his sacrifice was to be accomplished; behold that concourse of woes which constrain him to cry out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Matt. xxvii. 46. If ye can, hold out against objects like these!

If we consider the *cross of Jesus Christ*, relatively to the proofs which it supplies in support of the doctrine of him who there finished his life, it will be a powerful inducement to adopt the sentiments of St. Paul. It is natural, I allow, for reasonable beings, of whom sacrifices are exacted, so costly as those which Christianity prescribes, to expect full assurance of the truth of that religion. It is impossible to employ too much precaution, when the point in question is, whether or not we are to surrender victims so beloved. The slightest doubt on this head is of essential importance. But is this article susceptible of the slightest doubt? Jesus Christ sealed with his blood the doctrine which he taught; he was not only the hero of the religion which we preach, but likewise the martyr of it.

If we consider the *cross of Christ*, relatively to the aid necessary to form us to the sentiments expressed by St. Paul, it still powerfully presses us to adopt them. It assures, on the part of God, of every support we can need, in maintaining the conflicts to which we are called. It lays the foundation of this reasoning, the justest, the most conclusive, which intelligence ever formed: "If God be for us, who can be against us? 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. 31, 32.

And, to conclude this discourse by representing the same images which we traced in the beginning of it, if we consider *the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ*, relatively to the glory which followed, it still presses us to adopt the sentiments of St. Paul in the text. The idea of that glory carried Jesus Christ through all that was most painful in his sacrifice. On the eve of consummating it, he thus addresses his heavenly Father: "The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified. Father, glorify thy name Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do: and now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was," John xii. 23, 28; xvii. 1, 4, 5. This expectation was not disappointed. The conflict was long, it was severe, but it came to a period; but heavenly messengers descended to receive him as he issued from the tomb; but a cloud came to raise him from the earth; but the gates of heaven opened, with the acclamations of the church triumphant, celebrating his victories, and hailing his exaltation in these strains: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in," Ps. xxiv. 7.

Christians! let our eyes settle on this object. To suffer with Jesus Christ, is to have full assurance of reigning with him. We do not mean to conceal from you the pains which await you in the career prescribed to the followers of the Redeemer. It is a hard thing to renounce all that flatters, all that pleases, all that charms. It is hard to be told incessantly of difficulties to be surmounted, of enemies to be encountered, of a cross to be borne, of crucifixion to be endured. It is hard for a man to mortify himself, while all around him are rejoicing; while they are refining on pleasure; while they are employing their utmost ingenuity to procure new amusements; while they are distilling their brain to diversify their delights; while they are spending life in sports, in feasting; in gayety, in spectacle on spectacle. The conflict is long, it is violent, I acknowledge it; but it draws to a period; but your cross shall be followed by the same triumph which that of your Saviour was: "Father, the hour is come, glorify thy Son:" but you, in expiring on your cross; you shall with holy joy and confidence commend your soul to God, as he commended his, and, closing your eyes in death, say, "Father! into thy hands I commend my spirit," Luke xxii. 46; but the angels shall descend to receive that departing spirit, to convey it to the bosom of your God; and after having rejoiced in your conversion, they shall rejoice together in your beatitude, as they rejoiced in his; but in the great day of the restitution of all things, you shall ascend on the clouds of heaven, as Jesus Christ did; you shall be exalted, like him, far above all heavens; and you shall assume, together with him, a seat on the throne of the majesty of God.

Thus it is that *the cross of Christ* forms us to the sentiments of our apostle; thus it is that we are enabled to say, "The world is crucified unto us, and we are crucified unto the world:" thus it is that the cross conducts us to the true glory. O glorious cross! thou shalt ever be the object of my study, and of my meditation! I will propose to myself to know nothing, save Jesus Christ and him crucified! "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!" May God grant us this grace! Amen.

SERMON LXXX.

ON THE FEAR OF DEATH.

PART I.

HEBREWS ii. 14, 15.

Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage.

To know what death is, without being terrified at it, is the highest degree of perfection attainable by the human mind; it is the highest point of felicity which a man can reach, while in this valley of tears. I say, to know death without fearing it; and it is in the union of these two things we are to look for that effort of genius so worthy of emulation, and that perfection of felicity so much calculated to kindle ardent desire. For to brave death without knowing what it is; to shut our eyes against all that is hideous in its aspect, in order to combat it with success, this is so far from indicating a superior excellency of disposition, that it must be considered rather as a mental derangement; so far from being the height of felicity, it is the extreme of misery.

We have seen philosophers shaking off (if after all they did so in reality, and if that intrepid outside did not conceal a trembling heart,) we have seen philosophers shaking off the fear of death; but they did not know it. They viewed it only under borrowed aspects. They figured it to themselves, as either reducing the nature of man to a state of annihilation, or as summoning him before chimerical tribunals, or as followed by a certain imaginary felicity.

We have seen heroes, as the world calls them, pretending to brave the terrors of death; but they did not know it: they represented it to themselves as crowned with laurels, as decorated with trophies, as figuring on the page of the historian.

We have seen, and still see every day, libertines pretending to brave the terrors of death, but they know it not. Their indolence is the cause of that assumed firmness; and they are incapable of enjoying tranquillity, but by banishing the idea of a period, the horror of which they are unable to overcome. But not to disguise this formidable object; to view it in its

true light; to fix the eye steadily on every feature; to have a perception of all its terrors; in a word, to know what death is, without being terrified at it, to repeat it once more, is the highest degree of perfection attainable by the human mind; it is the highest point of felicity which a man can reach while in this valley of tears.

Sovereign wisdom, my brethren, forms his children to true heroism. That wisdom effects what neither philosophers by their false maxims, nor the heroes of the world by their affected intrepidity, nor the libertine by his insensibility and indolence; that wisdom effects what all the powers in the universe could not have produced, and alone bestows on the Christian the privilege of knowing death without fearing it. All this is contained in the words which I have read as the subject of the present discourse: "through fear of death, men were all their life-time subject to bondage;" there is the power of death; there his empire; there his triumph. Jesus Christ, "through his death, has destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil, and delivers them who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage;" Behold death vanquished! there are his spoils; there is the triumph over him: salutary ideas! which will prevent themselves in succession to our thoughts in the sequel of this exercise. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil: and deliver them who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage."

With respect to the first words, "forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same," I shall only remark, that by the children referred to, we are to understand men in general, and believers in particular: and by that *flesh and blood* we are not to understand *corruption*, as in some other passages of Scripture, but *human nature*; so that when it is said, "as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, Jesus Christ likewise took part of the same," the meaning is, he assumed a body such as ours is.

Having made these few short remarks on the first words, we shall confine ourselves to the two ideas which have been indicated, and shall employ what remains of our time, in proving this fundamental truth, that Jesus Christ, "by his death, has destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, in order that he might deliver them who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage."

The terrors of death are expressed in terms powerfully energetic, in this text. It represents to us a mighty tyrant causing death to march at his command, and subjecting the whole universe to his dominion. This tyrant is the devil. He is the personage here described, and who, "through the fear of death, subjects men to bondage."

You stand aghast, no doubt, on beholding the whole human race reduced to subjection under a master so detestable. The fact, how-

ever, cannot be called in question; this great enemy of our salvation unquestionably exercises a sort of empire over the universe. Though the Scriptures speak sparingly of the nature and functions of this malignant spirit, they say enough of them to convey a striking idea of his power, and to render it formidable to us. The Scripture tells us, I. That he *tempts* men to sin; witness the wiles which he practised on our first parents; witness that which St. Paul says of him in chap. ii. of the Epistle to the Ephesians, "the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience;" witness the name of *Tempter* given to him in the gospel history, Matt. iv. 3. The Scripture informs us, II. That he *accuses* men before God of those very crimes which he solicited them to commit; witness the prophet Zechariah, who was "showed Joshua the high-priest, standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him;" or, as it might have been rendered, to be his *adversary* or *accuser*: witness the descriptive appellation of *calumniator* or *accuser* given him by St. John in the Apocalypse. The Scripture tells us, III. That he sometimes *torments* men; witness the history of Job; witness what St. Paul says of his "delivering up unto Satan" the incestuous person at Corinth. This power of delivering up to Satan, to mention it by the way, was a part of the miraculous gifts conferred on the apostle; gifts transmitted to the immediately succeeding ages of the church, at least if Pauliness is to be credited on this subject,* who relates that an abandoned wretch was, by St. Ambrosius, delivered up to Satan, who tore him in pieces. Finally, IV. We find the devil designated in Scripture, "the god of the world," 2 Cor. iv. 4, and "the prince of the power of the air," Eph. ii. 2. You likewise see him represented as acting on the waters of the sea, as raising tempests, and as smiting the children of men with various kinds of plagues.

But if the devil be represented as exercising an influence over the ills of human life, he is still more especially represented as exerting his power over our death, the last and the most formidable of all our woes. The Jews were impressed with ideas of this kind. Nay, they did not satisfy themselves with general notions on this subject. They entered into the detail (for, my brethren, it has been an infirmity incident to man in every age, to assert confidently on subjects the most mysterious and concealed,) they said that the devil, to whom they gave the name of Samuel,† had the empire of death: that his power extended so far as to prevent the resurrection of the wicked. St. Paul, in the words of our text, adopts their mode of expression, as his custom is, without propagating their error: he describes the evil spirit as the person who possesses the *empire of death*, and who, "through the fear of death, subjects men all their life-time to bondage."

But Christians, be not dismayed at beholding this fearful image. "Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel," Numb. xxiii. 23.

* Paulin. de Vit. Ambros.
† Thalm. in Libo. Capht.

"Now is come salvation and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ; for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb," Rev. xii. 10, 11. Let us, however, reduce our reflections on the subject to method. Three considerations render death formidable to man; three considerations disarm death in the apprehension of the Christian; 1. The veil which conceals from the eyes of the dying person, the state on which he is about to enter: 2. The remorse of conscience which the recollection of his guilt excites: 3. The loss of titles, honours, and every other earthly possession. In these respects chiefly, "he who has the power of death subjects men to bondage:" these are the things which render death formidable.

In opposition to this, the death of Jesus Christ, 1. Removes the veil which concealed futurity from us, and constitutes an authentic proof of the immortality of the soul: 2. The death of Jesus Christ is a sacrifice presented to divine justice for the remission of our sins: 3. The death of Jesus Christ gives us complete assurance of a blessed eternity. These are the three considerations which disarm death in the apprehension of the dying believer. And this is a brief abstract of the important truths delivered in this text.

The devil renders death formidable, through uncertainty respecting the nature of our souls; the death of Christ dispels that terror, by demonstrating to us that the soul is immortal. The devil renders death formidable by awakening the recollection of past guilt; the death of Jesus Christ restores confidence and joy, for it is the expiation of all our sins. The devil clothes death with terror, by rendering us sensible to the loss of those possessions of which death is going to deprive us; the death of Jesus Christ tranquilizes the mind, because it is a pledge to us of an eternal felicity. The first of these ideas represents Jesus Christ to us as a *martyr*, who has sealed with his own blood a doctrine which rests entirely on the immortality of the soul. The second represents him as a *victim*, offering himself in our stead, to divine justice. And the third represents him as a *conqueror*, who has, by his death, acquired for us a kingdom of everlasting bliss.

Had we nothing farther in view, than to present you with vague ideas of the sentiments of the sacred authors, on this subject, here our discourse might be concluded. But these truths, treated thus generally, could make but a slight impression. It is of importance to press them one by one, and, opposing in every particular, the triumph of the Redeemer, to the empire of the wicked one, to place in its clearest point of light, the interesting truth contained in our text, namely, that Jesus Christ, "through his own death, has destroyed him who had the power of death, that is, the devil; that he might deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their life-time subject to bondage."

I. The first consideration which renders death formidable: the first yoke imposed on the necks of the children of men, by that tremendous prince who "has the power of death,"

is the fear of falling back into nothing, which the prospect of death awakens. The greatest of all the advantages which we possess, and that which indeed is the foundation of all the rest, is existence. We accordingly observe that old people, though all their faculties are much impaired, always enjoy a certain nameless superiority over young persons. The reflection that there was a time when they existed, while as yet the young did not exist, constitutes this superiority; and young persons, in their turn, feel a superiority suggested to them by the thought, that a time is coming when they shall exist, whereas the others shall be no more. Death terminates, to appearance, an advantage which is the foundation of every other. And is it any wonder that the heart of man should sink under such a consideration?

In vain will we flee for refuge from this depressing reflection, to the arguments which reason, even a well-directed reason, supplies. If they are satisfying of themselves, and calculated to impress the philosophic mind, they are far beyond the reach of a vulgar understanding, to which the very terms *spirituality* and *existence* are barbarous and unintelligible. To no purpose will we have recourse to what has been said on this subject, by the most enlightened of the pagan world, and to what, in particular, Tacitus relates of Seneca,* on his going into the bath which was to receive the blood, as it streamed from his opened veins: he besprinkled the bystanders with the fluid in which his limbs were immersed, with this memorable expression, that he presented those drops of water as a libation to Jupiter the Deliverer. In order to secure us against terrors so formidable, we must have a guide more safe than our own reason. In order to obtain a persuasion of the immortality of the soul, we must have a security less suspicious than that of a Socrates or a Plato. Now that guide, my brethren, is the cross of Jesus Christ: that security is an expiring Redeemer. Two principles concur in the demonstration of all-important truth.

1. The doctrine of Jesus Christ establishes the immortality of the soul.

2. The death of Jesus Christ is an irresistible proof of the truth of his doctrine.

1. That the doctrine of Jesus Christ establishes the immortality of the soul is a point which no one pretends to dispute with us. A man has but to open his eyes in order to be convinced of it. We shall, accordingly, make but a single remark on this head. It is this, that the doctrine of the immortality of the soul ought not to be considered merely as a particular point of the religion of Jesus Christ, independent of which it may subsist as a complete whole. It is a point without which Christianity cannot exist at all, and separated from which the religion of Jesus Christ, the fullest, the most complete, and the most consistent that ever was presented to the world, becomes the most imperfect, barren, and inconsistent. The whole fabric of the gospel rests on this foundation, that the soul is immortal. Wherefore was it that Jesus Christ, the Lord of universal nature, had a manger for his cradle, and a sta-

ble for his palace? because his "kingdom was not of this world," John xviii. 16. This supposes the immortality of the soul. Wherefore is the Christian encouraged to bid defiance to tyrants, who may drag him from a prison, from a dungeon, who may nail him to a cross, who may mangle his body on a wheel? It is because their power extends no farther than to the "killing of the body," Matt. x. 28, while the soul is placed far beyond their reach. This supposes immortality. Wherefore must the Christian deem himself miserable, were he to achieve the conquest of the whole world, at the expense of a good conscience? Because it will "profit a man nothing to gain the whole world, if he lose his own soul," Matt. xvi. 26. This supposes immortality. Wherefore are we not the most miserable of all creatures? Because "we have hope in Christ not for this life only," 1 Cor. xv. 19. This supposes immortality. The doctrine of Jesus Christ, therefore, establishes the truth of the immortality of the soul.

2. But we said, in the second place, that the death of Jesus Christ is a proof of his doctrine. He referred the world to his death, as a sign by which it might be ascertained whether or not he came from God. By this he proposed to stop the mouth of incredulity. Neither the purity of his life, nor the sanctity of his deportment, nor the lustre of his miracles had as yet prevailed so far as to convince an unbelieving world of the truth of his mission. They must have sign upon sign, prodigy upon prodigy. Jesus Christ restricts himself to one: "Destroy this temple, and within three days I will build it up again," Mark xiv. 58. "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas," Matt. xii. 39. This sign could not labour under any ambiguity. And this sign was accomplished. There is no longer room to doubt of a truth demonstrated in a manner so illustrious.

Our ancestors devised,* with greater simplicity, it must be allowed, than strength of reasoning, a very singular proof of the innocence of persons accused. They presented to them a bar of hot iron. If the person under trial had the firmness to grasp it, and received no injury from the action of the burning metal, he was acquitted of the charge. This proof was, as we have said, devised with more simplicity than strength of reasoning: no one having a right to suppose that God will perform a miracle, to evince his innocence to the conviction of his judges. I acknowledge at the same time, that had I been an eye-witness of such an experiment; had I beheld that element which dissolves, which devours bodies the most obdurate, respecting the hand of a person accused of a crime, I should certainly have been very much struck at the sight of such a spectacle.

But what shall we say of the Saviour of the world, after the proof to which he was put? He "walked through the fire without being burnt," Isa. xliii. 2. He descended into the bosom of the grave: the grave respected him, and those other insatiables which never say "it is enough," Prov. xxx. 16, opened a passage

for his return to the light. You feel the force of this argument. Jesus Christ, having died in support of the truth of a doctrine entirely founded on the supposition of the immortality of the soul, there is no longer room to doubt whether the soul be immortal.

Let us here pause for a few moments, and before we enter on the second branch of our subject, let us consider how far this position, so clearly proved, so firmly established, has a tendency to fortify us against the fears of death.

Suppose for an instant that we knew nothing respecting the state of souls, after this life is closed, and respecting the economy on which we must then enter; supposing God to have granted us no revelation whatever on this interesting article, but simply this, that our souls are immortal, a slight degree of meditation on the case, as thus stated, ought to operate as an inducement rather to wish for death, than to fear it. It appears probable that the soul, when disengaged from the senses, in which it is now enveloped, will subsist in a manner infinitely more noble than it could do here below, during its union with matter. We are perfectly convinced that the body will, one day, contribute greatly to our felicity; it is an essential part of our being, without which our happiness must be incomplete. But this necessity, which fetters down the functions of the soul, on this earth, to the irregular movements of ill-assorted matter, is a real bondage. The soul is a prisoner in this body. A prisoner is a man susceptible of a thousand delights, but who can enjoy, however, only such pleasures as are compatible with the extent of the place in which he is shut up: his scope is limited to the capacity of his dungeon: he beholds the light only through the aperture of that dungeon: all his intercourse is confined to the persons who approach his dungeon. But let his prison-doors be thrown open; from that moment, behold him in a state of much higher felicity. Thenceforward he can maintain social intercourse with all the men in the world; thenceforward he can contemplate an unbounded body of light; thenceforward he is able to expatiate over the spacious universe.

This exhibits a portrait of the soul. A prisoner to the senses, it can enjoy those delights only which have a reference to sense. It can see only by means of the cuticles and the fibres of its eyes: it can hear only by means of the action of the nerves and tympanum of its ears: it can think only in conformity to certain modifications of its brain. The soul is susceptible of a thousand pleasures, of which it has not so much as the idea. A blind man has a soul capable of admitting the sensation of light; if he be deprived of it, the reason is, his senses are defective, or improperly disposed. Our souls are susceptible of a thousand unknown sensations; but they receive them not, in this economy of imperfection and wretchedness, because it is the will of God that they should perceive only through the medium of those organs, and that those organs, from their limited nature, should be capable of admitting only limited sensations.

But permit the soul to expatiate at large, let it take its natural flight, let these prison walls be broken down, O, then! the soul becomes

* Rasquier Recher. de la France, liv. iv. 2.

capable of ten thousand inconceivable new delights. Wherefore do you point to that ghastly corpse? Wherefore deplore those eyes closed to the light, those spirits evaporated, that blood frozen in the veins, that motionless, lifeless mass of corruption? Why do you say to me, "My friend, my father, my spouse is no more; he sees, he hears, he acts no longer." He sees no longer, do you say? He sees no longer, I grant, by means of those visual rays which were formed in the retina of the eye; but he sees as do those pure intelligences which never were clothed with mortal flesh and blood. He hears no more through the medium of the action of the ethereal fluid, but he hears as a pure spirit. He thinks no longer through the intervention of the fibres of his brain; but he thinks from his own essence, because, being a spirit, the faculty of thought is essential to him, and inseparable from his nature.

SERMON LXXX.

ON THE FEAR OF DEATH.

PART II.

HEBREWS ii. 14, 15

Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same: that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil: and deliver them who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage.

In discoursing from these words, we observed, that death is rendered formidable to man, by a threefold consideration, and that three considerations of an opposite nature strip him of all his terrors, in the eye of the believer in Christ Jesus. Death is formidable, 1. Because of the veil which conceals from the eyes of the dying person, that state on which he is about to enter. 2. From remorse of conscience, which the recollection of past guilt excites. 3. From the loss of titles, honours, and all other earthly possessions.

In opposition to these, the death of Christ, 1. Removes the veil which conceals futurity, and constitutes an authentic proof of the immortality of the soul. 2. It is a sacrifice presented to divine justice for the remission of sin. 3. It gives us complete assurance of a blessed eternity. These are the considerations which disarm death of his terrors to the dying believer.

We have finished what was proposed on the first particular, and have shown, 1. That the doctrine of Jesus Christ fully establishes the soul's immortality; and, 2. That the death of Jesus Christ is an irresistible proof of the truth of his doctrine.

But to no purpose would it be to fortify the mind against the apprehension of ceasing to exist, unless we are delivered from the terror of being for ever miserable. In vain is it to have demonstrated that our souls are immortal, if we are haunted with the well-grounded apprehension of their falling into the hands of that God who "is a consuming fire." In this case, what constitutes a man's greatness would constitute his misery. Let us endeavour,

II. In the second place, to dissipate the dreadful apprehension which a guilty conscience awakens in the prospect of judgment to come. Having considered Jesus Christ as a martyr, who sealed with his own blood the doctrine which he preached, and his death as an argument in support of the immortality of the soul taught in that doctrine; let us contemplate our divine Saviour as a victim, which God has substituted in our place, and his death as a sacrifice offered up to divine justice, for the expiation of our offences.

One of the principal dangers to be avoided in controversies, and particularly in that which we are going to handle, is to imagine that all arguments are of equal force. Extreme care must be taken to assign to each its true limits, and to say, this argument proves thus far, that other goes so much farther. We must thus advance step by step up to truth, and form, of those arguments united, a demonstration so much the more satisfactory, in proportion as we have granted to those who dispute it, all that they could in reason ask. On this principle we divide our arguments into two classes. The first we propose only as presumptions in favour of the doctrine of the satisfaction. To the second we ascribe the solidity and weight of demonstration. Of the first class are the following:

I. We allege human reason as a presumptive argument in support of the doctrine which we maintain. We do not mean to affirm, that human reason derives from the stores of her own illumination the truth of this doctrine. So far from that we confidently affirm, that this is one of the mysteries which are infinitely beyond the reach of human understanding. It is one of "the things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man," 1 Cor. ii. 9. But we say that this mystery presents nothing that shocks human reason, or that implies a shadow of contradiction. What do we believe? That God has united the human nature to the divine, in the person of Jesus Christ, in a manner somewhat resembling that in which he has united the body to the soul, in the person of man. We say that this composition (pardon the expression,) this composition of Humanity and of Deity suffered in what was human of it; and that what was divine gave value to the sufferings of the man, somewhat after the manner in which we put respect on a human body, not as a material substance, but as united to an intelligent soul.

These are the terms in which we propose our mystery. And there is nothing in this which involves a contradiction. If we had said that the Divinity and Humanity were confounded or common; if we had said that Deity, who is impassible, suffered; if we had said that Jesus Christ as God made satisfaction to Jesus Christ as God, reason might have justly reclaimed; but we say that Jesus Christ suffered as man; we say that the two natures in his person were distinct; we say that Jesus Christ, suffering as a man, made satisfaction to God maintaining the rights of Deity. This is the first step we advance in this career. Our first argument we carry thus far, and no farther.

II. Our second argument is taken from the divine justice. We say that the idea which we have of the divine justice presents nothing inconsistent with the doctrine we are endeavouring to establish, but on the contrary leads us directly to adopt it. The divine justice would be in opposition to our doctrine, did we affirm that the innocent Jesus suffered as an innocent person; but we say that he suffered, as loaded with the guilt of the whole human race. The divine justice would be in opposition to our doctrine, did we affirm that Jesus Christ had "the iniquity of us all laid upon him," whether he would or not; but we say that he took this heavy load upon himself voluntarily. The divine justice would be in opposition to our doctrine, did we affirm that Jesus Christ took on himself the load of human guilt, to encourage men in the practice of sin; but we say that he acted thus in the view of sanctifying them, by procuring their pardon. The divine justice would be in opposition to our doctrine did we affirm that Jesus Christ, in assuming the load of our guilt, sunk under the weight of it, so that the universe, for the sake of a few guilty wretches, was deprived of the most distinguished being that could possibly exist; but we say that Jesus Christ, in dying for us, came off victorious over death and the grave. The divine justice, therefore, presents nothing inconsistent with the doctrine of the satisfaction.

But we go much farther, and affirm, that the idea of divine justice leads directly to the doctrine. The atonement corresponds to the demands of justice. We shall not here presume to determine the question, whether it is possible for God, consistently with his perfections, to pardon sin without exacting a satisfaction. Whatever advantage we might have over those who deny our thesis, we shall not press it on the present occasion. But, in any case, they must be disposed to make this concession, that if the wisdom of God has devised the means of obtaining a signal satisfaction to justice, in unison with the most illustrious display of goodness; if he can give to the universe an unequivocal proof of his abhorrence of sin, in the very act of pardoning the sinner; if there be a method to keep offenders in awe, even while mercy is extended to them, it must undoubtedly be more proper to employ such a method than to omit it. This is the second step we advance towards our conclusion. Our second argument we carry thus far, and no farther.

3. Our third consideration is taken from the suggestions of conscience, and from the practice of all nations. Look at the most polished, and at the most barbarous tribes of the human race; at nations the most idolatrous, and at those which have discovered the purest ideas on the subject of religion. Consult authors of the remotest antiquity, and authors the most recent: transport yourself to the ancient Egyptians, to the Phœnicians, to the Gauls, to the Carthaginians, and you will find that, in all ages, and in every part of the globe, men have expressed a belief that the Deity expected sacrifices should be offered up to him: nay, not only sacrifices, but such as had, as far as it was possible, something like a proportion to his greatness. Hence those magnificent temples;

hence those hecatombs; hence those human victims; hence that blood which streamed on the altars, and so many other rites of religious worship, the existence of which no one is disposed to call in question. What consequence do we deduce from this position? The truth of the doctrine of the atonement? No: we do not carry our inference so far. We only conclude, that there is no room to run down the Christian religion, if it instructs us that God demanded satisfaction to his justice, by an expiatory sacrifice, before he could give an unrestrained course to his goodness. This third argument we carry thus far, and no farther.

4. A fourth reflection hinges on the correspondence of our belief, respecting this particular, with that of every age of the Christian church, in uninterrupted succession, from Jesus Christ down to our own times. All the ages of the Christian world have, as we do, spoken of this sacrifice. But we must not enlarge. Whoever wishes for complete information on this particular, will find a very accurate collection of the testimonies of the fathers, at the end of the treatise on the satisfaction, composed by the celebrated Grotius. The doctrine of the atonement, therefore, is not a doctrine of yesterday, but has been transmitted from age to age, from Jesus Christ down to our own times. This argument we carry thus far and no farther.

Here then we have a class of arguments which, after all, we would have you to consider only as so many presumptions in favour of the doctrine of the atonement. But surely we are warranted to proceed thus far, at least, in concluding; a doctrine in which human reason finds nothing contradictory: a doctrine which presents nothing repugnant to the divine attributes, nay, to which the divine attributes directly lead us; a doctrine perfectly conformable to the suggestions of conscience, and to the practice of mankind in every age, and of every nation; a doctrine received in the Christian church from the beginning till now; a doctrine which, in all its parts, presents nothing but what is entirely worthy of God, when we examine it at the tribunal of our own understanding: such a doctrine contains nothing to excite our resentment, nothing that we ought not to be disposed to admit, if we find it clearly laid down in the Scriptures.

Now, my brethren, we have only to open the Bible in order to find express testimonies to this purpose; and not only do we meet with an infinite number of passages in which the doctrine is clearly taught, but a multitude of classes of such passages.

1. In the first class, we must rank all those passages which declare that Jesus Christ died for us. It would be no easy matter to enumerate them; "I delivered unto you first of all," says St. Paul in his first epistle to the Corinthians, xv. 3, "that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures." "Christ also hath once suffered for sins," says St. Peter, in his first epistle general, iii. 18, "the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God."

2. In a second class must be ranked those passages which represent Jesus Christ as suf-

fering the punishment which we had deserved. The fifty-third chapter of the prophet Isaiah turns entirely on this subject; and the apostles hold the self-same language. They say expressly that Christ "was made to be sin for us, who knew no sin," 2 Cor. v. 21, that he was "made a curse for us," Gal. iii. 13, that he "bare our sins in his own body on the tree," 1 Pet. ii. 24.

3. In a third class must be ranked all those passages in which our salvation is represented as being the fruit of Christ's death. The persons, whose opinions we are combating, maintain themselves on a ground which we established in a former branch of this discourse, namely, that the death of Jesus Christ was a demonstration of the truth of his doctrine. They say that this is the reason for which our salvation is considered as the effect of that death. But if we are saved by the death of Jesus Christ, merely because it has sealed a doctrine which leads to salvation, how comes it then, that our salvation is nowhere ascribed to the other parts of his ministry, which contributed, no less than his death, to the confirmation of his doctrine? Were not the miracles of Jesus Christ, for example, proofs equally authentic as his death was, of the truth of his doctrine? Whence comes it, that our salvation is nowhere ascribed to them? This is the very thing we are maintaining. The resurrection, the ascension, the miracles were absolutely necessary to give us assurance, that the wrath of God was appeased; but Christ's death alone was capable of producing that effect. You will more sensibly feel the force of this argument, if you attend to the connexion which our text has with what follows in the 17th verse, "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren; that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest . . . to make reconciliation for the sins of the people."

If we are saved by the death of Jesus Christ, merely because that event sealed the truth of his doctrine, wherefore should it have been necessary for him to assume our flesh? Had he descended from heaven in the effulgence of his glory; had he appeared upon Mount Zion, such as he was upon Mount Sinai, in flashes of lightning, with the voice of thunder, with a retinue of angels; would not the truth of the gospel have been established infinitely better than by the death of a man? Wherefore, then, was it necessary that Christ should die? It was because the victim of our transgressions must be put to death. This is St. Paul's reasoning. And for this reason it is that our salvation is nowhere ascribed to the death of the martyrs, though the death of the martyrs was, like that of Jesus Christ, a proof of the truth of the gospel.

4. In a fourth class, must be ranked all those passages which represent the death of Jesus Christ as the body and the reality, of which all the sacrifices prescribed by the law were but the figure and the shadow. We shall select a single one out of a multitude. The greatest part of the Epistle to the Hebrews may be quoted to this effect. It is evident that the great object of its author is to engage Christians to look for that in the sacri-

fice of Jesus Christ, which the Jews, to no purpose, sought for in those which Moses prescribed. Now what did the Jews look for in their sacrifices? Was it not the means of appeasing the Deity? If, therefore, the sacrifices of the Jews were the expiation of sin, only in figure and in a shadow, if the sacrifice of Jesus Christ be their body and reality, does it not follow that Jesus Christ has really and literally expiated our transgressions? To pretend that the Levitical sacrifices were not offered up for the expiation of great offences, but only for certain external indecencies, which rather polluted the flesh, than wounded the conscience, is an attempt to maintain one error by another; for a man has only to open his eyes, to be convinced that the Levitical sacrifices were offered up for offences the most atrocious; it is needless to adduce any other evidence than the annual sacrifice prescribed, Lev. xvi. 21, 22, in the offering of which, Aaron "laid both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confessed over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins . . . and the goat did bear upon him all their iniquities."

5. In a fifth class must be ranked the circumstances of the passion of Jesus Christ, and of his agony in the garden; that sorrow, those fears, those agitations, those cries, those tears, that bloody sweat, those bitter complaints: "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Matt. xxvi. 46. The argument derived from this will appear of still greater weight, if you support it by thus reflecting, that no person in the universe ought to have met death with so much joy as Jesus Christ, had he suffered a mere ordinary death. Christ died with a perfect submission to the will of his father, and with a fervent love to mankind. Christ died in the full assurance of the justice of his cause, and of the innocency of his life. Christ died completely persuaded of the immortality of the soul, and of the certainty of a life to come. Christ died under a complete assurance of the exalted felicity which he was to enjoy after death. He had come from God. He was returning to God. Nay, there ought to have been something more particular in his triumph, than in that of the generality of believers. Because he had "made himself of no reputation;" God was about "to give him a name which is above every name." A cloud was going to serve him as a triumphal car, and the church triumphant was preparing to receive him with acclamations of joy, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in," Ps. xxiv. 7.

What then, are we to expect that Jesus Christ shall do? Shall we behold him advancing to meet death with joy? Shall he not say with St. Paul, "My desire is to depart? Shall he not in rapture exclaim, "This day crowns are to be distributed, and I go to receive my share?" No, Jesus Christ trembles, he turns pale, he fears, he sweats great drops of blood: whereas the martyrs, with inferior illumination, with feebler motives, have braved death, have bidden defiance to the most horrid torments, have filled their tormentors with astonishment. Whence comes this difference? From

the very point which we are endeavouring to establish. The death of Jesus Christ is widely different from that of the martyrs. The martyrs found death already disarmed: Jesus Christ died to disarm this king of terrors. The martyrs presented themselves before the throne of grace; Jesus Christ presented himself at the tribunal of Justice. The martyrs pleaded the merits of Christ's death: Jesus Christ interceded in behalf of the martyrs.

Let the great adversary, then, do his worst to terrify me with the image of the crimes which I have committed; let him trace them before my eyes in the blackest characters which his malignity can employ; let him collect into one dark point, all that is hideous and hateful in my life; let him attempt to overwhelm me with dismay, by rousing the idea of that tremendous tribunal, before which all the actions of men are to be scrutinized, so that like "Joshua the high-priest," I find myself standing in the presence of God, "clothed with filthy garments," Zech. iii. 1, &c. and Satan standing at his right hand to expose my turpitude; I hear, at the same time, the voice of one pleading in my behalf: I hear these reviving words: "is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? . . . Take away the filthy garments from him . . . Let them set a fair mitre upon his head . . . and I will clothe him with change of raiment."

SERMON LXXX.

ON THE FEAR OF DEATH.

PART III.

HEBREWS ii. 14, 15.

Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage.

We now come in the

III. Third and last place, to consider death rendered formidable, from its being attended with the loss of titles, honours, and every other earthly possession, and in opposition to this, we are to view the death of Jesus Christ as removing that terror, by giving us complete assurance of a blessed eternity. We are going to contemplate death as a universal shipwreck, swallowing up all our worldly fortunes and prospects. We are going to contemplate Jesus Christ as a *conqueror*, and his death as the pledge and security of a boundless and everlasting felicity, which shall amply compensate to us the loss of all those possessions, of which we are about to be stripped by the unsparing hand of death.

When we attempt to stammer out a few words from the pulpit, respecting the felicity which God has laid up for his people in another world, we borrow the images of every thing that is capable of touching the heart, and of communicating delight. We call in to our assistance the soul of man, with all its exalted faculties; the body, with all its beautiful forms

and proportions; nature, with her overflowing treasures; society, with its enchanting delights; the church, with its triumphs; eternity, with its unfathomable abysses of joy. Of all these ingredients blended, we compose a faint representation of the celestial blessedness.

The soul of man constitutes one ingredient, and we say, In heaven your soul shall arrive at its highest pitch of attainable perfection: it shall acquire expansive illumination, it shall reach sublime heights of virtue, it shall "behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord, and shall be changed into the same image, from glory to glory," 2 Cor. iii. 18.

The body furnishes a second ingredient, and we say, In heaven your body shall be exempted from all the defects by which it is at present disfigured, from those diseases which now prey upon and waste it, from that death which destroys the fabric.

Nature supplies a third ingredient, and we say, In heaven all the stores of Nature shall be displayed in rich profusion: "the foundations of the holy city are of jasper, its gates are of pearl, its walls are of pure gold," Rev. xxi. 21.

Society supplies a fourth ingredient, and we say, In heaven shall be united, in the tenderest social bonds, kindred spirits the most exalted; souls the most refined; hearts the most generous and enlarged.

The church supplies a fifth ingredient, and we say, In heaven shall be exhibited the triumph of the faithful over tyrants confounded, the saints shall be enthroned, the martyrs shall appear with palms in their hands, and with crowns upon their heads.

Eternity supplies a sixth ingredient, and we say, In heaven you shall enjoy a felicity infinite in its duration, and immeasurable in its degree; years accumulated upon years, ages upon ages, shall effect no diminution of its length: and so of the rest.

This day, Christians, in which we are representing death to you as a universal wreck which swallows up all your possessions, your titles, your greatness, your riches, your social connexions, all that you were, and all that you hoped to be; this day, while we are attempting to convey to you an idea of the celestial felicity, capable of strengthening you to behold, without dismay, this universal wreck, in which you are going to be involved; this day we could wish you to conceive the heavenly world, and the blessedness which God is there preparing for you under another idea. We mean to trace another view of it, the lustre of which effaces all the rest. We build upon this foundation of St Paul: "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. The heavenly blessedness is the purchase of the death of Jesus Christ. Here collect, my brethren, every thing that is capable of enhancing to your apprehension the unspeakable greatness and importance of that death.

View the death of Christ relatively to the types which prefigured it; relatively to the shadows by which it was adumbrated; relatively to the ceremonies by which it was represented; relatively to the oracles which predicted it

View the death of Christ relatively to the tempests and thunderbolts which were levelled at the head of the Redeemer. Behold his soul overwhelmed with sorrow; behold that blood falling down to the ground; that cup of bitterness which was given him to drink; hearken to that insulting language, to those calumnies, to those false accusations, to that unjust sentence of condemnation; behold those hands and feet pierced with nails, that sacred body speedily reduced to one ghastly wound; behold that licentious rabble clamorously demanding the punishment of the cross, and increasing the horror of it by every indignity which malice could invent; look up to heaven itself, and behold the eternal Father abandoning the Son of his love to so many woes; behold hell in concert with heaven, and heaven with the earth.

View the death of Christ relatively to the dreadful signs by which it was accompanied; relatively to that earth seized with trembling, to that sun shrouded in darkness, to those rocks rent asunder, to those opening graves, to those departed saints returning to the light of day.

View the death of Christ relatively to the greatness of God, and to the littleness of man, in whose behalf all this bloody scene was transacted.

Collect all these various particulars, and still say to yourself, The death of Jesus Christ is all this. The death of Jesus Christ is the body of the figures, the original of the types, the reality of the shadows, the accomplishment of the prophecies. The death of Jesus Christ is that great event which darkened the sun, which opened the tombs, which rent asunder the rocks, which made the earth to tremble, which turned nature and the elements upside down. Follow up these reflections, and on these let your imagination settle.

The death of Jesus Christ conceived thus, apply it to the subject which we are treating. The death of Jesus Christ conceived thus, let it serve to assist you in forming an idea of the heavenly blessedness. Still build on this foundation of St. Paul; say with that apostle, "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?" You regret the world; you who are advancing on your way heavenward. And what is heaven? It is the purchase of Christ's death. "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?" If the means be thus great, what must the end be! If the preparatives be thus magnificent, what must be the issue! If the conflict be thus sharp, what must be the victory! If the price be thus costly, what, O what, shall be the bliss which this price is intended to purchase.

After that, my brethren, return to the world.—What is it you regret? Are you regretting the loss of palaces, of sceptres, of crowns? It is to regret the humble crook in your hand, the cottage which covers your head. Do you regret the loss of society, a society whose defects and whose delights are frequently an equal source of misery to you? Ah! phantom of vain desire, will you still pre-

sent illusion to the eye? Will you still maintain your ground against those solid blessings which the death of Jesus Christ has purchased for us? Ah! "broken cisterns," will you still preserve a preference in our esteem to "the fountain of living waters?" Ah! great High Priest of the new covenant, shall we still find it painfully difficult to follow thee, whilst thou art conducting us to heavenly places, by the bloody traces of thy cross and martyrdom. Jesus Christ is a "conqueror," who has acquired for us a kingdom of glory and felicity; his death is an invaluable pledge of a triumphant eternity.

Death; then, has nothing, henceforward, that is formidable to the Christian. In the tomb of Jesus Christ are dissipated all the terrors which the tomb of nature presents. In the tomb of nature I perceive a gloomy night, which the eye is unable to penetrate; in the tomb of Jesus Christ I behold light and life. In the tomb of nature the punishment of sin stares me in the face; in the tomb of Jesus Christ I find the expiation of it. In the tomb of nature I read the fearful doom pronounced upon Adam, and upon all his miserable posterity: "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return," Gen. iii. 19; but in the tomb of Jesus Christ my tongue is loosed into this triumphant song of praise, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? . . . Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ," 1 Cor. xv. 55. 57. "Through death he has destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; that he might deliver them who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage."

THE APPLICATION.

But if these be our privileges, is it not matter of reproach to us, my brethren, that brought up in the knowledge and profession of a religion which furnishes arms so powerful for combating the terrors of death, we should still, for the most part, view it only with fear and trembling? The fact is too evident to be denied. From the slightest study of by far the greatest part of professing Christians, it is clearly apparent that they consider death as the greatest of all calamities. And with a very slender experience of the state of dying persons, it will be found that there are few, very few indeed, who die without regret, few but who have need to exercise all their submission, at a season when it might be expected they should give themselves up to transports of joy. A vapour in the head disconcerts us; we are alarmed if the artery happens to beat a little faster than usual; the least apprehension of death inspires us with an unaccountable melancholy, and oppressive dejection.

But those apprehensions and terrors, my brethren, surprising as they may appear to us, have nothing which ought really to fill us with surprise. If to apply to a man's self the fruits of the death of Jesus Christ were a simple act of the understanding, a simple movement of the heart, a simple acknowledgment of the tongue; if to apply to a man's self the fruits of the death of Christ were nothing more than what a hardened sinner is capable of

figuring to himself, or than what is prescribed to him by an accommodating casuist, you would not see a single Christian afraid of death. But you know it well, the gospel assures you of it, and the dictates of your own conscience confirm the truth, to make application of the fruits of Christ's death is a complication of duties, which require attention, time, labour, intenseness of exertion, and must be the business of a whole life. The greatest part of those who bear the Christian name, neglect this work while in health; is it any wonder that they should tremble when overtaken by the hour of death?

Call to remembrance the three ways in which Christ has disarmed death. He has spoiled the king of terrors, by demonstrating to us the immortality of the soul, by making atonement for our transgressions, by acquiring for us an eternal felicity.

But what effect will the death of Christ have upon us, as a proof of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, unless we study those proofs, unless we seriously meditate upon them, unless we endeavour to feel their force, unless we guard against the difficulties which the unhappy age we live in opposes to those great principles?

What effect can the death of Christ have upon us, as a sacrifice offered up to divine justice for our sins, unless we feel the plenitude of that sacrifice, unless we make application of it to the conscience, unless we present it to God in the exercises of a living faith; above all, unless by the constant study of ourselves, unless by unremitting, by persevering exertion, we place ourselves under the terms, and invest ourselves with the characters of those who have a right to apply to themselves the fruits of this sacrifice?

What effect can the death of Christ produce upon us, considered as the pledge of a blessed eternity, unless the soul be powerfully impressed with that eternity, unless the heart be penetrated with a sense of what it is; if we are at pains to efface the impression which those interesting objects may have made upon us; if hardly moved by those great truths which ought to take entire possession of the mind, we instantly plunge ourselves into the vortex of worldly pursuits, without taking time to avail ourselves of that happy disposition, and, as it were, purposely to withdraw from those gracious emotions which seemed to have laid hold of us? Ah! my brethren, if such be the conduct of the generality of professing Christians, as we are under the necessity of admitting, when, not satisfied with observing their deportment in the house of God, and from a pulpit, we follow them into life, and look through those flimsy veils of piety and devotion which they had assumed for an hour in a worshipping assembly; if such, I say, be the conduct of the generality of professing Christians, their terror at the approach of death exhibits nothing to excite astonishment.

The grand conclusion to be deduced, my brethren, from all these reflections, is not an abstract conclusion and of difficult comprehension: it is a conclusion easy, natural, and which would spontaneously present itself to the mind, were we not disposed to practise de-

ception upon ourselves; the grand conclusion to be deduced from these reflections is this: If we wish to die like Christians, we must live like Christians. If we would wish to behold with firmness the dissolution of this body, we must study the proofs which establish the truth of the immortality of the soul, so as to be able to say with St. Paul, "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day," 2 Tim. i. 12. Would we wish to have a security against fear at that tremendous tribunal, before which we must appear to receive judgment, we must enter into the conditions of the covenant of grace, that we may be able to say with the same apostle, "I am the chief of sinners, a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy," 1 Tim. i. 13. Would we be strengthened to resign, without murmuring, all the objects around us, and to which we are so fondly attached, we must learn to disengage ourselves from them betimes; to place our heart betimes where *our treasure is*, Matt. vi. 21, that we may be able to say with the Psalmist, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee," Ps. lxxiii. 25.

If after we have exerted our utmost efforts, we still find our frail flesh and blood complaining at the prospect of approaching dissolution; if the heart still repines at the hard necessity imposed upon us of dying; let us strive to recover confidence, not only against this apprehension, but likewise against the doubts which it might excite against our salvation. This fear of death is, in such a case, not a crime, but an infirmity. It is indeed a melancholy proof that we are not yet perfect, but it is not a blot which obliterates our Christianity. It is an expression of timidity, not of mistrust. It is a calamity which prevents our enjoying all the sweets of a triumphant death, but not an obstacle to prevent our dying in safety. Let us be of good courage. What have we to fear? God is an affectionate friend, who will not desert us in the hour of adversity. God is not a cruel being, who takes pleasure in rendering us miserable. He is a God whose leading characters are goodness and mercy. He stands engaged to render us happy. Let us not distrust his promise; it has been ratified by the most august zeal which suspicion itself could exact, by the blood of the spotless Lamb, which is sprinkled, not on the threshold of our doors, but on our inmost conscience. The exterminating angel will respect that blood, will presume to aim no stroke at the soul which bears the mark of it.

After all, my dearly beloved brethren, if the most advanced Christians, at the first glimpse of death, and in the first moments of a mortal distemper, are unable to screen themselves from the fear of death; if the flesh murmurs, if nature complains, if faith itself seems to stagger; reason, religion, but especially the aid of God's spirit, granted to the prayers, to the importunities ascending to heaven from the lips of such a Christian, dissipate all those terrors. The mighty God suffers himself to be overcome, when assailed by supplication and tears. God resists not the sighs of a be-

liever, who from his bed of languishing stretches out his arms towards him, who entreats him to sanctify the sufferings which he endures, who implores his support in the agonies of death, who cries out from the centre of a soul transported with holy confidence, "Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth," Ps. xxxi. 5. Receive it, O my God. Remove from me those phantoms which disturb my repose. Raise me up, take me to thyself. "Teach my hands to war, and my fingers to fight. Draw me, I shall run after thee." Kindle my devotion; and let my inflamed desires serve as a chariot of fire to transport me to heaven. The clouds, thickened around me by "Him who had the power of death," are scattering; the veil which covered eternity insensibly withdraws; the understanding is convinced; the heart melts; the flame of love burns bright; the return of holy meditations, which formerly occupied the soul, disclose the grand object of religion, and the

bed of death is transformed into a field of victory. Many of your pastors, Christians, have been the joyful spectators of such a triumph.

May all who hear me this day be partakers of these divine consolations! May that invaluable sacrifice which Jesus Christ offered up to his father in our behalf, by cleansing us from all our guilt, deliver us from all our fears! May this great High Priest of the new covenant bear engraven on his breast all these mystical Israelites, now that he is entered into the holiest of all! And when these foundations of sand, on which this clay tabernacle rests, shall crumble away from under our feet, may we all be enabled to raise our departing spirits out of the ruins of the world, that they may repose in the mansions of immortality! Happy, beyond expression, beyond conception happy, to die in such sentiments as these! God of his infinite mercy grant it may be our blessed attainment! To him be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

The first part of the history of England is divided into three periods: the Saxon, the Norman, and the Plantagenet. The Saxon period is the most ancient, and the Norman period is the most illustrious. The Plantagenet period is the most extensive, and the most interesting.

The Saxon period is divided into three reigns: the reign of Alfred the Great, the reign of Edward the Confessor, and the reign of Harold Godwinson. The Norman period is divided into three reigns: the reign of William the Conqueror, the reign of Henry I, and the reign of Matilda. The Plantagenet period is divided into three reigns: the reign of Henry II, the reign of Richard I, and the reign of John.

The reign of Alfred the Great is the most illustrious of the Saxon period. He was a great warrior, a great statesman, and a great legislator. He was the first king of England who was a Christian. He was the first king of England who was a scholar. He was the first king of England who was a philosopher.

The reign of Edward the Confessor is the most illustrious of the Saxon period. He was a great warrior, a great statesman, and a great legislator. He was the first king of England who was a Christian. He was the first king of England who was a scholar. He was the first king of England who was a philosopher.

The reign of Harold Godwinson is the most illustrious of the Saxon period. He was a great warrior, a great statesman, and a great legislator. He was the first king of England who was a Christian. He was the first king of England who was a scholar. He was the first king of England who was a philosopher.

The reign of William the Conqueror is the most illustrious of the Norman period. He was a great warrior, a great statesman, and a great legislator. He was the first king of England who was a Christian. He was the first king of England who was a scholar. He was the first king of England who was a philosopher.

The reign of Henry I is the most illustrious of the Norman period. He was a great warrior, a great statesman, and a great legislator. He was the first king of England who was a Christian. He was the first king of England who was a scholar. He was the first king of England who was a philosopher.

The reign of Matilda is the most illustrious of the Norman period. She was a great warrior, a great statesman, and a great legislator. She was the first queen of England who was a Christian. She was the first queen of England who was a scholar. She was the first queen of England who was a philosopher.

The reign of Henry II is the most illustrious of the Plantagenet period. He was a great warrior, a great statesman, and a great legislator. He was the first king of England who was a Christian. He was the first king of England who was a scholar. He was the first king of England who was a philosopher.

The reign of Richard I is the most illustrious of the Plantagenet period. He was a great warrior, a great statesman, and a great legislator. He was the first king of England who was a Christian. He was the first king of England who was a scholar. He was the first king of England who was a philosopher.

SERMONS

OF THE

REV. JAMES SAURIN,

TRANSLATED

BY THE REV. JOSEPH SUTCLIFFE.



PREFACE,

BY THE REV. JOSEPH SUTCLIFFE.

SAURIN'S SERMONS, one hundred and sixty-eight in number, are comprised in twelve volumes. I have read them with edification and delight. Actuated by these sentiments, I doubted whether I could better employ my leisure moments than in preparing an additional volume, to those already before the English reader.

The three Discourses on the Delay of Conversion, are a masterly performance, and in general, a model of pulpit eloquence. They are not less distinguished by variety and strength of argument, than by pathos and unction: and they rise in excellence as the reader proceeds. Hence, I fully concur in opinion with Dupont, and the succeeding editors, who have given the first place to these Discourses: my sole surprise is, that they were not translated before. Whether they were reserved to ornament a future volume, or whether the addresses to the unregenerate were deemed too severe and strong, I am unable to determine. By a cloud of arguments derived from reason, from revelation, and from experience, our author certainly displays the full effusions of his heart, and in language unfettered by the fear of man. The regular applications in the first and second Sermons, are executed in such a style of superior merit, that I lament the deficiency of language to convey his sentiments with adequate effect.

On the subject of warm and animated addresses to wicked and unregenerate men, if I might be heard by those who fill the sanctuary, I would venture to say, that the general character of English sermons is by far too mild and calm. On reading the late Dr. Enfield's English Preacher, and finding on this gentleman's tablet of honour, names which constitute the glory of our national church, I seem unwilling to believe my senses, and ready to deny, that Tillotson, Atterbury, Butler, Chandler, Coneybeare, Seed, Sherlock, Waterland, and others, could have been so relaxed and unguarded as to have preached so many sermons equally acceptable to the orthodox and the Socinian reader. Those mild and affable recommendations of virtue and religion; those gentle dissuaves from immorality and vice, have been found, for a whole century, unproductive of effect. Hence, all judicious men must admit the propriety of meeting the awful vices of the present age with remedies more efficient and strong.

Our increase of population, our vast extent of commerce, and the consequent influx of wealth and luxury, have, to an alarming degree, biassed the national character towards dissipation, irreligion, and vice. We see a crowd of families rapidly advanced to affluence, and dashing away in the circles of gay and giddy life; we see profane theatres, assembly-rooms, and watering-places, crowded with people devoted to pleasure, and unacquainted

with the duties they owe to God; we see a metropolis, in which it is estimated that not more than one adult out of fifteen attends any place of divine worship. Ought not ministers so circumstanced, to take the alarm, and to weep for the desolations of the sanctuary? If impiety and effeminacy were, confessedly, the causes of the desolation of Greece and Rome, ought we not to be peculiarly alarmed for our country? and while our brave warriors are defending it abroad, endeavour to heal at home the evils which corrode the vitals? Ought we not to adopt a mode of preaching like that which first subdued the enemies of the cross? If our former mode of preaching has failed of effect; if the usual arguments from Scripture have no weight; ought we not to modify those arguments according to existing circumstances, that, fighting the sinner on the ground of reason, and maintaining the rights of God at the bar of conscience, we may vanquish the infidelity of his heart? The wound must be opened before he will welcome the balm of Calvary, and be enraptured with the glory and fulness of the gospel. Hence, I am fully of opinion that we ought to go back to the purest models of preaching; that addressing the sinner in the striking language of his own heart, we may see our country reformed, and believers adorned with virtue and grace.

But, though our author be an eminent model in addressing the unregenerate, he is by no means explicit and full on the doctrines of the Spirit: his talents were consequently defective in building up believers, and edifying the church. It is true, he is orthodox and clear, as far as he goes: and he fully admits the Scripture language on the doctrine of assurance; but he restricts the grace to some highly favoured souls, and seems to have no idea of its being the general privilege of the children of God. Hence this doctrine which especially abounds in the New Testament, occupies only a diminutive place in his vast course of Sermons. On this subject, indeed, he frankly confesses his fears of *enthusiasm*; and, to do him justice, it seems the only thing he feared in the pulpit.

But, however prepossessing and laudable this caution may appear in the discussion of mysterious truths, it by no means associates the ideas we have of the divine compassion, and the apprehensions which awakened persons entertain on account of their sins. Conscious of guilt on the one hand, and assured on the other that *the wages of sin is death*, mere evangelical arguments are inadequate to allay their fears, and assuage their griefs. Nothing will do but a *sense of pardon*, sufficiently clear and strong to counteract their sense of guilt. Nothing but the love of God shed abroad in the heart, can disperse their grief and fear, Rom. v. 5; Luke xxiv. 32; 1 John iv. 18. Nothing but the Spirit of adoption can remove the spirit

of bondage, by a direct assurance that we are the children of God, Rom. viii. 15, 16. Every awakened sinner needs, as much as the inspired prophet, the peace which passeth all understanding, to compose his conscience; the Spirit of holiness to regenerate his heart; the Spirit of grace and supplication, to assist him in prayer; the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, and the joy unspeakable and full of glory, to adopt the language of praise and thanksgiving, which seem to have been the general sentiments of the regenerate in acts of devotion. That is the most satisfactory ground of assurance, when we hope to enjoy the inheritance, because we have the earnest; and hope to dwell with God, because he already dwells with us, adorning our piety with the correspondent fruits of righteousness. Revelation and reason here perfectly accord: *Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find. If ye being evil, know how to give good things to your children, how much more shall your Father, which is in heaven, give good things to them that ask him.* Hence, SAURIN, on this subject, was by far too contracted in restricting this grace to a few highly favoured souls.

Farther still, it is not enough for a minister to beat and overpower his audience with arguments; it is not enough that many of his hearers weep under the word, and form good resolutions for the future; they must be encouraged to expect a blessing before they depart from the house of God. How is it that the good impressions, made on our hearers, so generally die away; that *their devotion is but as the morning cloud?* After making just deductions for the weakness and inconstancy of men; after allowing for the defects which business and company produce on the mind, the grand cause is, the not exhorting them to look for an instantaneous deliverance by faith. In many parts of the Scriptures, and especially in the Psalms, the supplicants came to the throne of grace in the greatest trouble and distress, and they went away rejoicing. Now, these Psalms I take to be exact celebrations of what God did by providence and grace for his worshippers. Hence we should exhort all penitents to expect the like deliverance, God being ready to shine on all hearts the moment repentance has prepared them for the reception of his grace.

Some may here object that many well-disposed Christians, whose piety has been adorned with benevolence, have never, on the subject of assurance, been able to express themselves in the high and heavenly language of inspired men; and that they have doubted, whether the *knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins*, Luke i. 77, were attainable in this life. Perhaps, on inquiry, those well-disposed Christians, whose sincerity I revere, have sat under a ministry, which scarcely went so far on the doctrines of the spirit as SAURIN. Perhaps they have sought salvation, partly by their works, instead of seeking it solely by faith in the merits, or righteousness, of Jesus Christ. Perhaps they have joined approaches to the altars of God, with the amusements of the age; and always been kept in arrears in

their reckonings with Heaven. Perhaps their religious connexions have hindered, rather than furthered, their religious attainments. If these sincere Christians were properly assisted by experienced people; if some *Aquila and Priscilla* were to expound unto them the way of God more perfectly, Acts xviii. 26, they would soon emerge out of darkness into marvellous light; they could not long survey the history of the Redeemer's passion, without loving him again: they could not review his victories without encouragement; they could not contemplate the effusions of his grace, without a participation of his comfort. They would soon receive

“What nothing earthly gives, or can destroy,
The soul's calm sunshine, and the heart-felt joy.”

Another defect of our author (if my opinion be correct,) is, that he sometimes aims at oratorical strokes, and indulges in argument and language not readily comprehended by the better instructed among the poor. This should caution others. True eloquence is the voice of nature, so rich in thought, so abundant in motives, and happy in expression, as to supersede redundant and meretricious ornament. It unfolds the treasures of knowledge, displays the amiableness of virtue, and unveils the deformity of vice, with the utmost simplicity and ease. It captivates the mind, and sways the passions of an audience in addresses apparently destitute of study or art: art, indeed, can never attain it; it is the soul of a preacher speaking to the heart of his hearers. However, SAURIN ought to have an indulgence which scarcely any other can claim. He addressed at the Hague an audience of two thousand persons, composed of courtiers, of magistrates, of merchants, and strangers, who were driven by persecution from every part of France. Hence it became him to speak with dignity appropriate to his situation. And if, in point of pure eloquence he was a single shade below Massillon, he has far exceeded him as a divine.

With regard to the peculiar opinions of the religious denominations, this venerable minister discovered superior knowledge, and admirable moderation. Commissioned to preach the gospel to every creature, he magnifies the love of God to man; and charges the sinner with being the sole cause of his own destruction (Sermon, Hosea xiii. 9.) Though he asserts the perseverance of the saints, it is, nevertheless, with such restrictions as tend to avoid disgusting persons of opposite sentiments. Against Antinomianism, so dangerous to salvation, he is tremendously severe: and it were to be wished that the supporters of these opinions would profit by his arguments. It is much safer to direct our efforts, that our hearers may resemble the God they worship, than trust to a mere code of religious opinions, dissonant to a multitude of Scriptures.

May Heaven bless to the reader this additional mite to the store of public knowledge, and make it advantageous to his best interests, and eternal joy!

JOSEPH SUTCLIFFE.

Halifax, Nov. 21, 1805.

SERMON LXXXI.

ON THE DELAY OF CONVERSION.

PART I.

ISAIAH lv. 6.

Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.

THAT is a singular oath, recorded in the tenth chapter of the Revelation. St. John saw an angel; an angel "clothed with a cloud; a rainbow encircled his head, his countenance was as the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire. He stood on the earth and the sea. He swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, that there should be time no longer." By this oath, if we may credit some critics, the angel announces to the Jews, that their measure was full, that their days of visitation were expired, and that God was about to complete, by abandoning them to the licentious armies of the emperor Adrian, the vengeance he had already begun by Titus and Vespasian.

We will not dispute this particular notion, but shall consider the oath in a more extended view. This angel stands upon the earth and the sea; he speaks to all the inhabitants of the world: he lifts his voice to you, my brethren, and teaches one of the most terrific, but most important truths of religion and morality, that the mercy of God, so infinitely diversified, has, notwithstanding, its restrictions and bounds. It is infinite, for it embraces all mankind. It makes no distinction between "the Jew and the Greek, the Barbarian and the Scythian." It pardons insults the most notorious, crimes the most provoking; and extricating the sinner from the abyss of misery, opens to him the way to supreme felicity. But it is limited. When the sinner becomes obstinate, when he long resists, when he defers conversion, God shuts up the bowels of his compassion, and rejects the prayer of those who have hardened themselves against his calls.

From this awful principle, Isaiah deduces the doctrine which constitutes the subject of our text. "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near." Dispensing with minuteness of method, we shall not stop to define the terms, "Seek ye the Lord, and call ye upon him." Whatever mistakes we may be liable to make on this head, and however disposed we may be to confound the appearance of conversion with conversion itself, errors of this kind, it must be acknowledged, are not the most destructive. We propose to-day to probe the wound, to penetrate to the source of our depravity, to dissipate, if possible, the illusive charm which destroys so many of the Christian world, and of which Satan too successfully avails himself for their seduction. This delusion, this charm, I appeal to your consciences, consists of, I know not what, confused ideas we have formed of the divine mercy, fluctuating purposes of conversion on the brink of futurity, and chimerical confidence of success whenever we shall enter on the work.

On the delay of conversion, we shall make a

series of reflections, derived from three sources: From *man*;—from the *Scriptures*;—and from *experience*. We shall have recourse in order, to religion, history, and experience, to make us sensible of the dangerous consequences of deferring the work. In the first place, we shall endeavour to prove from our own constitution, that it is difficult, not to say impossible, to be converted after having wasted life in vice.—We shall secondly demonstrate that revelation perfectly accords with nature on this head; and that whatever the Bible has taught concerning the efficacy of grace, the supernatural aids of the Spirit, and the extent of mercy, favour in no respect the delay of conversion. Thirdly, we shall endeavour to confirm the doctrines of reason and revelation, by daily observations on those who defer the change.—These reflections would undoubtedly produce a better effect delivered in one discourse than divided, and I would wish to dismiss the hearer convinced, persuaded, and overpowered with the mass of argument; but we must proportion the discourse to the attention of the audience, and to our own weakness. We design three discourses on this subject, and shall confine ourselves to-day to the first head.

"Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near." On this subject, to be discussed in order, shall our voice resound for the present hour; if Providence permit us to ascend this pulpit once more, it shall be resumed: if we ascend it the third time, we will still cry, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near." If a Christian minister ought to be heard with attention, if deference ought to be paid to his doctrine, may this command change the face of this church! May the scales fall from our eyes! and may the spiritually blind recover their sight!

Our mind, prevented by passion and prejudice, requires divine assistance in its ordinary reflections; but now attacking the sinner in his chief fort and last retreat, I do need thy invincible power, O my God, and I expect every aid from thy support.

I. Our own constitution shall supply us to-day with arguments on the delay of conversion. It is clear that we carry in our own breast principles which render conversion difficult, and I may add, impossible, if deferred to a certain period. To comprehend this, form in your mind an adequate idea of conversion, and fully admit, that the soul, in order to possess this state of grace, must acquire two essential dispositions; it must be illuminated; it must be sanctified. It must understand the truths of religion, and conform to its precepts.

First. You cannot become regenerate unless you know the truths of religion. Not that we would preach the gospel to you as a discipline having no object but the exercise of speculation. We neither wish to make the Christian a philosopher, nor to encumber his mind with a thousand questions agitated in the schools. Much less would we elevate salvation above the comprehension of persons of common understanding; who, being incapable of abstruse thought, would be cut off from the divine favour, if this change required profound reflection, and refined investigation. It can-

not, however, be disputed, that every man should be instructed according to his situation in life, and according to the capacity he has received from heaven. In a word, a Christian ought to be a Christian, not because he has been educated in the principles of Christianity transmitted by his fathers, but because those principles came from God.

To have contrary dispositions, to follow a religion from obstinacy or prejudice, is equally to renounce the dignity of a man, a Christian, and a Protestant.—The dignity of a man, who, endowed with intelligence, should never decide on important subjects without consulting his understanding, given to guide and conduct him:—The dignity of a Christian; for the gospel reveals a God who may be known, John iv. 22; it requires us to “prove all things, and to hold fast that which is good,” 1 Thess. v. 21. The dignity of a Protestant; for it is the foundation and distinguishing article of the Reformation, that submission to human creeds is a bondage unworthy of him whom the “Son has made free.” Inquiry, knowledge, and investigation, are the leading points of religion, and the first step, so to speak, by which we are to “seek the Lord.”

The second disposition is sanctification. The truths proposed in Scripture for examination and belief, are not presented to excite vain speculations, or gratify curiosity. They are truths designed to produce a divine influence on the heart and life. “He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar. If you know these things, happy are you, if you do them. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, to visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction,” 1 John ii. 4; John xiii. 17; James i. 27. When we speak of Christian obedience, we do not mean some transient acts of devotion; we mean a submission proceeding from a source of holiness, which, however mixed with imperfection in its efforts, piety is always the predominant disposition of the heart, and virtue triumphant over vice.

These two points being so established, that no one can justly dispute them, we may prove, I am confident, from our own constitution, that a conversion deferred ought always to be suspected; and that, by deferring the work, we risk the forfeiture of the grace.—Follow us in these arguments.

This is true, first, with regard to the light essential to conversion. Here, my brethren, it were to have been wished, that each of you had studied the human constitution; that you had attentively considered the mode in which the soul and body are united, the close ties which subsist between the intelligence that thinks within, and the body to which it is united. We are not pure spirit; the soul is a lodger in matter, and on the temperature of this matter depends the success of our researches after truth, and consequently after religion.

Now, my brethren, every season and every period of life are not alike proper for disposing the body to the happy temperature, which leaves the soul at liberty for reflection and thought. The powers of the brain fail with years, the senses become dull, the spirits evaporate, the memory weakens, the blood chills

in the veins, and a cloud of darkness envelopes all the faculties. Hence the drowsiness of aged people: hence the difficulty of receiving new impressions; hence the return of ancient objects; hence the obstinacy in their sentiments; hence the almost universal defect of knowledge and comprehension; whereas people less advanced in age have usually an easy mind, a retentive memory, a happy conception, and a teachable temper. If we, therefore, defer the acquisition of religious knowledge till age has chilled the blood, obscured the understanding, enfeebled the memory, and confirmed prejudice and obstinacy, it is almost impossible to be in a situation to acquire that information without which our religion can neither be agreeable to God, afford us solid consolation in affliction, nor motives sufficient against temptation.

If this reflection do not strike you with sufficient force, follow man in the succeeding periods of life. The love of pleasure predominates in his early years, and the dissipations of the world allure him from the study of religion. The sentiments of conscience are heard, however, notwithstanding the tumult of a thousand passions: they suggest that, in order to peace of conscience, he must either be religious, or persuade himself that religion is altogether a phantom. What does a man do in this situation? He becomes either incredulous or superstitious. He believes without examination and discussion, that he has been educated in the bosom of truth; that the religion of his fathers is the only one which can be good; or rather, he regards religion only on the side of those difficulties which infidels oppose, and employs all his strength of intellect to augment those difficulties, and to evade their evidence. Thus he dismisses religion to escape his conscience, and becomes an obstinate Atheist, to be calm in crimes. Thus he wastes his youth, time flies, years accumulate, notions become strong, impressions fixed in the brain, and the brain gradually loses that suppleness of which we now spake.

A period arrives in which these passions seem to subside; and as they were the sole cause of rendering that man superstitious or incredulous, it seems that incredulity and superstition should vanish with the passions. Let us profit by the circumstance; let us endeavour to dissipate the illusion; let us summons the man to go back to the first source of its errors; let us talk; let us prove; let us reason; but all is unavailing care; as it commonly happens that the aged talk of former times, and recollect the facts which struck them in their youth, while present occurrences leave no trace on the memory, so the old ideas continually run in their mind.

Let us farther remark, that the soul not only loses with time the facility of discerning error from truth, but after having for a considerable time habituated itself to converse solely with sensible objects, it is almost impossible to attach it to any other. See that man who has for a course of years been employed in auditing accounts, in examining the nature of trade, the prudence of his partners, the fidelity of his correspondents; propose to him, for instance, the solution of a problem; desire him to inves-

tigate the cause of a phenomenon, the foundation of a system, and you require an impossibility. The mind, however, of this man, who finds these subjects so difficult, and the mind of the philosopher who investigates them with ease, are formed much in the same way. All the difference between them is, that the latter has accustomed himself to the contemplation of mental objects, whereas the other has voluntarily debased himself to sordid pursuits, degraded his understanding, and enslaved it to sensible objects. After having passed our life in this sort of business, without allowing time for reflection, religion becomes an abyss; the clearest truth, mysterious; the slightest study, fatigue; and, when we would fix our thoughts, they are captivated with involuntary deviations.

In a word, the final inconvenience which results from deferring the study of religion, is a distraction and dissipation proceeding from the objects which prepossess the mind. The various scenes of life, presented to the eye, make a strong impression on the soul; and the ideas will obtrude even when we would wish to divert the attention. Hence distinguished employments, eminent situations, and professions which require intense application, are not commonly the most compatible with salvation. Not only because they rob us, while actually employed, of the time we should devote to God, but because they pursue us in defiance of our efforts. We come to the Lord's house with our bullocks, with our doves, with our speculations, with our ships, with our bills of exchange, with our titles, with our equipage, as those profane Jews whom Jesus Christ once chased from the temple in Jerusalem. There is no need to be a philosopher to perceive the force of this truth; it requires no evidence but the history of your own life. How often, when retired to the closet to examine your conscience, have worldly speculations interrupted your duty! How often, when prostrated in the presence of God, has this heart which you came to offer him, robbed you of your devotion by pursuing earthly objects! How often, when engaged in sacrificing to the Lord a sacrifice of repentance, has a thousand flights of birds come to annoy the sacred service! Evident proof of the truth we advance! Every day we see new objects: these objects leave ideas; these ideas recur; and the contracted soul, unable to attend to the ideas it already possesses, and to those it would acquire, becomes incapable of religious investigation. Happy is the man descended from enlightened parents, and instructed, like Timothy, in the Holy Scriptures from his infancy! Having consecrated his early life to the study of truth, he has only, in a dying and retired age, to collect the consolations of a religion magnificent in its promises, and incontestable in its proofs.

Hence we conclude, with regard to whatever is speculative in our salvation, that conversion becomes more difficult in proportion as it is deferred. We conclude with regard to the light of faith, that we must "seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near." We must study religion while aided by a collected mind, and an easy conception. We must, while young, elevate the heart above sensible objects, and fill the soul with sacred

truths before the world has engrossed its capacity.

This truth is susceptible of a much clearer demonstration, when we consider religion with regard to practice. And as the subject turns on principles to which we usually pay but slight attention, we are especially obliged to request, if you would edify by this discourse, that you would hear attentively. There are subjects less connected, which may be comprehended, notwithstanding a momentary absence of the mind; but this requires an unremitting attention, as we lose the whole by neglecting the smallest part.

Remember, in the first place, what we have already hinted, that in order to true conversion, it is not sufficient to evidence some partial acts of love to God: the principle must be so profound and permanent, that this love, though mixed with some defects, shall ever be the predominant disposition of the heart. We should not apprehend that any of you would dispute this assertion, if we should content ourselves with pressing it in a vague and general way; and if we had no design to draw conclusions directly opposite to the notions of many, and to the practice of most. But at the close of this discourse, unable to evade the consequences which follow the principle, we are strongly persuaded you will renew the attack on the principle itself, and deny that to which you have already assented. Hence we ought not to proceed before we are agreed what we ought to believe upon this head. We ask you, brethren, whether you believe it requisite to love God in order to salvation? We can scarcely think that any of our audience will answer in the negative; at least we should fear to speak with much more confidence on this point, and on the necessity of acquiring instruction in order to conversion, than to supersede the obligation of loving God, because it would derogate from the dignity of man, who is obliged to love his benefactor; from the dignity of a Christian, educated under a covenant which denounces anathemas against those who love not the Lord Jesus; from the dignity of a Protestant, who cannot be ignorant how all the divines of our communion have exclaimed against the doctrine of Rome on the subject of penance.

Recollect, my brethren, that we are agreed upon this point; recollect in the subsequent parts of this discourse, that, in order to conversion, we must have a radical and habitual love to God. This principle being allowed, all that we have to say against the delay of conversion, becomes self-established. The whole question is reduced to this; if in a dying hour, if at the extremity of life, if in a short and fleeting moment, you can acquire this habit of divine love, which we have all agreed is necessary to salvation; if it can be acquired in one moment, then we will preach no more against delay: you act with propriety. Put off, defer, procrastinate even to the last moment, and by an extraordinary precaution, never begin to seek the pleasures of piety till you are abandoned by the pleasures of the world, and satiated with its infamous delights. But if time, if labour, are required to form this genuine source of love to God, the necessity of which we have already

proved, you should frankly acknowledge the folly of postponing so important a work for a single moment; that it is the extreme of madness to defer the task to a dying hour; and that the prophet cannot too highly exalt his voice in crying to all who regard their salvation, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near."

This being allowed, we proceed to establish on two principles, all that we have to advance upon this subject. First, we cannot acquire any habit without performing the correspondent actions. Language, for instance, is a thing extremely complex. To speak, requires a thousand playful motions of the body, a thousand movements to form the elements, and a thousand sounds to perfect the articulation. All these at first are extremely difficult; they appear quite impossible. There is but one way to succeed, that is, to persevere in touching the keys, articulating the sounds, and producing the movements; then what seemed at first impossible becomes surmountable, and what becomes surmountable is made easy, and what is once easy becomes natural: we speak with a fluency which would be incredible were it not confirmed by experience. The spirits flow to the parts destined for these operations, the channels open, the difficulties recede, the volitions are accomplished; just as a stream, whose waters are turned by the strength of hand and aid of engines, falls by its own weight to places where it could not have been carried but with vast fatigue.

Secondly, when a habit is once rooted, it becomes difficult or impossible to correct it, in proportion as it is confirmed. We see in the human body, that a man, by distraction or indolence, may suffer his person to degenerate to a wretched situation; if he continue, his wretchedness increases; the body takes its mould; what was a negligence, becomes a necessity; what was a want of attention, becomes a natural and an insurmountable imperfection. Let us apply these principles to our subject, and avail ourselves of their force to dissipate, if possible, the mistakes of mankind concerning their conversation and their virtues. Habits of the mind are formed as habits of the body; the mental habits become as incorrigible as those of the latter.

First, then, as in the acquisition of a corporeal habit, we must perform the correspondent actions, so in forming the habits of religion, of love, humility, patience, charity, we must habituate ourselves to the duties of patience, humility, and love. We never acquire these virtues but by devotion to their influence: it is not sufficient to be sincere in wishes to attain them; it is not sufficient to form a sudden resolution; we must return to the charge, and by the continued recurrence of actions pursued and repeated, acquire such a source of holiness as may justify us in saying, that such a man is humble, patient, charitable, and full of divine love. Have you never attended those powerful and pathetic sermons, which forced conviction on the most obdurate hearts? Have you never seen those pale, trembling, and weeping assemblies? Have you never seen the hearers affected, alarmed, and resolved to reform their lives? And have you never been surprised to

see, after a short interval, each return to those vices he had regarded with horror, and neglect those virtues which had appeared to him so amiable? Whence proceeded so sudden a change? What occasioned a defection which apparently contradicts every notion we have formed of the human mind? It is here. This piety, this devotion, those tears proceeded from a transient cause, and not from a habit formed by a course of actions, and a fund acquired by labour and diligence. The cause ceasing, the effects subside! the preacher is silent, and the devotion is closed. Whereas the actions of life, proceeding from a source of worldly affections, incessantly return, just as a torrent, obstructed by the raising of a bank, takes an irregular course, and rushes forth with impetuosity whenever the bank is removed.

Farther, we must not only engage in the offices of piety to form the habits, but they must be frequent; just as we repeat acts of vice to form a vicious habit. Can you be ignorant, my brethren, of the reason? Who does not feel it in his own breast? I carry it in my own wicked heart; I know it by the sad tests of sentiment and experience. The reason is obvious; habits of vice are found conformable to our natural propensity; they are found already formed within, in the germ of corruption which we bring into the world. "We are shapen in iniquity, and conceived in sin," Ps. li. 7. We make a rapid progress in the career of vice. We arrive, without difficulty, at perfection in the works of darkness. A short course suffices to become a master in the school of the world and of the devil; and it is not at all surprising, that a man should at once become luxurious, covetous, and implacable, because he carries in his own breast the principles of all these vices.

But the habits of holiness are directly opposed to our constitution. They obstruct all its propensities, and offer, if I may so speak, violence to nature. When we wish to become converts, we enter on a double task: we must demolish, we must build; we must demolish corruption, before we can erect the edifice of grace. We must level mortal blows at the old man, before the new can be revived. We must, like those Jews who raised the walls of Jerusalem, work with "the sword in one hand, and the tool in the other," Neh. iv. 17, equally assiduously to produce that which is not, as to destroy that which already exists.

Such is the way, and the only way, by which we can expect the establishment of grace in the heart; it is by unremitting labour, by perseverance in duty, by perpetual vigilance. Now, who is it; who is there among you that can enter into this thought, and not perceive the folly of those who delay their conversion? We imagine that a word from a minister, a prospect of death, a sudden revolution, will instantaneously produce a perfection of virtue? O wretched philosophy! extravagance of the sinner! idle reverie of self-love and imagination, that overturns the whole system of original corruption, and the mechanism of the human frame! I should as soon expect to find a man, who would play skilfully on an instrument without having acquired the art by practice and application; I should as soon expect to find a man who would speak a language without

having studied the words, and surmounted the fatigue and difficulty of pronunciation. The speech of the one would be a barbarous subject of derision, and unintelligible; and the notes of the other would be discords destitute of softness and harmony. Such is the folly of the man who would become pious, patient, humble, and charitable, in one moment, by a simple wish of the soul, without acquiring those virtues by assiduity and care. All the acts of piety you shall see him perform, are but emotions proceeding from a heart touched, indeed, but not converted. His devotion is a rash zeal, which would usurp the kingdom of heaven rather than take it by violence. His confession is an avowal extorted by anguish which the Almighty has suddenly inflicted, and by remorse of conscience, rather than sacred contrition of heart. His charity is extorted by the fears of death, and the horrors of hell. Dissipate these fears, calm that anguish, appease these terrors, and you will see no more zeal, no more charity, no more tears; his heart, habituated to vice, will resume its wonted course. This is the consequence of our first principle; we shall next examine the result of the second.

We said, that when a habit is once rooted, it becomes difficult to surmount it, and altogether insurmountable, when suffered to assume an absolute ascendancy. This principle suggests a new reflection on the sinner's conduct who delays his conversion; a very important reflection, which we would wish to impress on the mind of our audience. In the early course of vice, we sin with a power by which we could abstain, were we to use violence; hence we flatter ourselves that we shall preserve that precious power, and be able to eradicate vice from the heart, whensoever we shall form the resolution. Wretched philosophy still; another illusion of self-attachment, a new charm of which the devil avails himself for our destruction. Because, when we have long continued in sin, when we are advanced in age, when reformation has been delayed for a long course of years, vice assumes the sovereignty, and we are no longer our own masters.

You intimate to us a wish to be converted; but when do you mean to enter on the work? To-morrow, without farther delay.—And are you not very absurd in deferring till to-morrow? To-day, when you wished to undertake it, you shrank on seeing what labour it would cost, what difficulties must be surmounted, what victories must be obtained over yourselves. From this change you divert your eyes: to-day you still wish to follow your course, to abandon your heart to sensible objects, to follow your passions, and gratify your concupiscent. But to-morrow you intimate a wish of recalling your thoughts, of citing your wicked propensities before the bar of God, and pronouncing their sentence. O sophism of self-esteem! carrying with it its own refutation. For if this wicked propensity, strengthened to a certain point, appears invincible to-day, how shall it be otherwise to-morrow, when to the actions of past days you shall have added those of this day! If this sole idea, if this mere thought of labour, induce you to defer to-day, what is to support you to-morrow under the real labour? Farther, there follows a conse-

quence from these reflections, which may appear unheard of to those who are unaccustomed to examine the result of a principle; but which may perhaps convince those who know how to use their reason, and have some knowledge of human nature. It seems to me, that, since habits are formed by actions, when those habits are continued to an age in which the brain acquires a certain consistency, correction serves merely to interrupt the actions already established.

It would be sufficient in early life, while the brain is yet flexible, and induced by its own texture to lose impressions as readily as it acquired them; at this age, I say, to quit the action would be sufficient to reform the habit. But when the brain has acquired the degree of consistency already mentioned, the simple suspension of the act is not sufficient to eradicate the habit; because by its texture it is disposed to continue the same, and to retain the impressions already received.

Hence, when a man has grovelled a considerable time in vice, to quit it is not a sufficient reform; for him there is but one remedy, that is, to perform actions directly opposed to those which had formed the habit. Suppose, for instance, that a man shall have lived in avarice for twenty years, and been guilty of ten acts of extortion every day. Suppose he shall afterward have a desire to reform; that he shall devote ten years to the work; that he shall every day do ten acts of charity opposite to those of his avarice; these ten years (considering the case here according to the course of nature only, for we allow interior and supernatural aids in the conversion of a sinner, as we shall prove in the subsequent discourses,) would those ten acts be sufficient perfectly to eradicate covetousness from this man? It seems contrary to the most received maxims. You have heard that habits confirmed to a certain degree, and continued to a certain age, are never reformed but by a number of opposite actions proportioned to those which had formed the habit. The character before us has lived twenty years in the practice of avarice, and but ten in the exercise of charity, doing only ten acts of benevolence daily during that period; he has then arrived at an age in which he has lost the facility of receiving new impressions. We cannot, therefore, I think, affirm that those ten years are adequate perfectly to eradicate the vice from his heart. After all, sinners, you still continue in those habits, aged in crimes, heaping one bad deed upon another, and flattering yourselves to reform, by a wish, by a glance, by a tear, without difficulty or conflict, habits the most inveterate. Such are the reflections suggested by a knowledge of the human frame with regard to the delay of conversion. To this you will oppose various objections which it is of importance to resolve.

You will say, that our principles are contradicted by experience; that we daily see persons who have long indulged a vicious habit, and who have renounced it at once without repeating the opposite acts of virtue. The fact is possible, it is indeed undeniable. It may happen in five cases, which, when fully examined, will be found not at all to invalidate what has already been established.

1. A man possessing the free use of his faculties, may by an effort of reflection extricate himself from a vicious habit, I allow; but we have superseded the objection, by a case apparently applicable. We have cautiously anticipated, and often assumed the solution. We speak of those only, who have attained an advanced age, and have lost the facility of acquiring new dispositions. Have you ever seen persons of sixty or seventy years of age renounce their avarice, their pride; some favourite passion, or a family prejudice?

2. A man placed in a hopeless situation, and under an extraordinary stroke of Providence, may instantly reform a habit, I grant; but that does not destroy our principles. We have not included in our reflections those extraordinary visitations which Providence may employ to subdue the sinner. When we said that the reformation of a vicious habit would require a number of acts which have some proportion to those which formed it, we supposed an equality of impressions in those actions, and that each action would be equal to that we wished to destroy.

3. A man may suddenly reform a habit on the reception of new ideas, and on hearing some truths of which he was ignorant before, I also acknowledge; but this proves nothing to the point. We spoke of a man born in the bosom of the church, educated in the principles of Christianity, and who has reflected a thousand and a thousand times on the truths of religion; and on whom we have pressed a thousand and a thousand times the motives of repentance and regeneration; but, being now hardened, he can hear nothing new on those subjects.

4. A man may, I allow, on the decay of his faculties, suddenly reform a bad habit; but what has this to do with the renovation which God requires? In this case, the effect of sin vanishes away, but the principle remains. A particular act of the bad habit yields to weakness and necessity, but the source still subsists, and wholly predominates in the man.

5. In fine, a man whose life has been a continued warfare between vice and virtue; but with whom vice for the most part has had the ascendancy over virtue, may obtain in his last sickness, the grace of real conversion. There is, however, something doubtful in the case; conversion on a death-bed being difficult or impossible; because between one unconverted man and another there is often a vast difference; the one, if I may so speak, is within a step of the grave, but the other has a vast course to run. The former has subdued his habits, has already made a progress, not indeed so far as to attain, but so far as to approach a state of regeneration: this man may, perhaps, be changed in a moment: but how can he, who has already wasted life in ignorance and vice, effectuate so great a change in a few days, or a few hours? We have therefore proved our point that the first objection is destitute of force.

You will, however, propose a second: you will say, that this principle proves too much, that if we cannot be saved without a fund and habit of holiness, and if this habit cannot be acquired without perseverance in duty, we exclude from salvation those deeply contrite sinners who having wasted life in vice, have now

not sufficient time to form a counterpoise to the force of their criminal habits.

This difficulty naturally presents itself to the mind; but the solution we give does not so properly accord with this discourse; it shall be better answered in the exercises which shall follow, when we shall draw our arguments from the Scriptures. We shall then affirm that when a sinner groans under the burden of his corruption, and sincerely desires conversion, God affords his aid, and gives him supernatural power to vanquish his sinful propensities. But we shall prove, at the same time, that those aids are so very far from countenancing the delay of conversion, that no consideration can be more intimidating to him who presumes on so awful a course. For, my brethren, our divinity and morality give each other the hand, the one being established upon the other. There is a wise medium between heresy, and I know not what absurd and extravagant orthodoxy; and as it is a bad maxim so to establish the precepts, as to renounce the doctrines of Jesus Christ, it is equally pernicious to make a breach in his precepts, to confirm the doctrines.

The aids of the Holy Spirit, and a consciousness of our own weakness, are the most powerful motives which can prompt us to labour for conversion without delay. If conversion, after a life of vice, depended on yourselves, if your heart were in your power, if you had sufficient command to sanctify yourselves at pleasure, then you would have some reason for flattery in this delay. But your conversion cannot be effectuated without an extraneous cause, without the aids of the Spirit of God; aids he will probably withhold, after you shall have despised his grace, and insulted it with obstinacy and malice. On this head therefore, you can form no reasonable hope.

You will draw a third objection from what we have already allowed, that a severe affliction may suddenly transform the heart. To this principle, we shall grant that the prospect of approaching death may make an impression to undeceive the sinner; that the veil of corruption raised at the close of life, may induce a man to yield at once to the dictates of conscience, as one walking hastily towards a precipice, would start back on removing the fatal bandage which concealed the danger into which he was about to fall.

On this ground, I would await you, brethren. Is it then on a death-bed, that you found your hopes? We will pledge ourselves to prove, that so far from this being the most happy season, it is exactly the reverse. The reflections we shall make on this subject, are much more calculated to strike the mind than those already advanced, which require some penetration, but it suffices to have eyes to perceive the force of those which now follow.

We will not absolutely deny the possibility of the fact on which the objection is founded. We allow that a man, who with composure of mind sees the decay of his earthly house, and regards death with attentive eyes, may enter into the requisite dispositions. Death being considered as near, enables him to know the world, to discover its vanity, emptiness, and total insufficiency. A man who has but a few moments to live, and who sees that his honour,

his riches, his titles, his grandeur, and the whole universe united for his aid, can afford him no consolation: a man so situated knows the vanity of the world better than the greatest philosophers, and the severest anchorites: hence he may detach his heart. We would ever wish that the Deity should accept of such a conversion, should be satisfied with one who does not devote himself to virtue, till the occasions of vice are removed, and should receive the like sinner at the extremities of life; it is certain, however, that all these suppositions are so far from favouring the delay of conversion, as to demonstrate its absurdity.—How can we presume on what may happen in the hour of death? Of how many difficulties is this illusory scheme susceptible! Shall I die in a bed calm and composed? Shall I have presence and recollection of mind? Shall I avail myself of these circumstances to eradicate vice from the heart, and to establish there the kingdom of righteousness?

For, first, who is to guarantee that you shall die in this situation? To how many disastrous accidents, to how many tragic events are you not exposed? Does not every creature, every substance which surrounds you, menace both your health and your life? If your hopes of conversion are founded on a supposition of this kind, you must fear the whole universe. Are you in the house? you must fear its giving way, and dissipating by the fall all your expectations. Are you in the open field? you must fear lest, the earth, opening its caverns, should swallow you up, and thus elude your hope. Are you on the waters? you must fear to see in every wave a messenger of death, a minister of justice, and an avenger of your lukewarmness and delay. Amidst so many well-founded fears, what repose can you enjoy? If any one of these accidents should overtake you, say now, what would become of your foolish prudence? Who is it that would then study for you the religion you have neglected? Who is it that would then shed for you tears of repentance? Who is it that would then quench for you the devouring fire, kindled against your crimes, and ready to consume you? Is a tragic death a thing unknown? What year elapses undistinguished by visitations of this kind? What campaign is closed without producing myriads?

In the second place, we will suppose that you shall die a natural death. Have you ever seen the dying? Do you presume that one can be in a proper state for thought and reflection, when seized with those presages of death, which announce his approach? When one is seized with those insupportable and piercing pains which take every reflection from the soul? When exposed to those stupors which benumb the brightest wit, and the most piercing genius? To those profound lethargies which render unavailing, motives the most powerful, and exhortations the most pathetic? To those frequent reverses which present phantoms and chimeras, and fill the soul with a thousand alarms? My brethren, would we always wish to deceive ourselves? Look, foolish man; look on this pale extended corpse, look again on this now dying carcass: where is the mind which has fortitude to recollect itself in this

deplorable situation, and to execute the chimerical projects of conversion?

In the third place, we will suppose that you shall, by the peculiar favour of heaven, be visited with one of those mild complaints, which conduct imperceptibly to the grave, and unattended with pain; would you then be more happily disposed for conversion? Are we not daily witnesses of what passes on those occasions? Our friends, our family, our self-esteem, all unite to make us augur a favourable issue, whenever the affliction is not desperate: and not thinking this the time of death, we think also it ought not to be the time of conversion. After having disputed with God the fine days of health, we regret to give him the lucid intervals of our affliction. We would wish him to receive the soul at the precise moment when it hovers on our lips. We hope to live, and hope inflames desire; the wish to live more and more enroots the love we had for the world; and “the friendship of this world is enmity with God.” Meanwhile the affliction extends itself, the disease takes its course, the body weakens, the spirits droop, and death arrives even before we had scarcely thought that we were mortal.

Fancy yourselves, in short, to die in the most favourable situation, tranquil and composed, without delirium, without stupor, without lethargy. Fancy also, that stripped of prejudice, and the chimerical hope of recovery, you should know that your end is near. I ask whether the single thought, the sole idea, that you shall soon die, be not capable of depriving you of the composure essential to the work of your salvation? Can a man habituated to dissipation, accustomed to care, devoted to its maxims, see without confusion and regret, his designs averted, his hopes frustrated, his schemes subverted, the fashion of the world vanishing before his eyes, the thrones erected, the books opened, and his soul cited before the tribunal of the Sovereign Judge? We have frequent occasions to observe, when attending the sick, that those who suffer the greatest anguish, are not always the most distressed about their sins, however deplorable their state may be, their pains so far engross the capacity of the soul, as to obstruct their paying attention to what is most awful, the image of approaching death. But a man who sees himself approaching the grave, and looks on his exit undisturbed with pains; a man who considers death as it really is, suffers sometimes greater anguish than those which can arise from the acutest disease.

But what shall I say of the multitude of anxieties attendant on this fatal hour? Physicians must be called in, advice must be taken, and endeavours used to support this tottering tabernacle. He must appoint a successor, make a will, bid adieu to the world, weep over his family, embrace his friends, and detach his affections. Is there time then, is there time amid so many afflictive objects, amid the tumult of so many alarms; is there time to examine religion, to review the circumstances of a vanishing life, to restore the wealth illegally acquired, to repair the tarnished reputation of his neighbour, to repent of his sin, to examine his heart, and weigh those distinguished mo-

tives which prompt us to holiness? My brethren, whenever we devote ourselves entirely to the great work; whenever we employ all our bodily powers, all our mental faculties; whenever we employ the whole of life it is scarcely sufficient, how then can it be done by a busy, wandering, troubled, and departing spirit? Hence the third difficulty vanishes of its own accord; hence we may maintain as permanent, the principles we have discussed, and the consequences we have deduced.

Now, we are fully convinced that those of you who know how to reason, will not dispute these principles; I say those who know how to reason; because it is impossible, but among two or three thousand persons, there must be found some eccentric minds, who deny the clearest and most evident truths. If there are among our hearers, persons who believe that a man can effectuate conversion by his own strength, it would not be proper for them to reject our principles, and they can have no right to complain. If you are orthodox, as we suppose, you cannot regard as false what we have now proved. Our maxims have been founded on the most rigid orthodoxy, on the inability of man, on the necessity of grace, on original corruption, and on the various objections which our most venerable divines have opposed to the system of degenerate casuists. Hence, as I have said, not one of you can claim the right of disputing the doctrine we have taught. Heretics, orthodox, and all the world are obliged to receive them, and you yourselves have nothing to object. But we, my brethren, we have many sad and terrific consequences to draw; but at the same time, consequences equally worthy of your regard.

APPLICATION.

First, you should reduce to practice the observations we have made on conversion, and particularly the reflections we have endeavoured to establish, that in order to be truly regenerate, it is not sufficient to do some partial services for God, love must be the reigning disposition of the heart. This idea ought to correct the erroneous notions you entertain of a good life, and a happy death, that you can neither know those things in this world, nor should you wish to know them. They are, indeed, visionaries who affect to be offended when we press those grand truths of religion, who would disseminate their ridiculous errors in the church, and incessantly cry in our ears, "Christians, take heed to yourselves; they shake the foundation of faith; the doctrine of assurance is a doctrine of fanaticism."

My brethren, were this a subject less serious and grave, nothing would hinder us from ridiculing all scruples of this nature. "Take heed to yourselves, for there is fanaticism in the doctrine;" we would press you to love God with all your heart; we would press you to consecrate to him your whole life; we would induce you not to defer conversion, but prepare for a happy death by the continual exercise of repentance and piety. Is it not obvious that we ought to be cautious of admitting such a doctrine, and that the church would be in a deplorable condition were all her members adorned with those dispositions? But we have said al-

ready, that the subject is too grave and serious to admit of pleasantry.

My brethren, "if any one preach to you another gospel than that which has been preached, let him be accursed." If any one will presume to attack those doctrines which the sacred authors have left in their writings, which your fathers have transmitted, which some of you have sealed with your blood, and nearly all of you with your riches and fortune; if any one presume to attack them, let the doctors refute, let the ecclesiastical sword cut, pierce, excise, and excommunicate at a stroke the presumptuous man. But consider also that the end of all these truths is, to induce mankind to love their Maker. This is so essential, that we make no scruple to say, if there were one among the different Christian sects better calculated to make you holy than our communion, you ought to leave this in order to attach yourselves hereafter to the other. One of the first reasons which should induce us to respect the doctrine of the incarnate God, the inward, immediate, and supernatural aids of the Spirit is, that there is nothing in the world more happily calculated to enforce the obligation of loving God.

Return therefore, from your prejudices, irradiate your minds, and acquire more correct ideas of a holy life, and a happy death. On this subject, we flatter and confuse ourselves, and willingly exclude instruction. We imagine, that provided we have paid during the ordinary course of life, a modified regard to devotion, we have but to submit to the will of God, whenever he may call us to leave the world; we imagine that we have worthily fulfilled the duties of life, fought the good fight, and have nothing to do but to put forth the hand to the crown of righteousness. "There is no fear," say they, "of the death of such a Christian; he was an Israelite indeed, he was an honest man, he led a good life." But what is the import of the words, *he led a moral life?* a phrase as barbarous in the expression as erroneous in the sense; for if the phrase mean anything, it is that he has fulfilled the duties of morality. But can you bear this testimony of the man we have just described; of a man who contents himself with avoiding the crimes accounted infamous in the world; but exclusively of that, he has neither fervour, nor zeal, nor patience, nor charity? Is this the man, who, you say, has *led a moral life?* What then is the morality which prescribes so broad a path? Is it not the morality of Jesus Christ? The morality of Jesus Christ recommends silence, retirement, detachment from the world. The morality of Jesus Christ requires, that you "be merciful, as God is merciful; that you be perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." The morality of Jesus Christ requires, that you "love God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind;" and that if you cannot fully attain to this degree of perfection on earth, you should make continual efforts to approach it. Here you have the prescribed morality of Jesus Christ. But the morality of which you speak, is the morality of the world, the morality of the devil, the morality of hell. Will such a morality enable you to sustain the judgment

of God? Will it appease his justice? Will it close the gates of hell? Will it open the gates of immortality? Ah! let us form better ideas of religion. There is an infinite distance between him, accounted by the world an honest man, and a real Christian; and if the love of God have not been the predominant disposition of our heart, let us tremble, let us weep, or rather let us endeavour to reform. This is the first conclusion we deduce from our discourse.

The second turns on what we have said with regard to the force of habits; on the means of correcting the bad, and of acquiring the good. Recollect, that all these things cannot be done in a moment; recollect, that to succeed, we must be fixed and firm, returning a thousand and a thousand times to the charge. We should be the more struck with the propriety of this, if, as we said in the body of this discourse, we employed more time to reflect on ourselves. But most people live destitute of thought and recollection. We are dissipated by exterior things, our eyes glance on every object, we ascend to the heavens to make new discoveries among the stars, we descend into the deep, we dig into the bowels of the earth, we run even from the one to the other world, seeking fortune in the most remote regions, and we are ignorant of what occurs in our own breast. We have a body and a soul, noblest works of God, and we never reflect on what passes within, how knowledge is acquired, how prejudices originate, how habits are formed and fortified. If this knowledge served merely for intellectual pleasure, we ought at least to tax our indolence with negligence: but being intimately connected with our salvation, we cannot but deplore our indifference. Let us therefore study ourselves, and become rational, if we would become regenerate. Let us learn the important truth already proved, that virtue is acquired only by diligence and application.

Nor let it be here objected, that we ought not to talk of Christian virtues as of the other habits of the soul; and that the Holy Spirit can suddenly and fully correct our prejudices, and eradicate our corrupt propensities. Without a doubt we need his aid—Yes, O Holy Spirit, source of eternal wisdom, however great may be my efforts and vigilance, whatever endeavours I may use for my salvation, I will never trust to myself, never will I “offer incense to my drag, or sacrifice to my net,” never will I lean upon this “bruised reed,” never will I view my utter insufficiency without asking thy support.

But after all, let us not imagine that the operations of the Holy Spirit are like the fabulous enchantments celebrated in our romances and poets. We have told you a thousand times, and we cannot too often repeat it, that grace never destroys, but perfects nature. The Spirit of God will abundantly irradiate your mind, if you vigorously apply to religious contemplation; but he will not infuse the light if you disdain the study. The Spirit of God will abundantly establish the reign of grace in your heart, if you assiduously apply to the work; but he will never do it in the midst of dissipation and sin. We ought to endeavour

to become genuine Christians, as we endeavour to become profound philosophers, acute mathematicians, able preachers, enlightened merchants, intrepid commanders, by assiduity and labour, by close and constant application.

This is perhaps a galling reflection. I am not astonished that it is calculated to excite in most of you discouragement and fear: here is the most difficult part of our discourse. The doctrines or truths we discuss being unwelcome, and such as you would gladly evade, we must here suspend the thread of this discourse, that you may feel the importance of our ministry. For, after having established these truths, we must form the one or the other of these opinions concerning your conduct, either that you do “seek the Lord while he may be found,” and endeavour, by a holy obstinacy, to establish truth in the mind, and grace in the heart; or that you exclude yourselves from salvation, and engage yourselves so aforesaid in the way of destruction, as to occasion fear lest the Spirit of God, a thousand and a thousand times insulted, should for ever withdraw.

What do you say, my brethren? Which of these opinions is best founded? To what end do you live? Does this unremitting vigilance, this holy obstinacy, this continual recurrence of watchfulness and care, form the object of your life? Ah! make no more problems of a truth, which will shortly be but too well established.

Ministers of Jesus Christ, sent by the God of vengeance, not to plant only, but also to root out; to build, but also to throw down; Jer. i. 10, to “proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord,” Isa. lxi. 2, but also to blow the alarming trumpet of Zion in the ears of the people—; awaken the conscience; brandish the awful sword of Divine justice; put in full effect the most terrific truths of religion. In prosperous seasons the gospel supplies us with sweet and consoling passages; but we should now urge the most efficacious, and not stay to adorn the house of God, when called to extinguish a fire which threatens its destruction. Yes, Christians, did we use concerning many of you, any other language, we should betray the sentiments of our hearts. You suffer the only period, proper for your salvation, to escape. You walk in a dreadful path, “the end thereof is death,” and your way of life tends absolutely to incapacitate you from tasting the sweetness of a happy death.

It is true, if you call in some ministers at the close of life, they will perhaps have the weakness to promise, to the appearance of conversion, that grace which is offered only to a genuine change of heart. But we solemnly declare, that if, after a life of inaction and negligence, they shall speak peace to you on a death-bed, you ought not to depend on this kind of promises. You ought to class them with those things which ought not to be credited, though “an angel from heaven should come and preach them.” Ministers are but men, and weak as others. You call us to attend the dying, who have lived as most of the human kind. There we find a sorrowful family, a father bathed in tears, a mother in despair: what would you have us to do? Would you have us speak honestly to the sick man? Would you have us

tell him, that all this exterior of repentance is a vain phantom without substance, without reality? That among a thousand sick persons, who seem converted on a death-bed, we scarcely find one who is really changed? That for one degree of probability of the reality of his conversion, we have a thousand which prove it to be extorted? And to speak without evasion, we presume, that in one hour he will be taken from his dying bed, and cast into the torments of hell? We should do this—we should apply this last remedy, and no longer trifle with a soul whose destruction is almost certain. But you forbid us, you prevent us; you say that such severe language would injure the health of the sick. You do more; you weep, you lament. At a scene so affecting, we soften as other men: we have not resolution to add one affliction to another; and whether from compassion to the dying, or pity to the living, we talk of heaven, and afford the man hopes of salvation. But we say again, we still declare that all these promises ought to be suspected; they can change neither the spirit of religion, nor the nature of man. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord," Heb. xii. 14. And those tears which you shed on the approach of death, that extorted submission to the will of God, those hasty resolutions of obedience, are not that holiness. In vain should we address you in other language. You yourselves would hear on your dying bed an irreproachable witness always ready to contradict us.—That witness is conscience. In vain does the degenerate minister endeavour to afford the dying illusive hope; conscience speaks without disguise. The preacher says, "Peace, peace," Jer. vi. 14; conscience replies, "There is no peace to the wicked, saith my God," Isa. lv. 21. The preacher says, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors," Ps. xxiv. 7. Conscience cries, "Mountains, mountains, fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb," Rev. vi. 16.

But, O gracious God, what are we doing in this pulpit? Are we come to trouble Israel? Are we sent to curse? Do we preach to-day only of hell, only of devils? Ah! my brethren, there is no attaining salvation but in the way which we have just prescribed: it is true, that to the present hour you have neglected: it is true, that the day of vengeance is about to succeed the day of wrath. But the day of vengeance is not yet come. You yet live, you yet breathe: grace is yet offered. I hear the voice of my Saviour, saying, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem," Isa. xl. 1. I hear the delightful accents crying upon this church, "Grace, grace unto it," Zech. iv. 7. "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my relentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger: I will not return to destroy Ephraim," Hos. xi. 8, 9. It speaks peculiarly to you, young people, whose minds are yet free from passion and prejudice, whose chaste hearts have not yet been corrupted by the world.

You are now precisely at the age for salvation, you have all the necessary dispositions for the study of religious truths, and the subjugation of your heart to its laws. What penetration, what perception, what vivacity, and consequently what preparation for receiving the yoke of Christ. Cherish those dispositions, and improve each moment of a period so precious. "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth," Eccles. xii. 1. Alas, with all your acuteness you will have enough to do in surmounting the wicked propensities of your heart. And what would it be, if to the depravity of nature, and the force of habit, you should add, the grovelling all your life in vice?

And you aged men, who have already run your course, but who have devoted the best of your days to the world: you who seek the Lord to-day, groping your way, and who are making faint efforts in age to withdraw from the world, a heart of which it has possession: what shall we say to you? Shall we say that your ruin is without remedy, that your sentence is already pronounced, that nothing now remains but to cast you headlong into the abyss you have willingly prepared for yourselves? God forbid that we should thus become the executioners of Divine vengeance. We address you in the voice of our prophet. "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found." Weep at the remembrance of your past lives, tremble at the thought, that God sends strong delusions on those that "obey not the truth." Oh! happy docility of my youth, whither art thou fled? Ah! soul more burdened with corruption than with the weight of years: Ah! stupidity, prejudice, fatal dominion of sin, you are the sad recompense I have derived from serving the enemy of my salvation.

But, while you fear, hope; and hoping, act: at least, O! at least the span of life, which God may add, devote to your salvation. You have abundantly more to do than others; your task is greater, and your time is shorter. You have, according to the prophet, "to turn your feet unto the testimonies of the Lord," Ps. cxix. 59. But swim against the stream; "enter in at the strait gate." Above all,—above all, offer up fervent prayers to God. Perhaps, moved by your tears, he will revoke the sentence; perhaps, excited to compassion by your misery, he will heal it by his grace; perhaps, surmounting by the supernatural operations of the Spirit, the depravity of nature, he will give you thoughts so divine, and sentiments so tender, that you shall suddenly be transformed into new men.

To the utmost of our power, let us reform. There is yet time, but that time is perhaps more limited than we think. After all, why delay? Ah! I well see what obstructs. You regard conversion as an irksome task, and the state of regeneration as difficult and burdensome, which must be entered into as late as possible. But if you knew—if you knew the gift of God!—If you knew the sweetness felt by a man who seeks God in his ordinances, who hears his oracles, who derives light and truth from their source:—If you knew the joy of a man transformed into the image of his Maker, and who daily engraves on his heart some new trait of the all-perfect Being:—If

you knew the consolation of a Christian, who seeks his God in prayer, who mingles his voice with the voice of angels, and begins on earth the sacred exercises which shall one day constitute his eternal felicity.—If you knew the joys which succeed the bitterness of repentance, when the sinner, returning from his folly, prostrates himself at the feet of a merciful God, and receives at the throne of grace, from the Saviour of the world, the discharge of all their sins, and mingling tears of joy with tears of grief, repairs by redoubled affection, his lukewarmness and indolence:—If you knew the raptures of a soul persuaded of its salvation, which places all its hope within the veil, as an anchor sure and steadfast, which bids defiance to hell and the devil, which anticipates the celestial delights; a soul “which is already justified, already risen, already glorified, already seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus,” Eph. ii. 6.

Ah! why should we defer so glorious a task? We ought to defer things which are painful and injurious, and when we cannot extricate ourselves from a great calamity, we ought at least to retard it as much as possible. But this peace, this tranquillity, these transports, this resurrection, this foretaste of paradise, are they to be arranged in this class? Ah no! I will no longer delay, O my God, to keep thy commandments. I will “reach forth,” I will “press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling,” Phil. iii. 14. Happy to have formed such noble resolutions! Happy to accomplish them! Amen. To God, the Father, Son, and Spirit, be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON LXXXI.

ON THE DELAY OF CONVERSION.

PART II.

ISAIAH IV. 6.

Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.

It is now some time, my brethren, if you recollect, since we addressed you on this subject. We proposed to be less scrupulous in discussing the terms than desirous to attack the delay of conversion, and absurd notions of divine mercy. We then apprised you, that we should draw our reflections from three sources,—from the nature of man,—from the authority of Scripture,—and from actual experience. We began by the first of these points; to-day we intend to discuss the second; and if Providence call us again into this pulpit, we will explain the third, and give the finishing hand to the subject.

If you were attentive to what we proposed in our first discourse, if the love of salvation drew you to these assemblies, you would derive instruction. You would sensibly perceive the vain pretensions of those who would indeed labour to obtain salvation, but who always delay. For what, I pray, is more proper to excite alarm and terror in the soul, negligent of conversion, than the single point to which

we called your attention, the study of man? What is more proper to confound such a man, than to tell him, as we then did, your brain will weaken your age; your mind will be filled with notions foreign to religion; it will lose with years, the power of conversing with any but sensible objects; and of commencing the investigation of religious truths? What is more proper to save such a man from his prejudices, than to remind him, that the way, and the only way of acquiring a habit is practice; that virtue cannot be formed in the heart by a single wish, by a rash and hasty resolution, but by repeated and persevering efforts; that the habit of a vice strengthens itself in proportion as we indulge the crime? What, in short, is more proper to induce us to improve the time of health for salvation, than to exhibit to him the portrait we have drawn of a dying man, stretched on a bed of affliction, labouring with sickness, troubled with phantoms and reveries, flattered by his friends, terrified with death, and consequently incapable of executing the work he has deferred to this tragic period? I again repeat, my brethren, if you were attentive to the discourse we delivered, if the desire of salvation drew you to these assemblies, there is not one among you that those serious reflections would not constrain to enter into his heart, and to reform without delay the purposes of life.

But it may appear to some, that we narrow the way to heaven; that the doctrines of faith being above the doctrines of philosophy, we must suppress the light of reason, and take solely for our guide in the paths of piety, the lamp of revelation. We will endeavour to afford them satisfaction: we will show that religion, very far from weakening, strengthens the reflections which reason has suggested. We will prove, that we have said nothing but what ought to alarm those who delay conversion, and who found the notion they have formed of the Divine mercy, not on the nature of God, but on the depraved propensity of their own heart, and on the impure system of their lusts. These are the heads of this discourse.

You will tell us, brethren, entering on this discourse, that we are little afraid of the difficulties of which perhaps it is susceptible; we hope that the truth, notwithstanding our weakness, will appear in all its lustre. But other thoughts strike our mind, and they must for a moment arrest our course. We fear the difficulty of your hearts: we fear more: we fear that this discourse, which shall disclose the treasures of grace, will aggravate the condemnation of those who turn it into wantonness: we fear that this discourse, by the abuse to which many may expose it, will serve merely as a proof of the truths already established. O God! avert this dreadful prediction, and may the cords of love, which thou so evidently employest, draw and captivate our hearts. Amen.

I. The Holy Scriptures to-day are the source from which we draw our arguments to attack the delay of conversion. Had we no design but to cite what is positively said on this subject, our meditation would require no great efforts. We should have but to transcribe a mass of infallible decisions, of repeated warnings, of terrific examples, of appalling menaces,

with which they abound, and which they address to all those who presume to delay conversion. We should have to repeat this caution of the prophet, "To-day if ye will hear his voice harden not your hearts," Ps. xc. 7. A caution he has sanctified by his own example, "I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments," Ps. cxix. 60. We should have only to address to you this reflection, made by the author of the second book of Chronicles: "The Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, because he had compassion on his people; but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people till there was no remedy. Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew the young men with the sword. And had no compassion upon young men or maidens, old men or him that stooped for age. They burned the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, and burned all the palaces thereof with fire," 2 Chron. xxxvi. 15, &c. We should only have to propose the declaration of Eternal Wisdom, "Because I called and ye refused, I will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh," Prov. i. 26. We should have but to represent the affecting scene of Jesus Christ weeping over Jerusalem, and saying, "O that thou hadst known, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace; but now they are hid from thine eyes," Luke xix. 41. We should have but to say to each of you, as St. Paul to the Romans: "Despise thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearing, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgments of God," Rom. ii. 4, &c. And elsewhere that God sends strong delusion on those who believe not the truth, to believe a lie, 2 Thess. ii. 8. We should have but to resound in this assembly, those awful words in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "If we sin wilfully after 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. For if the mercy of God is without bounds, if it is ready to receive the sinner the moment he is induced by the fear of punishment to prostrate himself before him, why is this precise day marked to hear the voice of God? Why this haste? Why this exhausting of resources and remedies? Why this strong delusion? Why this refusal to hear the tardy penitent? Why this end of the days of Jerusalem's visitation? Why this heaping up of the treasures of wrath? Why this utter defect of sacrifice for sin? All these passages, my brethren, are as so many sentences against our delays, against the contradictory notions we fondly form of the divine mercy, and of which we foolishly avail ourselves in order to sleep in our sins.

All these things being hereby evident and clear, we stop not for farther explication, but proceed with our discourse. When we employed philosophical arguments against the

delay of conversion; when we prove from the force of habits, that it is difficult, not to say impossible, for a man aged in crimes, to be converted at the hour of death; it appeared to you, that we shook two doctrines which are in fact the two fundamental pillars of your faith.

The first is the supernatural aids of the Holy Spirit, promised in the new covenant; aids which bend the most rebellious wills, aids which can surmount in a moment all the difficulties which the force of habit may oppose to conversion.

The second doctrine is that of mercy, access to which being opened by the blood of Christ, there is no period it seems but we may be admitted whenever we come, though at the close of life. Here is, in substance, if I mistake not, the whole of what religion and the Scriptures seem to oppose to what has been advanced in our first discourse. If we make it therefore evident, that these two doctrines do not oppose our principles; if we prove, that they contain nothing directly repugnant to the conclusions we have drawn, shall we not thereby demonstrate, that the Scriptures contain nothing but what should alarm those who trust to a tardy repentance. This we undertake to develop. The subject is not without difficulty; we have to steer between two rocks equally dangerous; for if, on the one hand, we should supersede those doctrines, we abjure the faith of our fathers, and draw upon ourselves the charge of heterodoxy. On the other hand, if we should stretch those doctrines beyond a certain point, we furnish a plea for licentiousness: we sap what we have built, and refute ourselves. Both these rocks we must cautiously avoid.

The first proofs of which people avail themselves, to excuse their negligence and delay, and the first arguments of defence, which they draw from the Scriptures, in order to oppose us, are taken from the aids of the Spirit, promised in the new covenant. "Why those alarming sermons?" say they. "Why those awful addresses, to the sinner who defers his conversion? Why confound, in this way, religious with natural habits?" The latter are formed, I grant, by labour and study; by persevering and uninterrupted assiduity. The former proceed from extraneous aids; they are the productions of grace, formed in the soul by the Holy Spirit. I will not, therefore, invalidate a doctrine so consolatory; I will profit by the prerogatives of Christianity; I will devote my life to the world; and when I perceive myself ready to expire, I will assume the character of a Christian. I will surrender myself to the guidance of the Holy Spirit; and then he shall, according to his promise, communicate his powerful influence to my heart; he shall subdue my wicked propensities, eradicate my most inveterate habits, and effluete, in a moment, what would have cost me so much labour and pain. Here is an objection, which most sinners have not the effrontery to avow, but which a false theology cherishes in too many minds; and on which we found nearly the whole of our imaginary hopes of a death-bed conversion.

To this objection we are bound to reply.

We proceed to make manifest its absurdity, 1. By the ministry God has established in the church. 2. By the efforts he requires us to make, previously to our being satisfied that we have received the Holy Spirit. 3. By the manner in which he requires us to co-operate with the Spirit, when we have received him. 4. By the punishment he has denounced against those who resist his work. 5. By the conclusions which the Scripture itself deduces from our natural weakness, and from the necessity of grace. Here, my brethren, are five sources of reflection, which amount to demonstration, that every man who draws consequences from the promised aids of the Spirit, to live in lukewarmness, and to flatter himself with acquiring, without labour, without difficulty, without application, habits of holiness, offers violence to religion, and is unacquainted with the genius of the Holy Spirit's economy.

The ministry established in the church, is the first proof that the aids of the Spirit give no countenance to lukewarmness, and the delay of conversion. Had it been the design of the Holy Spirit to communicate knowledge, without the fatigue of religious instruction; had it been his design to sanctify, in a moment, without requiring our co-operation in this great work, why establish a ministry in the church? Why require us in infancy to be taught "line upon line, and precept upon precept," as Isaiah expresses himself, Isa. xxxviii. 10. Why, as St. Paul says, require us afterward to "leave the principles of the doctrines of Christ, and go on to perfection?" Heb. vi. 1. Why require, as the same apostle says, that we proceed from "milk to strong meat?" 1 Cor. iii. 2. Why require to propose motives, and address exhortations? Why are we not enlightened and sanctified without means, without ministers, without the Bible, without the ministry? Why act exactly in the science of salvation, as in the sciences of men? For, when we teach a science to a man, we adapt it to his capacity, to his genius, and to his memory; so God requires us to do with regard to men. "Faith comes by hearing," says St. Paul, "and hearing by the word," Rom. x. 17. "Being ascended up on high, he gave some to be apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry (mark the expression,) for the edifying of the body of Christ," Eph. iv. 11, 12. Perceive you not, therefore, the impropriety of your pretensions? Seeing it has been God's good pleasure to establish a ministry, do you not conceive that he would have you regard it with deference? Seeing he has opened the gates of these temples, do you not conceive that he requires you to enter his courts? Seeing he has enjoined us to preach, do you not conceive that he requires you to hear? Seeing he requires you to hear, do you not conceive that he likewise requires you to comprehend? Seeing he commands us to impress you with motives, would he not have you feel their force? Do you think he has any other object in view? Show us a man, who has lived eighty years without meditation and piety, that has instantaneously become a good divine, a faithful Christian, perfected in holiness and piety. Do

you not perceive, on the contrary, that the youth who learns his catechism with care, becomes a good catechumen; that the candidate who profoundly studies divinity, becomes an able divine; and that the Christian, who endeavours to subdue his passions, obtains the victory over himself? Hence, the Holy Spirit requires you to use exertions. Hence, when we exhorted you to become genuine Christians, with the same application that we use to become enlightened merchants, meritorious officers, acute mathematicians, and good preachers, by assiduity and study, by labour and application, we advanced nothing inconsistent with the genius of our religion. Hence, he who draws from the aids of the Holy Spirit conclusions to remain inactive, and defer the work of salvation, offers violence to the economy of grace, and supersedes the design of the ministry God has established in his church. This is our first reflection.

We have marked, secondly, the efforts that God requires us to use to obtain the grace of the Holy Spirit, when we do not account ourselves as yet to have received them. For it is fully admitted that God required us, at least, to ask. The Scriptures are very express. "If any man lack wisdom let him ask of God," Jam. i. 5; "seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened," Matt. vii. 7. And, if we are required to ask, we are also obliged to use efforts, however weak and imperfect, to obtain the grace we ask. For, with what face can we ask God to assist us in the work of salvation, when we deliberately seek our own destruction? With what face can we ask God not to lead us into temptation, and we ourselves rush into temptation, and greedily riot in sin? With what face can we ask him to extinguish the fire of concupiscence, when we daily converse with objects which inflame it?

We ought, therefore, to conduct ourselves, with regard to the work of salvation, as we do with regard to life and health. In vain should we try to preserve them, did not God extend his care: nature, and the elements, all conspire for our destruction; we should vanish of our own accord; God alone can retain the breath which preserves our life. Asa, king of Israel, was blamed for having had recourse to physicians, without having first inquired of the Lord. But should we not be fools, if, from a notion that God alone can preserve our life, we should cast ourselves into a pit; abandon ourselves to the waves of the sea, take no food when healthy, and no medicine when sick? Thus, in the work of salvation, we should do the same; imploring the grace of God to aid our endeavours. We should follow the example of Moses, when attacked by Amalek; he shared with Joshua the task of victory. Moses ascended the hill, Joshua descended into the plain: Joshua fought, Moses prayed: Moses raised his suppliant hands to heaven, Joshua raised a warrior's arm: Moses opposed his fervour to the wrath of Heaven, Joshua opposed his courage and arms to the enemy of Israel: and, by this judicious concurrence of praying and fighting, Israel triumphed and Amalek fled.

Observe, thirdly, the manner in which the Holy Spirit requires correspondent co-operation

from us, as the objects of his care. In displaying his efficacy in the heart, he pretends not to deal with us as with stocks and stones. It is an excellent sentence of Augustine: "God, who made us without ourselves, will not save us without ourselves." Hence the Scripture commonly joins these two things, the work of God in our conversion, and the correspondent duty of man. "To-day if ye will hear his voice," here is the work of God, "harden not your hearts." Ps. xc. 8. Here is the duty of man. "You are sealed by the Holy Spirit." Eph. iv. 30. Here is the work of God. "Grieve not the Holy Spirit." Here is the duty of man. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." Rev. v. 20. Here is the work of God. "If any man hear my voice and open." Here is the duty of man. "God worketh in us to will and to do." Phil. ii. 12. Here is the work of God. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Here is the duty of man. "I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh." Ezek. xi. 19. Here is the work of God. "Make you a new heart, and a new spirit." Ezek. xviii. 31. Here, the duty of man. What avail all these expressions, if it were merely the design of Scripture in promising grace to favour our lukewarmness and flatter our delay of conversion? What are the duties it prescribes, except those very duties, the necessity of which we have proved, when speaking of habits? What is this caution, not to harden the heart against the voice of God, if it is not to pay deference to all the commands? What is the precept, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit," but to yield to whatever he deigns to teach? What is it to open to God, who knocks at the door of our heart, if it is not to hear when he speaks, to come when he calls, to yield when he entreats, to tremble when he threatens, and to hope when he promises? What is this "working out our salvation with fear and trembling," if it is not to have this continual vigilance, these salutary cautions, these weighty cares, the necessity of which we have proved?

Our fourth reflection is derived from the threatenings, which God denounces against those who refuse to co-operate with the economy of grace. The Spirit of God, you say, will be stronger than your obstinacy; he will surmount your propensities; he will triumph over your opposition; grace will become victorious, and save you in defiance of nature.—Nay, rather this grace shall be withdrawn, if you persist in your contempt of it. Nay, rather this Spirit shall abandon you, after a course of obstinacy to your own way. He resumes the one talent from the unfaithful servant, who neglects to improve it; and, according to the passage already cited, God sends on those, who obey not the truth, strong delusion to believe a lie, 2 Thess. ii. 10, 11. Hence, St. Paul draws this conclusion: "Stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or by our epistle." And elsewhere it is said, "That servant who knew his lord's will, and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes," Luke xii. 47. And the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews affirms, "That it is impossible for those who

were once enlightened, if they fall away, to renew them again unto repentance," Heb. ii. 4. I am aware that the apostle had particularly in view the sin of those Jews who had embraced the gospel, and abjured it through apostacy or prejudice. We ought, however, to deduce this conclusion, that when the Holy Spirit has enabled us to attain a certain degree of light and purity, if we relapse into our courses, we cease to be the objects of his regard.

5. But why this mass of various arguments, to show the absurdity of the sinner, who excuses himself on the ground of weakness, and indolently awaits the operations of grace? We have a shorter way to confound the sinner, and resolve the sophism adduced by his depravity. Let us open the sacred books; let us see what conclusions the Scriptures draw from the doctrine of human weakness, and the promised aids of grace. If these consequences coincide with yours, we give up the cause; but, if they clash, you ought to acknowledge your error. Show us a single passage in the Bible where we find arguments similar to those we refute. Show us one passage, where the Scriptures, having asserted your weakness, and the aids of the Holy Spirit, conclude from these maxims, that you ought to continue in indolence. Is it not evident, on the contrary, that they draw conclusions directly opposite?—Among many passages, I will select two: the one is a caution of Jesus Christ, the other an argument of St. Paul. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation; for the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak," Mark xiii. 33. This is the caution of Christ. "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God that worketh in you to will and to do," Phil. ii. 12, 13. This is the argument of St. Paul. Had we advanced a sophism, when, after having established the frailty of human nature, and the necessity of grace, we founded, on those very doctrines, the motives which ought to induce you to diligence, and prompt you to vigilance; it was a sophism, for which the Scriptures are responsible. "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak:" here is the principle of Jesus Christ. "God worketh in you to will and to do:" here is the principle of St. Paul. "Work out your salvation:" here is the consequence. Are you, therefore, actuated by a spirit of orthodoxy and truth, when you exclaim against our sermons? Are you then more orthodox than the Holy Ghost, or more correct than eternal truth? Or rather, whence is it that you, being orthodox in the first member of the proposition of our authors, become heretics in the second? Why orthodox in the principle, and heretics in the consequence?

Collect now, my brethren, the whole of these five arguments; open your eyes to the light, communicated from all points, in order to correct your prejudice; and see how superficial is the man who draws from human weakness, and the aids of the Spirit, motives to defer conversion. The Holy Spirit works within us, it is true; but he works in concurrence with the word and the ministry, in sending you pastors, in accompanying their word with wisdom, their exhortation with unction, their weakness with power: and you—you who have never

read this word, who have absented yourselves from this ministry, who have not wished to hear these discourses, who have paid no deference to these cautions, nor submission to this power, would you have the Holy Spirit to convert you by means unknown, and beyond the limits of his operations? The Holy Spirit works within us, it is true: but he requires that we should seek and ask those aids, making efforts, imperfect efforts, to sanctify ourselves: and would you wish him to convert you, while you neglect to seek, while you disdain to ask; to say the least, while you give up yourselves to inaction and supineness? The Holy Spirit works within us, it is true; but he requires that we act in concert with his grace, that we second his operations, and yield to his entreaties: and would you wish him to convert you, while you harden yourselves against his voice, while you never cease from grieving him? The Holy Spirit works within us, it is true; but he declares that, if we obstinately resist, he will leave us to ourselves; he will refuse the aids he has offered in vain; he will abandon us to our natural stupidity and corruption; and you, already come to the crisis of vengeance, to the epoch for accomplishing his wrath, to the termination of a criminal career, can you presume that this Spirit will adopt for you a new economy, and work a miracle in your favour? The Holy Spirit works within us, it is true; but thence it is concluded in our Scriptures, that we ought to work, that we ought to labour, that we ought to apply to the concerns of salvation our strength of body, our facility of conception, our retention of memory, our presence of mind, our vivacity of genius: and you who devote this mind, this genius, this memory, this conception, this health, wholly to the world, do you derive from these very sermons sanction for an indolence and a delay, which the very idea of those talents ought to correct? If this be not wresting the Scriptures, if this be not offering violence to religion, and subverting the design of the Spirit in the discovery of our natural weakness, and the promised aids of grace, we must be proof against the most palpable demonstration.

Enough, I think, has been said, to establish our first proposition, that the aids of God's Spirit confirm the necessity of discharging the offices of piety, in order to acquire the habit; and that the difficulties adduced, are all converted into proofs, in favour of what they seemed to destroy. These are also, according to us, the pure divinity, and the truths which ought to resound in our protestant auditories. Happy, indeed, were the doctors, if, instead of multiplying questions and disputations, they had endeavoured to press these important truths. "O, my soul, lose not thyself in abstract and knotty speculations; fathom not the mysterious means which God adopts to penetrate the heart. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." John iii. 8. "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." Prov. xvi. 18. "Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honour is humility," xviii.

12. Content thyself with adoring the goodness of God, who promises thee assistance, and deigns to surmount by grace the corruptions of nature. But, while thou groanest under a sense of thy corruption, endeavour to surmount and vanquish thyself; draw from God's promises, motives for thy own sanctification and instruction; and even when thou sayest, I am nothing, I can do nothing, act as though the whole depended on thyself, and as though thou couldst "do all things."

II. The notion of the aids of the Holy Spirit, was the first source of illusion we have had to attack. The notion of the mercy of God is a second, on which we shall also proceed to reflect. "God is merciful," say they, "the covenant he has established with man, is a covenant of grace: we are not come to the darkness, to the devouring fire, and the tempest. A general amnesty is granted to the wicked. Hence, though our conversion be defective, God will receive our dying breath, and yield to our tears. What, then, should deter us from giving free scope to our passions, and deferring the rigorous duties of conversion, till we are nothing worth for the world?"

Strange argument! Detestable sophism, my brethren! Here is the highest stage of corruption, the supreme degree of ingratitude. What do I say? For though a man be ungrateful, he discovers sensibility and acknowledgement, for the moment at least, on the reception of a favour. Forgetfulness and ingratitude are occasioned by other objects, which time and the world have presented to the mind, and which have obliterated the recollection of past favours. But behold, in the argument of the sinner, a manœuvre of a novel kind; he acquires the unhappy art of embracing, in the bosom of his ingratitude, the present and the future; the favours already received, and those which are yet to come. "I will be ungrateful beforehand. I will, from this instant, misuse the favours I have not as yet received. In each of my acts of vice, I will recollect and anticipate the favours which God shall one day give; and I will derive, from this consideration, a fresh motive to confirm myself in revolt, and to sin with assurance." Is not this extreme of corruption and ingratitude the most detestable?

But it is not sufficient to attack this system by arguments of equity and decency; this would be to make of man a portrait too flattering, by inducing a belief that he is sensible of motives so noble. This would effect the wicked little more than saying, you are very ungrateful if you persist in vice. The author of our religion knew the human heart too well, to leave it unopposed by the strongest banks. Let us extend our hypothesis, and demonstrate, that those who reason thus build upon false principles, on assurance of mercy, to which they have no possible claim. Hence, to find a compassionate God, they must "seek him while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near."

Here a scholastic method, and a series of questions discussed in the schools, would perhaps be acceptable, did we address an auditory of learned doctors, ready to oppose us with their arguments and proofs. But we will not disturb the repose of these disputes and con-

troversies; we will reduce all we have to advance to terms the most plain, and questions the most simple, and ask two things—Is the mercy of God offered in the gospel, offered absolutely and without conditions? And if it have prescribed conditions, are they of a nature, to which you can instantaneously conform on a death-bed, after having run a criminal career? Here is a second question.

On the idea you may form of these questions, will depend the opinion you ought to have of a man, who claims admission to the throne of mercy, after a dissipated life. For if the gospel is a definitive covenant, requiring nothing of man; or if its requisitions are so easy, that a wish, a tear, a superficial repentance, a slight recourse to piety, is sufficient, your argument is demonstrative, and our morality is too severe. Profit by a religion so accommodating; cease to anticipate an awful futurity; and reduce the whole gospel to mere request for grace. But, if the gospel is a conditional covenant; and if the conditions on which grace is offered, are of a nature that require time, labour and application; and if the conditions become impracticable, when deferred too long, then your argument is false, and your conduct altogether absurd.

Now, my brethren, I appeal to the conscience of the most profligate sinners, and to casuists minutely scrupulous. Can one rationally hesitate to decide on the two questions? And will it be difficult to prove, on the one hand, that the gospel, in offering mercy, imposes certain duties; and, on the other, that we reduce ourselves to an evident incapacity of compliance, when conformity is deferred?

I. Say that the gospel is a definitive covenant, and you save us the trouble of attacking and refuting an assertion which contradicts itself—for the very term covenant, implies a mutual contract between two parties; otherwise it would overturn a thousand express testimonies of Scripture, which we avoid reciting, because we presume they are well known to our audience.

II. The whole question then is reduced to this, to know what are the stipulated conditions. We are all agreed as to the terms. This condition is a disposition of the soul, which the Scriptures sometimes call *faith* and sometimes *repentance*. Not to dwell on terms, we ask what is this *faith*, and what is this *repentance*, which opens access to the throne of grace? In what do these virtues consist? Is the whole implied in a simple desire to be saved? In a mere desire to participate in the benefits of the passion of Jesus Christ? Or, if *faith* and *repentance* include, in their nature, the renunciation of the world, the forsaking of sin, a total change of life, an inward disposition, inducing us to accept all the benefits procured by the cross of Christ, does it not prompt us sincerely, and with an honest mind, to detest the crimes which nailed him to it? In a word, is it sufficient for the penitent to say on a death-bed, "I desire to be saved; I acknowledge that my Redeemer has died for my sins;" or must he subjoin to these confessions, sentiments proportioned to the sanctity of the salvation which he demands; and eradicate the crimes, for which Jesus Christ has made atonement?

I confess, my brethren, that I discuss these subjects with regret. I fear that those of other communions, who may be present in this assembly, will be offended at this discourse; and publish, to the shame of the reformed churches, that it is still a disputable point with us, whether the renunciation of vice, and adherence to virtue, ought to be included in the notions of faith, and in the conditions we prescribe to penitents. "Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in Askelon," 2 Sam. i. 20. There are ignorant persons in every society: we have them also in our communion. There are members in each denomination, who subvert the most generally received principles of their profession: we also have persons of this description. There are none but captious men; none but fools: none but degenerate protestants, presume to entertain those relaxed notions of faith and repentance.

A good protestant believes with our sacred authors, that "he who confesseth and forsaketh his sins, shall find mercy," Prov. xxviii. 13. That with God there is forgiveness, that he may be feared," Ps. cxxx. 4. "That God will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints; but let them not turn again unto folly," Ps. lxxxv. 8. A good protestant believes, that "faith without works is dead; that it worketh by love; and that we are justified by works," Jam. ii. 21—26. A good protestant believes, that "the kingdom of heaven is at hand, in order that men may bring forth fruits meet for repentance," Matt. iii. 3. 8. A good protestant believes, that "there is no condemnation to those who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit," Rom. viii. 1, 2. That "sin shall not have dominion over us, because we are not under the law, but under grace," Rom. vi. 14. A good protestant believes, that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord:" that "neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall enter the kingdom of God," 1 Cor. vi. 8, 9.

If this were not the true definition of faith and repentance; if faith and repentance were a mere wish to participate of the merits of Jesus Christ; if, in order to salvation, we had but to ask grace, without subduing the corruptions of the heart, what would the gospel be? I will venture to affirm, it would be the most impure of all religions; it would be a monstrous economy; it would be an invitation to crimes; it would be a subversion of the law of nature. Under this supposition, the basest of men might have claims of mercy: the laws of God might be violated with impunity; Jesus Christ would not have descended from heaven, to save us from our sins, but to console us in the commission of crimes. A heathen, excluded from the covenant of grace, would be checked in his riot by fears of the most tremendous punishment; a Christian, on the contrary, would be the more encouraged to continue in sin, by the notion of a mercy ever ready to receive him. And you, Celsus, you Porphyry, you Zosimus, you Julian, celebrated enemies of the Christian name, who once calumniated the infant church, who so frequently accused the first Christians with authorizing licentiousness, you had reason to complain, and we have nothing to reply. So

many are the reflections, so many the proofs, that the faith and repentance, without which we can find no access to the throne of grace in a dying hour, consist not in a simple desire to be saved, in a superficial recourse to the merits of Jesus Christ; they include, in their notion, the renunciation of the world, the abandoning of our crimes, and the renovation of heart, of which we have just spoken; and, that, without this faith, there is no grace, no mercy, no salvation.

I know that there are tender conversions; that faith has degrees; that piety has a beginning; that a Christian has his infancy; and that, at the tribunal of a merciful God, the sincerity of our repentance will be a substitute for its perfection. But do you call that a growing conversion, do you denominate that faith, do you take that for repentance, which is the remorse of a conscience alarmed, not by abhorrence of sin, but the fear of punishment; not by a principle of divine love, but a principle of self-love; not by a desire to be united to God, but by horror, excited by the idea of approaching death, and the image of devouring fire? Farther, is it not true, that to what degree soever we may carry evangelical condescension, it is always evident, that faith and repentance include, in their notion, the principles, at least, of detachment from the world, of renunciation of vice, and the renovation of heart, the necessity of which we have pressed.

This being established, it seems to me that truth is triumphant; having proved how little ground a man, who delays conversion, has to rely on the mercy of God, and expect salvation. For, after having lived in negligence, by what unknown secret would you form in the soul the repentance and faith we have described, without which, access to the mercy of God is excluded? Whence would you derive these virtues? From your own strength, or from the operations of the Holy Spirit? Do you say from your own strength? What then becomes of your orthodoxy? What becomes of the doctrine of human weakness, and of the necessity of grace; of which pretext you avail yourselves to defer conversion? Do you not perceive how you destroy your own principles, and sap with one hand, what you build with the other?

Recollect farther what we established in our first discourse on the force of habits. And how can you presume that a habit formed by a thousand acts; a habit in which a man has grovelled and grown old, should be changed in a moment? How can you dream that a man who has wasted so many years in sin; a man accustomed to regard the world as his portion, and virtue not as valuable, except as a final resource; how can you think that such a man should be converted in a moment? Ah! and in what circumstances? in an expiring old age, when the senses are dulled, when the memory fails, when reason is disturbed with reverie, and when the vivacity of nature is extinguished, or indeed, on the approaches of death, when the mere idea of "the king of terrors," agitates, affrights, and confounds him? Nothing then, most assuredly, but the extraordinary grace of the Holy Spirit can convert such a man. But what assurance have you that the Holy Spirit

will work the like miracle in your favour? Say rather, how many presumptive arguments are opposed in the first part of our discourse to a hope so preposterous.

We conclude, that nothing is so doubtful as a tardy repentance; that nothing is so unwise as the delay of conversion. We farther conclude, that, in order to receive the aids of grace, we must live in continual vigilance; in order to become the objects of mercy, we must have both repentance and faith; and the only sure tests of having these virtues, is a long course of pious offices. In the ordinary course of religion, without a miracle of mercy, a man who has wasted his life in sin, whatever sighs he may send to heaven at the hour of death, has cause to fear that all access to mercy will be cut off.

All these things appear very clear, my brethren; nevertheless, the wicked love to deceive themselves; they affect rationally to believe the things of which they are only persuaded by caprice; and they start objections, which it is of importance to resolve; with this view we proceed to apply the whole of this discourse.

APPLICATION.

We find people who readily say, that they cannot comprehend these things; that they cannot imagine the justice of God to be so severe as we have insisted; and the conditions of the new covenant to be so rigorous as we have affirmed.

What are the whole of these objections but suppositions without foundation, and frivolous conjectures? "There is but an appearance: I cannot imagine: I cannot conceive." Would you, on suppositions of this nature, risk your reputation, your honour, your fortune, your life? Why, then, risk your salvation?

The justice of God is, perhaps, not so rigorous, you say, as we have affirmed. It is true, that it may be so. If God have, by himself, some covenant of grace not yet revealed; if he should have some new gospel; if God have prepared some other sacrifice, your conjectures may be right. But if "there is no name under heaven whereby we can be saved, but that of our Jesus," Acts iv. 12; if there is no other blood than that shed by this divine Saviour; if "God shall judge the world according to my gospel," Rom. ii. 16; then your arguments fail, and your salvation is hopeless.

Farther, what sort of reasoning is this? "There is but an appearance: I cannot conceive: I cannot imagine." And who are you that reason in this way? Are you Christians? Where then is that faith, which ought to subjugate reason to the decision of revelation, and which admits the most abstract doctrines, and the most sublime mysteries? If you are allowed to talk in this way, to reply when God speaks, to argue when he decides, let us establish a new religion; let us place reason on the throne, and make faith retire. The doctrine of the Trinity obstructs my thought, the atonement confounds me, the incarnation presents precipices to me, in which my reason is absorbed. If you are disposed to doubt of the doctrines we have advanced, under a pretext that you cannot comprehend them, then discard the other doctrines; they are not less incomprehensible.

I will go farther still; I will venture to affirm, that if reason must be consulted on the portrait we have drawn of God's justice, it perfectly accords with revelation. Thou canst not conceive how justice should be so rigorous; and I cannot conceive how it should be so indulgent. I cannot conceive how the Lord of the universe should be clothed with human flesh, should expose himself to an infuriated populace, and expire on a cross; this is the greatest difficulty I find in the gospel. But be thou silent, imperious reason; here is a satisfactory solution. Join the difficulty which thou findest in the administration of justice, with that which proceeds from thy notion of mercy; the one will correct the other. The superabundance of mercy will rectify the severity of justice; for the severity of justice proceeds from the superabundance of mercy.

If the people who talk in this manner; if the people who find the divine justice too severe; if they were a people diligently labouring to promote their own salvation; if they devoted an hour daily to the work, the difficulty would be plausible, and they would have apparent cause of complaint. But who are these complainants? They are people who throw the reins to their passions; who glory in their infamous intrigues; who are implacable in hating their neighbour, and resolved to hate him during life: they are votaries of pleasure, who spend half the night in gaming, in drunkenness, in theatres, and take from the day the part of the night they have devoted to dissipation: they are proud, ambitious men, who, under a pretext of having sumptuous equipage, and dignified titles, fancy themselves authorized to violate the obligations of Christianity with impunity. These are the people, who, when told if they persist in this way of life, that they cannot be saved, reply, that they cannot conceive how the justice of God should treat them with such severity. And I, for my own part, cannot conceive how God should treat you so indulgently; I cannot conceive how he should permit the sun to enlighten thee. I cannot conceive how he, who holds the thunder in his hand, can apparently be an idle spectator of thy sacrileges. I cannot conceive how the earth does not open beneath thy feet, and, by its terrific jaws, anticipate the punishment prepared in hell for thee by the divine vengeance.

You say again, that this mercy, of which we draw so magnificent a portrait, is consequently very circumscribed. But say rather, how is it that you dare to start difficulties of this nature? God, *the blessed God*, the Supreme Being, has formed you of nothing; has given you his Son, has offered you his Spirit, has promised to bear with you such as you are, with all your infirmities, with all your corruptions, with all your weakness; has opened to you the gates of heaven; and being desirous to give you himself, he requires no return, but the consecration to him of your few remaining days on earth; he excludes none from paradise, but hardened and impenitent men. How then, can you say that the mercy of God is circumscribed! What! is it impossible for God to be merciful unless he reward your crimes? Is no-

thing mercy with you, but that which permits a universal inundation of vice?

You still say, if the conditions of the new covenant are such as you have laid down, it is then an arduous task to become a Christian, and consequently very difficult to obtain salvation. But do you think, my brethren, that we are discouraged at the difficulty? Know you not, that "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life?" Matt. vii. 14. Know you not, that we must "pluck out the eye, and cut off the hand?" ver. 29. Surmount the most dear and delicate propensities; dissolve the ties of flesh and blood, of nature and self-attachment. Know you not, that we must "crucify the old man, and deny ourselves?" xvi. 24. Know you not, that "we must add to our faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge patience, to patience brotherly kindness, to brotherly kindness charity, and to charity godliness," 2 Pet. i. 5.

But you add, that few persons will then be saved; another objection we little fear, though, perhaps, it would have been unanswerable, had not Jesus Christ himself taught us to reply.—But is this a new gospel? Is it a new doctrine to say, that few shall be saved? Has not Jesus Christ himself declared it? I will address myself, on this subject, to those who understand the elucidation of types. I will adduce one type, a very distinguished type, a type not equivocal but terrific; it is the unhappy multitude of Israel, who murmured against God, after being saved from the land of Egypt.—The object of their journey was Canaan. Deut. i. 35, 36. God performed innumerable miracles to give them the land; the sea opened and gave them passage; bread descended from heaven to nourish them; water issued from the deaf rock to quench their thirst. There was but one in which they failed; they never entered into Canaan: there were but two adults, among all these myriads, who found admission. What is the import of this type? The very thing to which you object. The Israelites represent these hearers; the miracles represent the efforts of Providence for your salvation; Canaan is the figure of paradise, for which you hope, and Caleb and Joshua alone were admitted into the land, which so many miracles had apparently promised to the whole nation. What do these shadows adumbrate to the Christian world? My brethren, I do not dare to make the application. I leave with you this object for contemplation; this terrific subject for serious reflection.

But you still ask, "why do you preach to us such awful doctrine? It subverts religion; it drives people to despair." Great risk, indeed, and imminent danger of driving to despair, the men whom I attack! Suppress the poison, remove the dagger, exclude the idea of death from the mind, until the recollection of their sins shall drive them to the last extremity.—But why? The characters whom we have described, those nominal men of apathy, those indolent souls, those hearts sold to the world and its pleasures, have they weak and delicate consciences, which we ought to spare, and for whom we ought to fear, lest the displays of divine justice should produce effects too severe

and strong? Ah! unhappy people, even to mention difficulties of this nature. If you were already stretched on a dying bed; already come to the close of a criminal course; if hell had opened beneath to swallow you up; if you had no resource but the last efforts of an expiring soul, then you would be worthy of pity. But you are yet alive; grace is offered; all the avenues of repentance are open to you; "the Lord may yet be found;" there is not one among you, but may call upon him with success. Yet you devote the whole of life to the world; you confirm the habits of corruption; and when we warn you, when we unmask your turpitude, when we discover the abyss into which you precipitate yourselves by choice, you complain that it is driving you to despair! Would to God that our voice might be exalted like thunder, and the brightness of our discourse be as that which struck St. Paul on the road to Damascus; prostrating you, like that apostle, at the feet of the Lord! Would to God that the horrors of despair, and the frightful images of hell, might fill you with salutary fear, inducing you to avoid it! Would to God that your body might, from this moment, "be delivered to Satan, that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord," 1 Cor. v. 3.

It rests with you, my brethren, to apply these truths; and to profit by the means which Providence this day affords for your conversion. If there yet remains any resources, any hopes for the man who delays conversion, it is not with ministers of the gospel to point them out. We are not the plenipotentiaries of our religion; we are the ambassadors of Christ; we have explicit instructions, and our commission prescribed. God requires that we publish his covenant, that we promise you every aid of grace, that we open the treasures of mercy, that we lead you to heavenly places by the track, sprinkled with the blood of the Saviour of the world. But each of these privileges has conditions annexed, the nature of which you have heard. Comply with them, repent, give your conversion solid, habitual, and effective marks; then the treasures of grace are yours. But if you should persist in sin (to tell you truths to-day, which, perhaps, would be useless to-morrow,) if you should persist during life, and till the approaches of death, and the horrors of hell shall extort from you protestations of reform, and excite in you the semblance of conversion, we cannot, without doing violence to our instructions, and exceeding our commission, speak peace to your souls, and make you offers of salvation.

These considerations must exculpate ministers of the gospel, who know how to maintain the majesty of their mission, and correspond with their character. And if they exculpate us not in your estimation, they will justify us, at least, in the great day, when the most secret things shall be adduced in evidence. You are not properly acquainted with our ministry.— You call us to the dying, who we know to have been wicked, or far from conforming to the conditions of the new covenant. This wicked man, on the approach of death, composes himself; he talks solely of repentance, of mercy, and of tears. On seeing this exterior of conversion, you would have us presume, that such

a man is more than converted; and, in that rash conclusion, you would have us offer him the highest place in the mansions of the blessed.

But wo, wo to those ministers, who, by a cruel lenity, precipitate souls into hell, under the delusion of opening to them the gates of paradise. Wo to that minister, who shall be so prodigal of the favours of God. Instead of speaking peace to such a man, "I would cry aloud; I would lift up my voice like a trumpet; I would shout," Isa. lviii. 1. "I would thunder; I would shoot against him the arrows of the Almighty; I would make him suck the venom," Job vi. 4. Happy, if I might irradiate passions so inveterate; if I might save by fear; if I might pluck from the burning, a soul so hardened in sin.

But if, as it commonly occurs, this dying man shall devote to his conversion but an exhausted body, and the last sighs of expiring life; wo, wo again, to that minister of the gospel, who, by a relaxed policy, shall, so to speak, come to canonize this man, as though he had died "the death of the righteous!" Let no one ask, What would you do? Would you trouble the ashes of the dead? Would you drive a family to despair? Would you affix a brand of infamy on a house?—What would I do? I would maintain the interests of my Master; I would act becoming a minister of Jesus Christ; I would prevent your taking an anti-Christian death for a happy death; I would profit by the loss I have now described; and hold up this prey of the devil as a terror to the spectators, to the family, and to the whole church.

Would you know, my dear brethren, which is the way to prevent such great calamities? Would you know what is the accepted time to implore forgiveness, and to derive the Holy Spirit into your heart? It is this moment, it is now. "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found." Yes, he may be found to-day; he may be found in this assembly; he may be found under the word we are now speaking; he may be found under the exhortations we give in his name; he may be found in the remorse, the anguish, the emotions, excited in your hearts, and which say, on his behalf, "seek ye my face." He may be found in your closets, where he offers to converse with you in the most tender and familiar manner: he may be found among the poor, among the sick, among those dying carcasses, among those living images of death, and the tomb, which solicit your compassion; and which open to you the way of charity that leads to God, who is charity itself. He may be found to-day, but perhaps to-morrow he will be found no more. Perhaps, to-morrow you may seek in vain; perhaps, to-morrow your measure may be full; perhaps, to-morrow grace may be for ever withdrawn; perhaps, to-morrow the sentence which must decide your eternal destiny shall be pronounced!

Ah! who can estimate the value of a moment so precious! Ah! who can compare his situation with the unhappy victims, that divine vengeance has immolated in hell, and for whom "time is no longer!" Ah! who, on withdrawing from this temple, instead of so much vain conversation and criminal dissipation, would

not prostrate himself at the footstool of the Divine Majesty; weeping for the past, reforming the present, and taking salutary precautions for the future. Ah! who would not force him by broken sighs, by fervent prayers, by torrents of tears, never to depart! Who would not say, and more with his heart than with his mouth, "Stay with me, Lord; I will not let thee go, until thou hast blessed me," Gen. xxxii. 20; until thou hast vanquished my corruption, and given me the earnest of my salvation. The time of my visitation is almost expired; I see it, I know it, I feel it; my conversion requires a miracle; I ask this miracle of thee, and am resolved to obtain it of thy compassion.

My brethren, my dear brethren, we have no expressions sufficiently tender, no emotions sufficiently pathetic, no prayers sufficiently fervent, to draw you to these duties. Let your zeal supply our weakness. If we have brandished before your eyes the sword of divine vengeance, it is not to destroy you, but to save you; it is not to drive you to despair, but to induce you "to sorrow after a godly sort, and with a repentance not to be repented of," 2 Cor. ii. 10. It is incumbent on each of you who hear, and regard what I say, to participate in these advantages. May you, from the present moment, form a resolution to profit by an opportunity so precious. May the hour of your death, corresponding with the sincerity of your resolutions, and with the holiness of your lives, open to you the gates of heaven, and enable you to find in glory that God, whom you shall have found merciful in this church. God grant you grace so to do. To Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON LXXXI.

ON THE DELAY OF CONVERSION.

PART III.

ISAIAH lv. 6.

Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.

EXPERIENCE, my brethren, is a great teacher; it is a professor which adduces clear, solid, and indisputable proofs. Reason is an admirable endowment, given us as a guide in our researches after truth. Revelation has been happily added to reason, to correct and guide it; but both have their difficulties. Reason is circumscribed, its views are confined, its deviations frequent; and the false inferences we perceive it deduces, render doubtful its most clear and evident conclusions. Revelation, however venerable its tribunal, however infallible its decisions, "is foolishness," says the apostle, "to the natural man;" it is exposed to the glosses of erroneous critics, to the difficulties of heretics, and the contradictions of infidels. But experience is without exception; it speaks to the heart, to the senses, and the understanding; it neither reasons nor debates, but carries conviction and proof. It so commands the consent of the Christian, the philosopher, and even the atheist, that nothing but mental derangement can revoke its decisions in doubt.

This is the grand instructor that must preach

to-day in this pulpit. In illustrating the words of the text, it was not sufficient that we demonstrated, in our preceding discourses, from reason and Scripture, the folly of the sinner, who delays his conversion; it was not sufficient that philosophy and religion have both concurred to prove, that in order to labour successfully at the work of salvation, we must begin in early life, in the time of health, and in the days of youth. We will prove it by experience; we will demonstrate it by sad tests and instances of the truths we have delivered; we will produce to you awful declarations of the wrath of heaven, which cry to you with a strong and tender voice, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near."

These witnesses, these tests, these examples shall be adduced from persons, who once stood in your present situation; acquainted with the will of God, warned by his servant, and living, as St. Peter expresses himself, "at a period, in which the long-suffering of God awaited them," 1 Pet. iii. 20. And you, even you, Christians, must one day become what they now are. awful examples of the wrath of God; eternal monuments of his indignation and vengeance; unless your eyes, opened by so much light, unless your hearts, impressed by so many motives, unless your consciences, alarmed by the dreadful judgments of God, shall take measures to prevent the sentence, already prepared in his eternal counsels, and whose execution is at the door.

But does it not seem to you, my brethren, that we undertake a task too arduous, when we engage to prove, from experience, that the long-suffering of God is restricted; and that, by delaying conversion, we risk the total frustration of the work? You have already alleged, I am aware, an almost infinite number of sinners, who apparently subvert our principles; so many servants, called at the eleventh hour, so many hearts, which grace has changed in a moment; so many penitents, who, in the first essays of repentance, have found the arms of mercy open; and whose happy success consoles, to the present hour, the imitators of their crimes.

We shall hear your reasons, before we propose our own. We would leave nothing behind, which might occasion a mistake, in which it is so dangerous to be deceived. Our discourse shall turn on these two points: first, we shall examine the cases of those sinners which seem to favour the conduct of those who delay conversion; then we shall allege, in the second place, those which confirm our principle, and make a direct attack on security and delay.

I. We shall examine the case of those sinners, which seem to militate against what we have advanced in the preceding discourses. All that we then advanced, may be comprised under two heads. We said, first, that in order to acquire the habit of piety, there was but one way, the daily exercise of all its duties. We affirmed, secondly, that the period of mercy, is restricted; and that we risk a total exclusion when we offer to God only the last groans of expiring life. We founded our first proposition on the force of habits, and on the nature of the Holy Spirit's economy, who, for the most part, abandons to their own turpitude, those that resist his grace. This was the subject of our first

sermon, and the second part of the other. We established our second proposition on the new covenant, which offers us mercy, solely on condition of repentance, faith, and the love of God; consequently, which renders dubious the state of those, who have not bestowed upon those virtues, the time adequate to their acquisition. These are the two principal heads, which comprise all that we have advanced upon this subject.

You may also oppose to us two classes of examples. In the first class you may arrange those instantaneous conversions and changes, which grace has effectuated in a moment by a single stroke; and which apparently destroy what we have advanced on the force of habits, and the nature of the economy of the Holy Spirit. In the second class, you will put those other sinners, who, after the perpetration of enormous crimes, have obtained remission by a sign, by a prayer, by a few tears; and who afford presumptive hopes, that to whatever excess we may have carried our crimes, we shall never exceed the terms of mercy, or obstruct reception at the throne of grace. Let us consider the difficulties which may be drawn from both these sources.

You adduce first those sudden conversions, those instantaneous changes on the spot, without difficulty, labour, and repeated endeavours. Of this class, we have various examples in Scripture. We have Simon, we have Andrew, we have James the son of Zebedee, and most of the apostles, whom Jesus Christ found casting their nets into the sea, and engaged in the humble trade of fishing, or collecting the tribute; and who were instantaneously, and on the spot, endued with divine thoughts, new desires, and heavenly propensities; who, from the meanest artisans became the heralds of the gospel; formed the noble design of conquering the universe, and subjugating the whole world to the empire of their Master.

With this class, may also be associated the example of Zaccheus; who seems to have been reformed in a moment, and to have reformed on the spot, and without the previous duties of piety, a passion the most obstinate, which grows with age, and from which scarcely any one is converted. He assumed a language unheard of in the mouth of a merchant, and especially a covetous merchant: "The half of my goods I give to feed the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold," Luke xix. 8. To the same class you may add those thousands of persons who changed their faith and reformed their lives, on the first preaching of the apostles.

After so many trophies erected to the power of grace, what becomes of your arguments, you say, on the force of habits, on the genius of the Holy Spirit's economy? Who will dare to maintain, after the adduction of these that habits of piety may not be acquired without labour, fatigue, and the duties of devotion? Why may I not promise myself, after devoting the most of my life to pleasure, to have the same power over my heart as Zaccheus, the apostles, and first converts to Christianity? Why may I not expect the irradiations which enlightened, the aids which attracted, and the omnipotent

power, which converted them in a moment? Why should I make myself a perpetual martyr to forward a work, which one of those happy moments shall perfectly consummate? These are the first difficulties, and the first examples, you adduce.

You oppose, in the second plea, the case of those sinners, who, after committing the greatest crimes, have found, on the first efforts of repentance, the arms of mercy open for their reception. Of this class, there are many in the Scriptures; the principal are that of David; that of St. Peter; that of St. Paul; and that of the converted thief, which has a nearer connexion with our subject than any of the others. These are names, which the wicked have continually in their mouths; and it must be acknowledged, that they are distinguished monuments of divine mercy. It would seem that you may deduce from them this consequence, that to whatever degree you may have carried vice, there is some ground to expect pardon and salvation.

After so many examples of divine mercy, sinners will readily say, how is it that you alarm us with so many fears? Why draw so many terrific portraits of the justice of God? And why exclude the sinner, however corrupt, from the throne of grace? I who may have a secret intrigue, scarcely suspected, very far from being known to the world, shall I have more difficulty in obtaining mercy than David, who committed adultery in the face of all Israel? I who may have absented myself for a time from the true church, shall I have more difficulty in obtaining mercy than St. Paul, who persecuted the saints; or St. Peter, who openly denied his Master, and in his Master's presence? I who have not directly robbed, but have been contented with acquiring goods by means clandestine indeed, but at the same time sanctioned by example, by custom, by the usages of fraud, and art; by palliated lies, and oaths contrary to truth, but essential in the employment to which I am providentially called; shall I be more culpable than the converted thief who robbed on the highway? What should hinder me then from following those personages in vice during life, reserving time to throw myself into the arms of mercy, and imitate their repentance, in my last hours?

Have you, sinners, said enough? Are these all your *hidden things of dishonesty*, and all the frivolous pretences in which you are cradled by the demon of security? See then to what tends your religion, and the use you make of our Scriptures. The Holy Spirit has there delineated the lives of those illustrious men who once were vessels of honour in the Lord's house; he has "surrounded you with a cloud of witnesses," for animation in your course, by the example of men like yourselves, who have finished it with joy. He has also left you a history of their defects, to excite you to vigilance, saying to every sinner, take care, if those distinguished saints stumbled, what will thy fall be when thou shalt relax? If those main pillars have been shaken, what has not the bruised reed to fear? If the cedars of Lebanon have been ready to tumble, what shall be the destiny of the hyssop of the wall? To those reflections you are deaf; and to deceive

the Eternal Wisdom, and "to be wiser in your foolish generation," than the Father of lights himself, you draw from these examples, designed to make you wise, motives to confirm you in your crimes. We shall endeavour to examine the whole of your sophisms.

We shall first make this general observation; that when we said in the preceding discourse, we must, in order to acquire the habit of piety, perform its duties, and to obtain admission at the throne of grace, we must demonstrate our faith by a course of virtuous actions, we told you only what commonly occurs in the course of religion. We did not include in our remarks, the overpowering and extraordinary operations of grace. For God, who was pleased sometimes to supersede the laws of nature, supersedes also, on some occasions, the laws of religion, by graciously enlarging the limits of the new covenant. The laws followed in nature are wisely established. He has assigned a pavilion to the sun, and balanced the earth on its poles. He has prescribed boundaries to the sea, and obliged this impetuous element to respect the commands of its Creator. "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed," Job xxxviii. 11. We have likewise seen him supersede the laws of nature, and discover as much wisdom in their suspension as he manifested in their establishment. We have sometimes seen the earth quake; the sun stop and suspend his course; the waters of the sea advancing before, or retiring behind, "divide themselves as a wall on the right hand, and on the left," Exod. xiv. 22, as well to favour his chosen people, as to confound the rebellious nation. Just so the laws of religion, and the conditions of his covenant, are also perfectly wise, and equally founded on goodness and equity; meanwhile God is pleased sometimes to suspend them, and to enlarge the limits of grace.

This thought aptly applies to many of the cases you adduce, and particularly to instantaneous conversions. They are not the usual way in which the Holy Spirit proceeds; they do not occur in the ordinary course of religion. They are exceptions to the general laws; they are miracles. Instead, therefore, of judging of the general laws of religion, by these particular instances, you should rectify your notion of them by those general laws. Ah! temporizing directors, apostate casuists, pests of the public, you compose your penitents with deceitful hope. This is our first solution.

When a physician, after exhausting all the powers of art to restore the sick, finds his prescriptions baffled, his endeavour without effect, and his skill destitute of resource; when he finds the brain delirious, the circulation of the blood irregular, the chest oppressed, and nature ready to fall under the pressure of disease, he says, it is a lost case. He presumes not to say, that God cannot heal him; nor that he has never seen a recovery in similar circumstances; he speaks according to the course of nature; he judges according to the rules of art; he decides as a physician, and not as a worker of miracles. Just so, when we see a man in the church, who has persisted thirty, forty, or fifty years in a course of crimes; when we see this

man struck with death, that his first concern is for the health of his body, that he calls both nature and art to his assistance; but his hopes being lost, with regard to the world, he turns his attention towards religion; he makes a mighty ado about conversion; he weeps, he groans, he prays; that he discovers to us the semblance of repentance and conversion; we aver that this man's state is doubtful, and exceedingly doubtful. But we speak according to the ordinary course of religion: knowing that God is almighty, we exclude not the occurrence of miracles. Hence all the cases you adduce are prodigies of conversion, in which God has exceeded ordinary laws, and from which no conclusions can be drawn; and all that you add on the power of God, on the irresistible, renovating, and victorious efficacy of grace, however solid on other occasions, when applied to this subject, are empty declamations, and foreign to the point.

But are all those examples of conversion and repentance miracles? No, my brethren, nor is this the whole of our reply: and had we proved that they are all such in effect, we should indeed have done little, and you might have returned home, flattered, perhaps, that God would work the same prodigies for you in a dying hour. Let us enter into a more minute discussion; let us remark,—and this is our grand solution,—let us remark, that among all the sinners whose conversion you adduce, there is not one, no not one, in the condition of the Christian, who neglecting his salvation, presumes to offer to God only the dregs of life, and the last groans of expiring nature. No; of all those sinners, there is not one who was in the situation of such a man; consequently, there is not one, no not one, who can afford the shadow of a rational excuse to flatter the men we now attack. Let us illustrate this reflection; it is of the last importance. You may remark five essential distinctions. They differed—either with regard to their light—or with regard to their motives—or with regard to the duration of their crime—or with regard to their virtues—or with regard to the certainty of their repentance and conversion: five considerations, my brethren, which you cannot too deeply inculcate on your minds. Some of them apply to the whole, others to a part. Let each of you apply to himself that portion of our remarks on these conversions which corresponds with his case.

Speaking first of the illumination of those two classes of sinners, we affirm that there is an essential difference between the men whose example is adduced, and the Christians who delay conversion. Of all those sinners, there was not one, who possessed the light which we have at the present day. Zaccheus, the apostle, the prophets, David, and all the persons at the period in question, were in this respect inferior to the most ignorant Christian. Jesus Christ has decided, that "the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than they," Luke vii. 28. St. Peter had not seen the resurrection of his Master, when he had the weakness to deny him. The converted thief, had, perhaps, never heard his name, while abandoned to his crimes; and St. Paul, while

persecuting the church, followed the old prejudices of Judaism, "he did it ignorantly," as he himself affirms, 1 Tim. i. 13

This is the first consideration which aggravates your condemnation, and renders your salvation doubtful, if you defer the work. "The grace of God has appeared to all men." You are born in so enlightened an age, that the human mind seems to have attained the highest period of perfection to which its weakness will permit it to arrive. Philosophy has been disencumbered of all ambiguous terms, of all useless punctilios, and of all the pompous nothings, which confused, rather than formed the minds of youth; and our systems of moral philosophy seem to have attained perfection. Theology is purged, at least on most subjects, and would to God that it was altogether purged of the abstruse researches, and trifling disquisitions, which amused our fathers. If some weak minds still follow the former notions, they only render themselves ridiculous, weary the people, disgust the learned, and are left to detail their maxims to the dusty walls of their half deserted schools.

How clearly have they proved, for instance, the being of God? On how many clear, easy, and demonstrative evidences, have they established this fundamental article of religion? How clearly have they illustrated the doctrine of the immortality of the soul? How admirably has philosophy coincided with religion on this article, to disengage spirit from matter, to mark the functions of each substance, to distinguish which belongs to the body, and which to the mind? How clearly also have they proved the truth of religion? With what industry have they investigated the abyss of ancient literature, demonstrated and rendered palpable the prodigies achieved seventeen centuries ago?

I speak not this to make an eulogium on our age, and elevate it in your esteem. I have, my brethren, views more exalted. All the knowledge of this period is dispensed by that wise Providence which watches over your salvation, and it will serve for your refutation. The economy of the Holy Spirit, who illuminates your mind, has been fully discussed. If, therefore, it be true, that the atrocity of sin is proportionate to the knowledge of the delinquent;—if it be true, that those "who know their Master's will, and do it not, shall be punished with more stripes than those who are ignorant and negligent," Luke xii. 47;—if it be true, that the sin of such persons remains, as Jesus Christ has affirmed, John ix. 41;—if it be true, that "it were better not to have known the way of righteousness, than to turn from the holy commandment," 2 Pet. ii. 21;—if it be true, that God will require five talents of those who have received five, while those who have received but two shall be accountable but for two, Matt. xxv.—If it be true, that it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, than for Chorazin and Bethsaida;—it is also true, that your arguments are sophistical; that the example of those sinners can afford you nothing but deceitful hopes, which flatter the delay of conversion.

From this last consideration arises another,

which constitutes a second difference; that is, the motives which press you to conversion were scarcely known to the others. You are pressed more than they by motives of gratitude. What were all the favours which they received of God, in comparison of those which are heaped on you; you are born in "an accepted time, in a day of salvation," 1 Cor. vi. 2; in those happy days "which so many righteous men, and prophets had desired to see," Matt. xiii. 17. You are pressed more than they by motives of interest, "you have received of his fulness, and grace for grace," John i. 16; you to whom Christ has "revealed immortality and life," 2 Tim. i. 10; who having received such promises you ought to be the more separated "from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit,"—more than they, by motives of fear, "for knowing the terrors of the Lord," you ought to be the more obedient to his will. More than they by motives of emulation; you have not only "the cloud of witnesses," but the grand pattern, the model of perfection, who has left us so fine an example that we should tread in his steps; who has said, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart," Matt. xi. 29. Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of your faith; you ought, according to St. Paul's exhortation, to be induced "not to cast away your confidence," Heb. x. 35. More than they by the grandeur of your heavenly birth; "you have not received the spirit of bondage unto fear, but the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father," Rom. viii. 15.

What is the result of all these arguments? If you have more motives, you are more culpable; and if you are more culpable, the mercy which they have obtained, concludes nothing in your favour; and the objection, which you derive from example, is altogether sophistical. And what is worse, this superabundance of motives renders your conversion more difficult, and thereby destroys the hopes you found on their example. For though the Holy Spirit has a supreme power over the heart, nothing, however, is more certain, that in promoting our conversion, he acts with us as rational beings, and in conformity to our nature; he proposes motives, and avails himself of their force, to induce us to duty. Consequently, when the heart has long resisted the grand motives of conversion, it thereby becomes obdurate.

How were those miraculous conversions effected to which you appeal? It was in a way totally inapplicable to you. The first time Zaccheus saw Jesus Christ, he received the promise of salvation. Zaccheus feeling, by the efficacy of grace, the force of a motive which had never been proposed before, yielded immediately without hesitation. The converts, on the day of Pentecost, were in suspense concerning what opinion they should form of Jesus Christ: they had crucified him in ignorance, and Jerusalem remained undecided what to think of him after his death. The apostles preached; they proved by their miracles the truth of his resurrection. Then those men, being struck with motives never before proposed, yielded at once. Thus the Holy Spirit operated in their hearts; but in a manner con-

formable to their nature, proposing motives, and employing their force to captivate the heart.

But these operations of the Holy Spirit have lost their effect with regard to you. What motives can be in future proposed, which have not been urged a thousand times, and which have consequently lost their efficacy? Is it the mercy of God? That you have turned into lasciviousness. Is it the image of Jesus Christ crucified? Him you daily crucify afresh, without remorse and without repentance. Is it the hope of heaven? You look only at "the things which are seen." Is it the fear of hell? That has been painted a thousand and a thousand times, and you have acquired the art of braving its terrors and torments. If God should, therefore, employ in your behalf the same degree of power, which effectuated those instantaneous conversions, it would be found insufficient; if he should employ for you the same miracle, that miracle would be too weak. It would require a more abundant portion of grace to convert you, than it did to convert the others; consequently, a miracle, less distinguished than was afforded them, concludes nothing in favour of that, which is the object of your hope, and the flimsy foundation of your security.

A third difference is derived from the duration of their crimes. Of all the sinners we have enumerated, if we may except the converted thief, there is not one who persevered in vice to the close of life. St. Peter, St. Paul, and David, were but a few moments, but a few days, or a few years at most, entangled in sin. They consecrated the best part of life to the service of God. They were unfaithful in a few instances, but afterward their fidelity was unremitting.

Their fall shook their confidence, but did not overthrow it: it was enveloped, but not choked; obscured, but not extinguished.

I acknowledge the good thief seems to have, with the sinners we attack, the sad conformity of persisting in vice to the end of life. But his history is so short in the gospel, the circumstances related are so few, and the conjectures we may make on this subject are so doubtful and uncertain, that a rational man can find in it, no certain rule for the regulation of his conduct.

Who was this thief? What was his crime? What induced him to commit it? What was the first instance of his depravity? What was that of his repentance? What means did grace employ for his conversion? So many questions, so many doubts, so many sufficient reasons for inferring nothing from his conversion. Perhaps he had been engaged in this awful course but a short time. Perhaps, seduced by an unhappy ease, he was less guilty of theft than of softness and compliance. Perhaps only the accomplice of Barabbas in sedition, he had less design of disturbing society, than of checking the tyrannic and exorbitant power of the Romans. Perhaps, surprised by weakness, or tempted by necessity, he had received sentence for his first offence. Perhaps, having languished a long time in prison, he had repented of his sin. We do not affirm these things, they are merely conjectures; but all that you can object are similar conjectures, which may be

refuted with the same ease. And though the whole of these probabilities were refuted, how many criminating circumstances occur in your life which were not in his? We said, that he had not received the education which you have; he had not received the torrent of grace, with which you are inundated; he was unacquainted with a thousand motives, which operate on you; the moment he saw Jesus Christ, he loved him, and he believed on him. How was that? With what faith? At what time? In a manner the most heroic in the world: a faith like his was never found in Israel. At the time when Jesus Christ was fixed on the cross; when he was pierced with the nails; when he was delivered to an infuriated populace; when they spit upon him; when he was mocked by the Greek; when he was rejected by the Jew; when he was betrayed by Judas; when St. Peter denied him; when his disciples fled; when Jesus made himself of no reputation, and took upon himself the form of a servant, the *thief*,—the *thief* seemed to have taken all the faith to himself, and to constitute the whole church. After all, this is but a solitary example: if the converted thief afford you consolation in your crimes, tremble, tremble sinners, when you cast your eyes on him, who was hardened at his side; and let the singularity of this late conversion induce you to fear, lest you should not have been chosen of God, to furnish to the universe a second proof of the success of a conversion deferred to the hour of death.

A fourth reflection turns on the virtues of those sinners, whose example you adduce. For though one criminal habit may suffice, where repentance is wanting, to plunge into the abyss, him who is enslaved with it, whatever his virtues may be; yet there is a vast disparity between the state of two men, one of whom has fallen, indeed, into a crime, but who otherwise has the virtues of a great saint; and the other of whom has fallen into the same crime, but is wanting in those virtues. You bear with a fault in a servant, when he is well qualified for your service; but this defect would be insupportable in the person of another, destitute of those talents.

Apply this remark to the subject in hand. It is to inquire, whether God will extend his mercy to you after the perpetration of notorious offences. You allege, for your comfort, the case of those sinners who have obtained mercy; after having proceeded in vice, at least, according to your opinion, as far as yourselves. Take two balances: weigh with one hand *their* crimes and *your* crimes: weigh with the other *their* virtues and *your* virtues. If the weights are equal, your argument is conclusive: the grace which they have obtained, is an infallible test that you shall not be excluded. But if you should find, on inquiry, a difference; if you should find, on your dying bed, that you have resembled them in what is odious, and not in what is acceptable, do you not perceive, my brethren, the impropriety of your presumption, and the absurdity of your hopes?

Now, who is there, who is there among us, who abandons himself to vice, that will compare himself with those illustrious saints in regard to virtue; as it is readily acknowledged that they resemble them in regard to faults?

You follow, to-day, *the multitude to do evil*, as Zaccheus, and, as the apostles before their conversion: so far the parallel is just; but can you prove, like them, that you obeyed the first calls of Jesus Christ; that you have never been offended, either with the severity of his precepts, or with the bloody horrors of his cross and martyrdom? You sacrifice, like David, to an impudent Bathsheba, the rights of the Lord, who enjoins temperance and modesty: so far the parallel is just; but have you, like him, had "the law of God in your heart?" Have you, like him, "rose at midnight, to sing praises to God?" Have you, like him, made charity your glory, and piety your delight? You persecute the church, like St. Paul, by your malicious objections, and profane sneers; you draw away disciples, as the zealot once did, by persecutions and punishments: so far the parallel is just; but have you asked Jesus Christ, as he did, the first moment he appeared to him in the way to Damascus, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" Have you neither conferred with flesh nor blood, when required, like him, to go up to Jerusalem, and abjure the prejudices of your fathers? Has your zeal resembled his, so as to feel your spirit stirred within you, at the sight of a superstitious altar? And has your love resembled his, so as to be willing to be accused for your brethren? You have denied Jesus Christ, as St. Peter; and that criminal laxity, which induced you to comply in such and such company, when virtue was attacked, has made you like this apostle, who denied him in the court of Caiaphas: so far the parallel is just; but have you, like him, burned with zeal for the interests of his glory? Have you said, with an ardour like his, "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee?" Have you, like him, prodigal of your blood, been ready to seal the truths of the gospel; and, after being made a spectacle to the world, are you, like him, ready to be offered up? You, like the thief, have that false weight, and that short measure, which you secretly use on your counter, and in your warehouse; or that authority which you openly abuse in the face of the world, and on the seat of justice: you liberal culprits, who, perhaps, have imposed on strangers, or attacked them with open force: so far the parallel is just; but have you, like him, had eyes, which penetrated through the clouds, with which Christ was surrounded on the cross? Have you, like him, discovered the God of heaven and earth, in the person of the crucified Redeemer? Have you, like him, repaired, with the sincerity of your expiring breath, the crimes of your whole life? If the parallel be still just, your argument is good, and your recourse to mercy shall be attended with the same success. But if the parallel be defective; if you find, on your death-bed, that you have followed those characters solely in what was sinful, then your argument is false; and you ought, at least, to relinquish the hopes you have founded on their examples.

5. We find, in short, another difference between the men who delay conversion, and the sinners, whose cases they adduce; it is certain that they were converted and obtained mercy, whereas it is extremely doubtful whether the

others shall ever obtain it, and be converted. What, according to your mode of arguing, constitutes the strength of your objection, becomes the solidity of our reply. A sinner, in the career of crimes, is in a fluctuating condition, placed between life and death; equally uncertain whether he shall obtain salvation, or become the victim of perdition. These then, men who delay conversion, these are the sinners we have to attack. You allege the case of characters, whose state has been already determined; and whose repentance has been realized by experience. Each of these, while, like you, habituated to vice, was, like you, uncertain whether they should obtain mercy, or whether the door would be shut. Access has been opened, pardon has been granted. Thus the question is decided; and all doubts, with regard to them, are done away.

But your situation is quite the reverse. You have the sins of their fluctuating state, not the grace of their determined condition, which induces a favourable confidence. In this painful suspense, who is in the right? We, who tremble at the awful risk you run; or you, who rely on the precarious hope of extricating yourselves from sin? Who is in the right? Those accommodating guides, who, in your greatest profligacy, continually assure you of the divine mercy, which serves merely as a pretext to confirm you in crimes; or we, who brandish before your eyes the awful sword of justice, to alarm your indolence, and rouse you from soft security?

Collect now, my brethren, all this variety of reflections; and, if there remain with you a shadow of honesty, renounce the advantage you pretend to derive from these examples. Consider, that many of these conversions are not only out of the common course of religion, but also that they could not have been effectuated by less than miraculous powers. Consider that, among all those sinners, there was not one in the situation of a Christian, who delays conversion to the close of life. Consider that you are enlightened with meridian lustre, which they have scarcely seen. Consider that you are pressed with a thousand motives totally unknown to them. Consider, that they continued, for the most part, but a *short time* in sin; but you have wasted life in folly. Consider, that they possessed distinguished virtues, which rendered them dear to God; but you have nothing to offer him but dissipation or indolence. Consider, that they were distinguished by repentance, and afforded lasting proofs of their sincerity: whereas 'tis still doubtful whether you shall ever be converted, and you go the way to make it impossible. See, then, whether your arguments are just, and whether your hopes are properly founded.

These examples, we acknowledge, my brethren, are very encouraging to those who diligently endeavour to reform. We delight in enforcing them to those contrite and simple souls; to consciences bruised and tender that tremble at God's word. We came not to straiten the way to heaven; we came not to preach a severe morality, and to announce a divinity ferocious and cruel. Would to God that every sinner, in this assembly, would re-

collect himself, and swell the catalogue of converts, in which grace has been triumphant! But hardened men can infer nothing hence, except alarming considerations.

Hitherto we have examined the cases of those sinners, who apparently contradict our principles; let us, in the next place, briefly review those, by which they are confirmed. Let us prove that the long-suffering of God has its limits; and that in order to find him propitious, we must "seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near." This is our second head.

II. Three distinguished classes of examples, my brethren, three alarming monuments, confirm those illustrious truths. These are—

I. Public catastrophes. II. Obdurate sinners. III. Dying men.—Happy are they who are cautioned by the calamities of others!

I. Public catastrophes. There is to every government, to every nation, and to every church, a limited day of visitation: there is a time in which the Lord may be found, and a time in which he will not be found. "A time when he may be found:" when commerce flourishes, when families prosper, when armies conquer, when politics succeed, when the temples are open, when the solemn feasts are observed, and the faithful say one to another, "O come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord." This is the time *when the Lord may be found*. Happy time, which would have been restricted only by the duration of the world, had not the ingratitude of man introduced another time, in which *the Lord will not be found*. Then commerce languishes, families degenerate, armies are defeated, politics are confused, churches are overturned, the solemn feasts subside; "and the earth," according to the expression of Moses, "vomith out its inhabitants."

Isaiah has given us a proof of this awful truth, in the Jews of his own age. He preached, he prayed, he exhorted, he threatened, he thundered. How often was his voice heard in the streets of Jerusalem! Sometimes he would draw them with the cords of love; sometimes he would save them "with fear, pulling them out of the fire." How often did he thunder those terrific words—"Behold the Lord, the Lord of hosts, doth take away from Jerusalem, and from Judah, the stay and the staff, the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water; the mighty man, and the man of war; the judge, and the prophet, and the prudent, and the ancient, and the captain of fifty; and the honourable man, and the counsellor, and cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator," Isa. iii. 1—3. How often did he say to them, by divine authority—"Hear ye 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; it shall not be pruned nor digged, but there shall come up briars and thorns. I will also command the clouds, that they rain no rain upon it," ver. 5, 6. How often did he uplift the veil of future times, and represent the Chaldeans approaching; Jerusalem besieged; the city encumbered with the dead; the temple of the Lord reduced to heaps of stones; the holy mountain streaming with

blood; Judea buried in ashes, or swimming with the blood of its inhabitants? How often with a voice yet more tender did he cry, "O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandment! Why should ye be stricken any more? Ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the crown of the head, there is no soundness in it," Isa. i. 5, 6. "Howl, O gate, cry, O City, thou whole Palestina art dissolved," Isa. xiv. 31. "Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust for the fear of the Lord," Isa. ii. 10. That was the time to avert all these calamities; that was the aim of the prophet and the design of our text. But the Jews hardened themselves against his voice. God pronounced the sentence; he executed his word: he commanded the Chaldeans to invest the walls of Jerusalem; and then says the sacred historian, "there was no remedy," 2 Chron. xxxvi. 16. The Israelites made many efforts to appease the wrath of Heaven; the aged raised aloud their plaintive and trembling voices, the young poured forth a mournful and piercing cry; the daughters of Jerusalem lifted up their lamentations to Heaven: the priests wept aloud between the porch and the altar, they said a thousand and a thousand times, "Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage unto shame," Joel ii. 17. But the deed was done, the time was past, *the Lord would not be found*, and all this semblance of repentance, the smallest portion of which would perhaps, on another occasion, have sufficed to disarm the wrath of Heaven, was now without effect. This is expressed in so noble and energetic a manner, that we would for ever imprint it on your memory. "The Lord God of their fathers sent to them his messengers, rising up betimes and sending, because he had compassion on his people. But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, till the wrath of the Lord arose against his people. Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew the young people with the sword, and had no compassion on the young man, nor the aged, nor the infirm. They burnt the house of God, and demolished his palaces," 2 Chron. xxxvi. 15—17.

What happened to ancient Jerusalem, happened also to modern Jerusalem; I would say, Jerusalem as it stood in our Saviour's time. A thousand oracles had predicted the advent of the Messiah; the prophets had said that he was about to come; St. John the Baptist affirmed, that he was at the door; Jesus Christ came, in short, saying, Here I am. He walked in the streets of Jerusalem, he instructed them by his doctrine, he astonished them by his miracles, he influenced them by his example; he cried in their assemblies, "Walk while you have the light, lest darkness come upon you," John xii. 35. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that 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. xxiii. 37. That was the time; but they suffered the precious moments to escape. And what did Jesus Christ add? "He wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known,

even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes," Luke xix. 42. Do you feel all the force of these last words, "now they are hid from thine eyes?" Jerusalem was not, however, yet destroyed; the temple still stood; the Romans offered them peace; the siege was not commenced; more than forty years elapsed between the threatening and the stroke. But, ah! from that time, from that time, *these things were hid from their eyes*; from that time their destruction was determined; from that time their day of grace was expired, and their ruin finally fixed. So true it is, that the long-suffering of God is limited, and that mercy cannot always be obtained at the expected period, and precise moment on which we had fondly relied.

But, my brethren, to whom do I preach? To whom do I this day prove these melancholy truths? Of whom is this audience composed? Who are those "brands plucked from the burning," and "come up out of great tribulation?" By what stroke of Providence is the mass I now see convened from so many provinces? Whence are you? In what country were you born? Ah! my brethren, you are but too well instructed in the truths I now preach! The time of long-suffering is limited; need we prove it? Can you be ignorant of it? Are you not witnesses of it by experience? Are not our proofs sufficiently evident? Do you ask for arguments more conclusive? Come, see; let us go to the ruins of our temples: let us survey the rubbish of our sanctuaries; let us see our galley-slaves chained to the oar, and our confessors in irons; let us see "the land which has vomited us on the face of the earth;" and the name of refugee, venerable shall I call it, or the horrors of the whole world? And to present you with objects still more affecting; let us see our brethren at the foot of an altar which they believe idolatrous, mothers preserving the fortune of their families at the expense of their children's souls, whom they devote to idolatry; and by a sad reverse, preserving that same fortune to their children at the expense of their own souls.† Yield, yield to our calamities, ye catastrophes of ages past! Ye mothers whose tragic memory appals posterity, because you were compelled by the horrors of the famine to eat the flesh of your sons, preserving your own life by snatching it from those who had received it of you! However bloody your situation may be, you deprived them after all but of a momentary life, thereby saving both them and yourselves from the horrors of famine. But here both are precipitated into the same abyss. The mother, by a prodigy unheard of, if I may so speak, nourishes herself with the substance of her son's soul, and the son in his turn nourishes himself with the substance of his mother's soul.

Ah! my brethren, these are our proofs; these are our arguments; these are the solutions we

give of your objections; this is really the time in which "the Lord will not be found." For, since your calamities, what efforts have been used to terminate them, and to soften the vengeance which pursues you! How many humiliations! How many fasts! How many intercessions! How many tears! How many protestations! How many disconsolate mothers, satisfied with the ruin of their families, have asked no spoil, but the souls of their children! How many *Moseses*, how many *Samuels* have stood before God, and implored the liberation of his church! But all in vain. The time was past, the Lord would be found no more, and perhaps,—perhaps,—no more for ever.—Jer. xv. 5.

Happy in the extreme of our misery, if we may yet hope, that they will be salutary to those who have reached the shore on the *broken boards* of the shipwreck? For, my brethren, we consent that you should turn away your eyes from whatever is glorious in our exile, to look solely at that which is deplorable. What do those groups of fugitives, and dismembered families say to you? We are sent by the God of vengeance. In banishing us from our country, he said, go,—go, unhappy people;—go, and tell the world the consequences of falling into the hands of an angry God. Teach the Christian world your bloody, but salutary lessons; say to my children, in whatsoever part of the earth you may be cast; "except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Luke xiii. 3. But you yet stand, ye walls of this temple; you yet flourish, O happy provinces; though the long-suffering of God has its limits. But I check myself on the verge of this awful prediction.

II. Merely enumerating the remaining subjects, I would say, that experience, in the case of hardened sinners, supplies us with a second example. It is a received opinion, and not without some foundation, that the period allotted for repentance extends to the whole of life, and that God has no design in sparing us, but to promote our conversion. This is the sense of the Chaldee paraphrase; for so it renders the text; "Seek ye the Lord while you have life, call ye upon him while you are spared upon the earth." We will not oppose the thought; meanwhile we confidently affirm, that we daily see among our hearers sinners whom grace seems to have forsaken, and who appear to be lost without resource.

How often do we see people among us so habituated to offend against the dictates of conscience, that they now sin without remorse, and without repentance! If the things we preach to you were problematical;—if they were things which so far excited doubt and uncertainty in the mind, that we could not be assured of their reality;—if they were merely allowed, or forbidden, we should not be surprised at this insensibility. But do we not see persons in cold blood committing the most atrocious crimes, carrying on infamous intrigues, nourishing inveterate prejudices, handing them down from father to son, and making them the heritage of the family? Do we not see them committing those things in cold blood, and less shocked now at the enormity of their crimes, than they formerly were at the mere thought of them, and who are as insensible of all wo

* France was then formed into twenty-four provinces, now it is divided into about eighty-three departments.

† An edict was published by the king of France, commanding his officers to consecrate the goods of those who did not perform the acts of a good Catholic in their last hours.

say to affect them, as if we were repeating fables, or reciting frivolous tales? Whence does this proceed, my brethren? From the same cause we have endeavoured to prove in our preceding discourses, that habits, if not corrected, become confirmed: that the Holy Spirit withdraws himself; that he ceases to knock at the door of our hearts, and leaves us to ourselves when we resist his grace. These are *seared consciences*; they are fascinated minds; these are men given up to a spirit of delusion, Rom. i. 21; "Their hearts are waxed gross; they have eyes, and they see not, they have hearts, and they do not understand," Isa. vi. 10. If the arguments advanced in the preceding discourses, have been incapable of producing conviction, do not, at least, dispute with us what you see every day, and what passes before your eyes. Preachers, be not astonished after this, if your arguments, if your proofs, if your demonstrations, if your exhortations, if your most tender and pathetic entreaties have so little effect. God himself fights against you. You demonstrate, and God blinds their eyes: you exhort, and God hardens the heart; and that Spirit,—that Spirit, who by his victorious power endeavours to illuminate the simple, and make them that fear him to understand his secret;—that Spirit, by the power of vengeance, hardens the others in their wilful insensibility.

This awful period often comes with greater rapidity than we think. When we speak of sinners who are become incorrigible, we understand not only the aged, who have run a course of fifty or sixty years in crimes, and in whom sin is become natural. We speak also of those less advanced in age; who have refused to devote to God the early years of youth; who have assumed the flourishing titles of infidelity, and atheism; who are in effect, become Atheists, and have imbibed prejudices, from which it is now impossible to move them. At first, this was simply a want of zeal; then it became indifference, then followed coldness and indolence, afterward contempt of religion, and in the issue, the most obstinate and outrageous profaneness. I select cases for you who are yet susceptible of good impressions. They are providentially placed in open view to inspire you with holy fear; God has exposed them in his church as buoys and beacons, erected on the coast to warn the mariners; they say, keep your distance in passing here, fly this dreadful place, let the remains of this shipwreck induce you to seek deep waters and a safer course.

III. Let this produce a third example, and would to God that we had less authority for producing it, and were less instructed on the subject! This is dying men;—an example which you may adduce, to harden yourselves in vice; but which if properly understood, is much more calculated to excite alarm. We see in general, that every dying man, however wicked he may have been during life, seems to be converted on the approach of death; and we readily persuade ourselves that it is so in effect: and consequently, that there is no great difficulty in becoming regenerate in our last moments. But two things have always prejudiced me against a late repentance;—the nature of those sorrows, and especially the consequences.

First, The nature of those sorrows. After

acquiring some knowledge of the human heart, we fully perceive that there is nothing in it but what is extorted; that it is the fear of punishment, not the sentiments of religion and equity; that it is the approach of death, not an abhorrence of sin; that it is the terrors of hell, not the effusions of true zeal, which animate the heart. The sailor, while enjoying a favourable breeze, braves the Deity, uttering his blasphemies against Heaven, and apparently acknowledging no Providence but his profession and industry. The clouds become black; the sluices of heaven open; the lightnings flash in the air; the thunder becomes tremendous; the winds roar; the surge foams, the waves of the ocean seem to ascend to heaven; and heaven in turn seems to descend into the abyss. Conscience, alarmed by these terrific objects, and more so by the image of hell, and the expectation of immediate and inevitable death, endeavours to conceal herself from the pursuing vengeance of God. Blasphemy is changed to blessing, presumption to prayer, security to terror. This wicked man all at once, becomes a saint of the first class: and as though he would deceive the Deity, after having first deceived himself, he arrogates, as the right of this false reform, admission into heaven, and claims the whole rewards of true repentance.

What! conversions of this kind dazzle Christians! What! sailors, whose tears and cries owe their origin to the presence of immediate danger, from which they would be saved! But it is not in the agitation produced by peril, that we may know whether we have sincere recourse to God. It is in tranquil and recollected moments that the soul can best examine and investigate its real condition. It is not when the world has quitted us, that we should begin like true Christians to quit the world; it is when the world smiles, and invites us to taste its charms.

But what finally decides on those hasty resolutions are the consequences. Of all the saints that have been made in haste, you find scarcely one, on deliverance from danger, who fulfils the vows he has made. There is scarcely one who does not relapse into vice with the same rapidity with which he seemed to abandon it; a most conclusive argument, that such conversions are not sincere. Had it been true zeal, and divine love which dictated all those professions, and kindled that fire which seemed to burn, you would, no doubt, have retained the effects; but finding no fruit of your fervent resolutions, we ought to be convinced that they were extorted. Could your heart thus pass in one moment from one extreme to the other? Could it pass in one moment from repentance to obduracy, and from obduracy to repentance? Could it correct in one moment habits of vice, and assume habits of piety, and renounce with equal ease habits of piety, to resume habits of vice? The case of those whom God has restored to life, ought to correct your judgment, concerning those whom he takes away.

To all these proofs, my brethren, which I am not permitted to state in all their lustre, I fear lest another should soon be added;—I fear lest a fourth example should convince the world how dangerous it is to delay conversion. This proof, this example, is no other than the major

part of this congregation. On considering the way of life which most of you follow, we find but too much cause for this awful conjecture. But should we see you, without alarm, run headlong into the abyss from which you cannot be delivered by never-ceasing lamentations and tears? No, my brethren, we will redouble our entreaties, we will make fresh exertions to press on your minds these important truths.

APPLICATION.

The first thing we require of you is to enter into your own heart, to do justice to yourselves, to confess that most of you are in the awful situation we have attacked; that you are nearly all guilty of delaying conversion. I know that the human heart has its evasions, and that conscience has its depths. But, after all, you are not so far blind as to believe that, while carried away as some of you are with avarice, others with ambition; some with voluptuousness, others with slander; and some with a haughtiness which nothing can bend; living, as most of you do, resident in a city where you find all the temptations of vice in high life, and all the facility in the haunts of infamy, you are not so far blinded as to think that you are in a state of regeneration, while persisting in this course. And, as I supposed before, that no one of you is so far infatuated as to say, I have made my choice, I am resolved to cast myself headlong into the pit of destruction, and to be a victim of eternal vengeance; as no one of you has carried infatuation to this extreme, I am right in concluding, that nearly all of you rely on a future conversion. Begin here, begin by doing justice to yourselves on this point. This is the first thing we require you to do.

The second is, to recollect the arguments we have urged in our preceding discourses, against the delay of conversion, and confess their force. In the first, we addressed you as well-informed and rational beings; we proved from the human constitution, that conversion becomes either difficult or impracticable in proportion as it is deferred. In the second, we addressed you as Christians, who acknowledge a revelation received from heaven; and we endeavoured to prove these truths by that revelation;—by the character of the economy of the Holy Spirit;—by the nature and conditions of the new covenant;—capital points of faith, fundamental articles of religion, which you cannot evade, if you have the smallest shadow of Christianity. To-day we have directed all our efforts to enable you to comprehend the same things by clear, certain, and indisputable experience. Overlooking, therefore, every thing which concerns us in particular, and our weakness, which we acknowledge and feel, do justice to our proofs; acknowledge their force; and inquire, whether you have yet any thing further to object. Seek, examine, investigate. Is it not true, that bad habits become confirmed with age? Predominate in the heart? Take possession of all the intellectual powers, and transform themselves, so to speak, into our nature? Is it not true, that habits of piety are not acquired instantaneously, in a moment, by a sudden wish, and a simple emotion of the soul? Is it not true, that this detachment from sensible objects, this giving up the world, this self-denial, this

zeal, this fervour; these indispensable duties of religion, the essential characters of a Christian, is it not true that they are not the acquisitions of a moment, of an hour, of a day? Is it not true, that, to attain this happy state, there must be time, labour, and repeated endeavours; consequently, that a transient thought on a death-bed, and in the last periods of life, is quite inadequate to so great a work? Is it not true, that the Holy Spirit, in extending his assistance, requires that we should ask his aids, yield to his entreaties, and pay deference to an evangelical ministry? Is it not true, that he abandons to themselves those who resist his work; that it is thence concluded in the Scripture that we need his grace for our sanctification; and that we ought to work out our salvation with so much the more diligence? Is it not true, that mercy has restrictions and bounds, that it is promised to those only who conform to the covenant of grace, that those conditions are not a momentary repentance, a slight recourse to mercy, a superficial desire to participate in the merits of Christ's death; they imply such a total change, renovation of heart, and transformation of the soul, and in such sort, that when one is not in a state to conform to the conditions, we are no longer within the sphere of evangelical promises. Is it not true, in short, that those truths are not founded merely on arguments, on a chain of consequences, and remote principles? But they are demonstrated by sound and incontestable experience. Hence we ask you once more to admit the force of our arguments, and to do justice to the evidence we have adduced.

Thirdly, what we also require is, that you should acknowledge the inefficacy of sermons with regard to you, the little effect they commonly have, and consequently the little influence which ours (and especially those last delivered) have produced on your conduct. There is not a week, but some vice is attacked;—not a week, but some one ought to be corrected;—not a week, but some evident change ought to be produced in civil and religious society. And what do we see? I appeal to your consciences; you regard us as declaimers, called to entertain you for an hour, to diversify your pleasure, or to pass away the first day of the week; diverting your attention from secular concerns. It seems that we ascend our pulpits to afford you amusement, to delineate characters, implicitly submitting to your judgment, academic compositions; to say, "Come, come and see whether we have a fertile imagination, a fine voice, a graceful gesture, an action agreeable to your taste." With these detestable notions, most of you establish your tribunal, judging of the object of our sermons: which you sometimes find too long, sometimes too short, sometimes too cold, and sometimes too pathetic. Scarcely one among you turns them to their true design, purity of heart, and amendment of life. This is the success of the sermons you have heard. Should we think our discourses more happy? We should be too credulous did we expect it. It must be acknowledged, my brethren, that all we have said on the delay of conversion, has been of little avail with regard to most of you. Philosophy, religion, experience,—all leave you

much the same as you were before. This is the third thing you ought to confess.

When you have made these reflections, we will ask, what are your thoughts? What part will you take? What will you do? What will become of all the persons who compose this congregation? You know, on the one hand, that you are among the neglecters of salvation; you see, on the other, by evidences deduced from reason, Scripture, and experience, that those who thus delay, run the risk of never being converted. You are obliged to allow, that the most pathetic exhortations are addressed, in general without effect; and, meanwhile, time is urgent, life vanishes away; and the moment in which you yourselves must furnish a test of these sad truths, is just at hand. Do all these things make any impression on your minds? Do they give any stroke at the unhappy security in which you live? Do they trouble the false repose in which you rest? Have they any influence on your lives?

I know the part you are going to take; that, unable to think of them without horror, you are going to banish them from your mind, and efface them from your memory. You are going, on leaving this place, to fortify yourselves against this holy alarm, which has now, perhaps, been excited; you are going to talk of any subject but those important truths which have been preached, and to repose in indolence; to cause fear and trembling to subside, by banishing every idea which have excited them; like a man in a fatal sleep, while his house is on fire; we alarm him, we cry, "Rouse from your stupor, your house is on fire." He opens his eyes, he wishes to fly for safety; but falling again into his former lethargy, he becomes fuel to the flames.

My brethren, my very dear brethren, think, O think that the situation of your minds does not alter these grand truths. *You may forget them, but you cannot change them.* Whether you may think of them or not, they still subsist in all their force. You may indeed shut your eyes against the abyss which is under your feet; but you cannot remove it, you cannot avoid it, so long as you disregard our warnings, and resist our entreaties.

If your salvation is dear to you, if you have yet the least sensibility, the smallest spark of love to God—if you have not resolved on your own ruin, and sworn to your own destruction, enter into your hearts from this moment. Let each, from this moment, take salutary measures to subdue his predominant propensity. Withdraw not from this temple, without being firmly resolved on a change of life.

Consider that you were not sent into the world, to aggrandize and enrich yourselves; to form attachments which serve as unhappy ties to hold you on the earth; much less to scandalize the church, to be high-spirited, proud, imperious, unjust, voluptuous, avaricious. God has placed you here in a state of probation, that you might become prepared for a better world. Consider, that, though the distractions of life may frequently call a considerate man to be engaged in the world, in defiance of his wishes; yet there is nothing so unworthy as to be, like most of you, always dissipated, always devoted to pleasure. Consider, that though

this vacuity of life might be excused in a youth following the impulse of nature, before he has had time to reflect, yet games, diversions and theatres, do but ill accord with gray hairs; and that, at least, he should devote the remains of life, to the service of God, and the advancement of his own salvation.

Examine yourselves on these heads; let each make them the touchstone of his conduct; let him derive from them motives of reformation; let the time past suffice to have gratified his concupiscence; let him tremble on considering the wounds he has given his soul, and the dangers he has run, in delaying to the present hour.

Is it forty, fifty, or sixty years since I came into the world? What have I been doing? What account can I give of a period so precious? What virtues have I acquired? What wicked propensities have I subdued? What progress have I made in charity, in humility, and in all the virtues for which God has given me birth? Have not a thousand various passions divided the empire of my heart? Have they not all tended to enslave me? O miserable man! perhaps my day of grace is past: perhaps in future I may knock in vain at the door of mercy: perhaps I may be numbered with those of whom Christ says, "Many shall seek to enter in and shall not be able:" perhaps the insensibility I feel, and the resistance which my unhappy heart still makes, are the effects of divine vengeance: perhaps my time of visitation is past: perhaps God spares me only in life to make me a fearful example of the misery of those who delay conversion: perhaps it is to me he addresses that sentence, "Let him that is unjust be unjust still, and let him that is unholy be unholy still." But, perhaps I have yet a little time: perhaps God has spared me in life to afford me occasion to repair my past faults: perhaps he has brought me to-day into this church to pluck and save me from my misery: perhaps these emotions of my heart, these tears which run down mine eyes, are the effects of grace: perhaps these softening, this compunction, and these fears, are the voice which says, from God, "Seek ye my face:" perhaps this is the year of good-will; the accepted time; the day of salvation: perhaps, if I delay no longer, if I promote my salvation without delay, I may succeed in the work, and see my endeavours gloriously crowned.

O love of my Saviour, bowels of mercy, abyss of divine compassion! "O length, breadth, height, depth, of the love of God, which passeth knowledge!" resolve this weighty inquiry; calm the agitation of my mind; assure my fluttering soul. Yes, O my God, seeing thou hast spared me in life, I trust it is for salvation. Seeing thou seekest me still, I flatter myself it is for my conversion. Hence I assume new engagements, I ratify anew the covenant I have so often violated; I pledge to thee anew the vows I have so often broken.

If you act in this manner, your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord. For what is it that God requires of you? Why has he created you out of nothing? Why has he given you his Son? Why has he communicated to you his Holy Spirit? Is it to destroy you? Is it to

damn you? Are you so little acquainted with the Father of mercies, with the God of love? Does he take pleasure in the death of the sinner? Would he not rather that he should repent and live?

These are the consolations which follow the exhortations of the prophet, and the words of my text. For after having said, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near;" he draws this conclusion, to which I would lead you, which has been the design of these three discourses, and by which I would close the subject. "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." And, lest the penitent sinner should be overburdened with the weight of his sins,—lest, estimating the extent of divine mercy by his own contracted views, he should despair of salvation, I will add this declaration from God himself, a declaration which admirably expresses the grandeur of his compassion: "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways; for, as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my thoughts above your thoughts." Now to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be honour and glory for ever.—Amen.

SERMON LXXXII.

ON PERSEVERANCE.

HEBREWS xii. 1.

Wherefore, seeing we are also compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us; and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.

MY brethren, the Holy Spirit proposes to us in the words we have read, distinguished duties, excellent models, and wise precautions. "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us." These are the distinguished duties. "We are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses." These are the excellent models. "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us." These are the wise precautions.

I frankly acknowledge, my brethren, that on comparing the design of my text with the character of some among my hearers, I am in doubt whether I ought not to suspend the thread of my discourse; and whether the difficulty of success should not deter me from attempting the execution. We come to preach perseverance to men, of whom so great a number live in supineness, and to whom it is much more proper to say, *Return unto the testimonies of the Lord, than Continue to follow them.* We come to propose the most excellent models, the example of the Abrahams, the Moseses, the Davids, of whom so great a number hitherto propose to themselves, if I may so express myself, only negative models; I would say, who make it all their glory in not being altogether so bad as the worst of the human kind; they consider them-

selves in some sort as saints, when they can allege some one who surpasses them in wickedness. In short, we are going to prescribe the best precautions to people, who expose both their flanks to the enemy of their salvation; and who in the midst of beings, leagued for our everlasting ruin, live in the same security as if the profoundest peace prevailed, and as if they were walking in the only way which leads to eternal felicity.

Again, if it were only with regard to people of this character, for whom we have so just a cause to fear miscarrying, we ought to enrol ourselves in the little number, that associating ourselves among the disciples of wisdom, according to the example of Jesus Christ, we might hope to say to God as he did, "Behold me, and the children which God hath given me," Heb. ii. 13; Isa. viii. 18. But when I consider the limits in which the greatest saints among us include their virtues, the scanty bounds which comprise their duties, I am afraid they will revolt against the doctrine of my text. And you, who carry piety to the highest degree, are you fully prepared to enter into the spirit of the exhortation which St. Paul addresses you to-day? You, who on the pressing entreaties of Eternal Wisdom, which says, "give me thy heart," feel hard conflicts with yourselves not to bestow on an only son sentiments which you owe solely to the giver, you have not yet carried divine love to the most eminent degree: it is not enough that you inspire your son with the fear and love of God, you must acquire the disposition of the father of the faithful, who obeyed this command; "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and offer him for a burnt-offering," Gen. xxii. 2. You who, rather than abjure the truth, have sacrificed one part of your fortune, you have not carried divine love to the highest degree; you must acquire the disposition of those extraordinary men, some of whom were stoned for religion, others were sawn asunder, others were killed with the sword, others wandered about in sheep-skins, and in goat-skins, others were afflicted and tormented. These are the grand models, on which St. Paul wished to form the piety of the Hebrews, when he addressed them in the words of my text: it is on the same models we would wish to-day to form your piety. "Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us: and let us run with patience the race that is set before us."

These words may be considered in two different points of view; the one respects the Hebrews, to whom they were addressed, the other respects the whole Christian community.

I. They have peculiar references to the Hebrews, to whom they were addressed. These Hebrews had embraced the Christian religion, at a time of general exclamation against the Christians. They were very sincere in the profession of Christianity; but there is a difference between sincerity, and the constancy to which the disciples of Jesus Christ are called, particularly when the church seems abandoned to the fury of its persecutors. The grand design of the apostle in this epistle, was to inspire them with this constancy, and to prevent the fear of

punishments from causing them to fall into apostacy.

This design is apparent, from the illustrious character he gives of the Lord Christ, to whom they had devoted themselves by embracing the Christian religion. He is not a mere man, not an ordinary prophet, not an angel; but the Lord of men, and of angels. "For God," says the apostle at the commencement of this epistle, "who spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds. Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels, said he, at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?" Heb. i. 1—5.

This design is farther apparent, as the apostle apprizes the Hebrews concerning the difficulty, and even the impossibility of obtaining mercy after an abjuration accompanied with certain aggravating circumstances, which time does not permit me here to enumerate. The sense is asserted in these words: "It is impossible for those, who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted of the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they fall away to renew them again unto repentance," Heb. vi. 4—6. To "fall away," here signifies, not the repetition of a criminal habit we had hoped to reform, (and who could expect salvation if this were the meaning of the apostle?) but professing again the errors we had renounced on becoming Christians, and abjuring Christianity itself.

This design appears likewise, from the care the apostle takes to exalt the Christian economy above that of Moses: hence he infers, that if the smallest offences, committed against the Levitical economy, were punished with rigour, there cannot be punishments too severe for those who shall have the baseness to abjure Christianity. "If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries," Heb. x. 26, 27. The sin into which we wilfully fall, does not mean those relapses, of which we spake just now, as the ancient fathers believed: whose severity was much more calculated to precipitate apostates into the abyss from which they wished to save them, than to preserve them from it. But to sin wilfully, in this place signifies apostacy; this is the sense of the words which immediately follow the passage. "He that despised Moses' law, died without mercy, under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" Heb. x. 28, 29. The whole is descriptive of apostacy. The Jews,

having prevailed with any of their nation, who had embraced Christianity to return to Judaism, were not satisfied with their abusing it; they required them to utter blasphemies against the person of Jesus, and against his mysteries, as appears from the ancient forms of abjuration which the learned have preserved.

All these considerations, and many more, of which the subject is susceptible, demonstrate, that the grand design of St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, was to prevent apostacy, and to prompt them to confess the truth amidst the most cruel torments to which they might be exposed by the profession. This is the design of my text. "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us; that is, let neither persecutions the most severe, nor promises the most specious, be able to induce you to deny Christianity, nor any consideration deter you from professing it.

On this first design of the apostle, we shall merely conjure those, with whom there may remain some doubt as to the horrors of apostacy, and the necessity imposed on all Christians either to leave the places which prohibit the profession of the truth, or endure the severest tortures for religion; we shall conjure them seriously to reflect on what we advance; not to content themselves with general notions; to compare the situation of those Hebrews with that in which some of the reformed Christians are placed; to compare the abjurations required of the first, with those required of the latter; the punishments inflicted on the one, with those inflicted on the other; and the directions St. Paul gave the faithful of his own time, with those which are given to us. If, after sober and serious investigation, we still find casuists who doubt the doctrine, by affirming, that those of our brethren, who still remain in France, ought to make their choice, between flight and martyrdom, we will add no more; feeling ourselves unable to persuade men, with whom arguments so strong are incapable of conviction.

Perhaps some of you think, that we insist too often on the same subjects. But we frankly avow, that, so very far from thinking we preach too often, it seems to us we by no means resume them sufficiently. We are also fully resolved to insist upon them more powerfully than we have ever done before. Yes! while we shall see the incendiaries of the Christian world, men, who under the name of the meek and lowly Jesus cherish the most ambitious and barbarous sentiments, holding the reins of government in so large a space of Europe, *making drunk*, if I may use an expression in the Revelation, and an expression by no means hyperbolic, "making drunk the kings of the earth with the wine of their fornication:" while we shall see edicts issued anew, which have so often made to blush every one who has a vestige of probity in the community from which they proceed; while we shall see fresh faggots kindled, new gibbets erected, additional galleys equipped against the Protestants; while we see our unhappy brethren invariably negligent to the present period in which they promised to give glory to God, alleging, as an excuse, the severity of the persecution, and the fury of the persecutors; that when peace shall be restored to the churches, they will return to devotion; while we see a

million of men bearing the Christian name, contenting themselves to live without temple, without public worship, without sacraments, without hope of having on their death-beds the aids of ministers of the living God to comfort them against that terrific period; while we shall see fathers and mothers, so very far from sending into the land of liberty the children, whom they have had the weakness to retain in the climates of oppression, have even the laxity, shall I say, or the insanity to recall those who have had courage to fly; while we shall see exiles looking back with regret to the onions of Egypt, envying the condition of those who have sacrificed the dictates of conscience to fortune: while we shall see those lamentable objects, we will still enforce the doctrine of St. Paul in the epistle whence we have selected the text. We will still enforce the expressions of the apostle, and in the sense already given. "Take heed, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.—It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted of the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves afresh the Son of God, and put him to an open shame. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for 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. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace." And in our text, "Seeing we also." To what do these words refer? To what the apostle had said a little before respecting the faithful, who, for the sake of religion, "had been stoned, had been sawn asunder, had been killed with the sword:" after enumerating these, he adds, "Seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us run with patience the race that is set before us."

2. Enough having been said concerning the first sense of the text which regards but few Christians, we shall proceed to the second; which concerns the whole body of Christians, who are still in a world which endeavours to detach them from the communion of Jesus Christ. St. Paul exhorts them to "run with patience the race that is set before them;" that is, to persevere in fellowship with him. Perseverance is a Christian virtue. On this virtue shall turn the whole of our discourse, which shall be comprised under four classes of observations.

I. We shall remove what is equivocal in the term *perseverance*, or *running the race*.

II. We shall enforce the necessity of perseverance.

III. We shall remove certain systematical notions which excite confusion in this virtue.

IV. We shall point to the different classes of persons who compose this congregation, the various consequences they should draw from this doctrine, and the sentiments with which it should actuate their minds.

I. We shall remove what is equivocal in the term *perseverance*, and in the expression, "let us run with patience the race that is set before us." We may take the term in a double sense; or, to express myself more clearly, there are two ways in which we may consider the course Jesus Christ prescribed to his disciples. We will call the first, losing the habit of Christianity; and the second, doing actions incompatible with its design. By the habit of Christianity, we mean that disposition of a believer, in consequence of which, notwithstanding the weakness he may feel in virtue;—the defects with which he may have cause to reproach himself;—and the daily warfare between the flesh and the Spirit, or even some victories which the flesh may obtain over the mind;—all things considered, he gives God the preference to the world and the flesh; and has a consciousness in his own breast, that divine love prevails in his heart over every other love.—We may also turn aside from the course prescribed by Jesus Christ to his disciples, by doing things incompatible with the design of Christianity. It would discover a defective knowledge of man to conclude, that he has lost a habit the moment he does any action contrary to it. One act of dissipation no more constitutes a habit of dissipation, than a single duty of piety constitutes the habit of piety; and we have no more reason for inferring, that, because a man has discovered one instance of attachment to the world, he is really earthly-minded, than we have to say, that, because a man has discharged a single duty of piety, he is really a pious man. In what sense then, does the Holy Spirit exhort us to persevere? Is he wishful to preserve us from doing any thing incompatible with the design of Christianity? Is he wishful to preserve us from losing the habit?

Doubtless, my brethren, his design is to preserve us from doing any thing contrary to the object of Christianity; because it is by a repetition of this sort of actions that we lose what is called the habit of Christianity. That disposition of mind, however, which induces a Christian to fortify himself against every temptation, is a mean rather to obtain the virtue which our Scriptures called perseverance, than perseverance itself. When we say, according to inspired men, that, in order to be saved, we must endure to the end, we do not mean, that we should never in the course of life have committed a single fault; but that, notwithstanding any fault we have committed, we must be in the state just mentioned; that, all things being considered, we give God the preference over sensible objects, and feel divine love in our hearts predominant over every other love. Where indeed should we be, if we could not be saved without undeviating perseverance, without running with patience the race in the rigorous sense, I would say, so as never to commit an action incompatible with the design of Christianity? Where should we be, were God to scrutinize our life with

rigour; if he waited only for the first offence we commit, to plunge us into the abyss reserved for the wicked? Where would be the Jobs, the Moseses, the Davids, and all those distinguished offenders, whose memory the Holy Spirit has immortalized, to comfort us under our falls? One of the greatest motives to comply with a law is the lenity of the legislator: I will cite on this subject a passage of Justin Martyr.* "How could Plato," says he, "censure Homer for ascribing to the Gods placability by the oblation of victims? Those who have this hope, are the very persons who endeavour to recover themselves by repentance and reformation: whereas, when they consider the Deity as an inexorable being, they abandon the reins to corrupt propensities, having no expectation of effect from repentance."

Distinguish then the virtue we enforce from one of the principal means of its acquisition. If you ask me what is perseverance? I answer, it is that disposition of mind which enables us, as I have more than once affirmed, and which is still necessary to repeat; it is that disposition of mind which enables us, all things considered, to give God the preference over every sensible object, that divine love may predominate in our heart over every other love. If you ask me, what are the surest means of acquiring that disposition? I say, it is to watch against every temptation to which you may be exposed. I say, in order to preserve the habit of Christianity, you must use your utmost endeavours never to do any thing incompatible with its design.

II. Having removed the ambiguity of the term *perseverance*, we shall prove in the second article that we cannot be saved without this virtue.

1. The passage we have explained is not solitary. It is a passage which coincides with many other texts of Scripture. The truth, resulting from the sense here given, is not a truth substantiated solely by the text. It is an explanation which a great number of express texts establish beyond the possibility of doubt. Weigh the following: "Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall," 1 Cor. x. 12. "Thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold, therefore, the goodness and the severity of God: on them which fall severity; but towards thee goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off," Rom. xi. 20—22. "I have heard the voice of the words of this people, which they have spoken unto thee: they have well said all that they have spoken. O that there were such a heart in them, that they would fear me, that it might be well with them, and their children for ever," Deut. v. 28, 29. "He that endureth unto the end shall be saved," Matt. x. 22. "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown," Rev. iii. 11. "Thou son of man, say unto the children of thy people, the righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression: as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turneth from his wickedness; neither shall the righteous be able to live for

his righteousness in the day that he sinneth. When I say to the righteous, that he shall surely live: if he trust to his righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousness shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed he shall die," Ezek. iii. xviii. xxxiii. 12, 13. Such is the morality of our Scriptures. Such is the vocation of the faithful. It is not enough that we keep, for a few years, the commandments of God; we must continue to keep them. It is not enough that we triumph for awhile over the old man, we must triumph to the end; and if we have wandered by weakness for a season, we must steadfastly return to piety and religion.

2. Consider on what principle the Scripture characters founded their assurance of salvation. Was it on some speculative notions? On some confused systems? No: it has been on the principle of persevering in the profession of their religion, and in the practice of virtue. I will adduce but one example, which seems to me above all exception: it is he, who, of all the sacred authors, has furnished us with the most conclusive arguments on the doctrine of assurance of salvation, and the inamissibility of grace; I would say, the example of St. Paul. He never doubted but that he should always persevere in piety, and in the profession of religion. The love of God was so deeply rooted in the heart of this apostle, as to remove all scruple on that head. When, however, St. Paul, by abstraction of mind, considered himself as having lost the disposition which we shall call the habit of Christianity;—when he considered himself as falling under the temptations which exposed him to the flesh, to hell, and the world;—what did he expect considering his state in this point of view? What did he expect after the acquisition of so much knowledge; after preaching so many excellent sermons; after writing so many excellent and catholic epistles; after working so many miracles; after achieving so many labours; after encountering so many dangers; after enduring so many sufferings to exalt the glory of Christ; after setting so high an example to the church? What did he expect after all this? Paradise? The crown of righteousness? No: he expected hell and damnation. Did he expect that his past virtues would obtain the remission of his present defects? No: he expected that his past virtues would aggravate his present faults. "I count not myself to have apprehended," Phil. iii. 13. "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached unto others, I myself should be a cast-away," 1 Cor. ix. 27. In what situation did he place himself to lay hold of the crown of righteousness, and to obtain the prize? He placed himself at the close of his course. It was at the termination of life, that this athletic man exclaimed, "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.

3. Consider what have been the sentiments of the most distinguished Scripture characters, when they recollect themselves in those awful moments, in which, after they had so far offended against divine love as to suppose the habit lost, or when their piety was so far

* Ad Græcos exhort. p. 28. Ed. Colon.

eclipsed as to suppose it was vanished. Did they oppose their past virtues to their present faults? Hear those holy men: "O Lord, heal me; for my bones are vexed: my soul is also sore vexed," Ps. vi. 2. "Mine iniquities are gone over my head, as a heavy burden: they are too heavy for me," Ps. xxxviii. "I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me," Ps. li. 3—11. "Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. Cast me not away from thy presence; restore me unto the joy of thy salvation. Will the Lord cast off for ever? And will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" Ps. lxx. 8—10. What ideas do these words excite in your minds? Is it the presumptuous confidence which some men, unhappily called Christians, evince after committing the foulest offences? Are these the sentiments merely of an individual, who by a simple emotion of generosity and gratitude, reproaches himself for having insulted his benefactor? Or are they sorrows arising in the soul from the fears of being deprived of those favours in future? Magnanimous sentiments, doubtless are found in the characters of those distinguished saints. A repentance, founded solely on the fear of hell, can never obtain a pardon: it may do well enough for a disciple of Loyola; but not for a disciple of Jesus Christ. It is respect for order; it is the love of God; it is sorrow for having offended a being we sincerely love, which is the basis of true repentance. It is fully apparent that the expressions you have heard, are the language of a soul persuaded of this truth, that we cannot obtain salvation without persevering till death in the habit of holiness, which it fears to have lost. They are the language of a soul, which reproaches itself, not only for a deviation from order, but which fears, lest it should have forfeited its salvation.

4. Consider the absurdities, arising from the opinion we attack. The commencement of a life, sincerely consecrated to the service of God, is a sufficient barrier against all the fears arising from crimes with which it may in the issue be defiled. The children of God can never fall from grace. And none but the children of God can be sincerely consecrated to him in the early period of life. On this principle, I will frame you a system of religion the most relaxed, accommodating, and easy, even at the bar of corruption the most obstinate and inveterate. Consecrate sincerely to God a single hour of life. Distinguish by some virtue the sincerity of that early period. Then write with a pen of iron on a tablet of marble and brass, that, In such a day, and in such an hour, I had the marks of a true child of God. After that, plunge headlong into vice; run unbridled with the children of this world to the same excess of riot: give yourself no concern about your passions; if the horrors of this state should excite any doubts of your salvation, comfort yourself against the anathemas of legal preachers; comfort yourself against remorse of conscience, by casting your eyes on this tablet of brass and marble;—monuments of

the inamissibility of your faith, and sure pledges of your salvation. But, my brethren, was this indeed the system of those saints of whom we have spoken? They were not more convinced of this principle, that a sincerely good man cannot fall from grace, than of this which follows: that a man who cannot fall from grace, cannot fall from piety. They have trembled on doing an action contrary to piety; fearing lest the habit was lost.

5. In a word, our last proof of the necessity of perseverance is founded on the necessity of progressive religion. It is a proposition already established on other occasions, that there is no precise point of virtue, at which we are allowed to stop. If a man should take for his model one of the faithful, whose piety is least of all suspected: if a man should propose to himself so fine a model, and there restrict his attainment, saying, *I will go so far, and no farther*: such a one would have mistaken notions of religion. The Christian model is Jesus Christ. Perfection is the sole object of a Christian; and, the weaker he feels himself in its acquisition, the more should he redouble his exertions to approach it. Every period of life has its task assigned. The duties of youth will not dispense with those of riper age; and the duties of riper age will not dispense with those of retiring life. "Be ye perfect as your Father who is in heaven is perfect," Matt. v. 48. This is the command of Jesus Christ. "Be perfect," 2 Cor. xiii. 11. This is the precept of St. Paul. What do you infer from this principle? If we are condemned for not having advanced, what shall we be for having backslidden? If we are condemned for not having carried virtuous attainments to a more eminent degree, what shall we be for having de-based them to a degree so far below the standard?

III. But a doctrine of our churches seems to frustrate all our endeavours to prompt you to perseverance, and to warn you that salvation is reserved solely for those who do persevere. It is this. We fully believe, that the most illustrious saints were guilty of offences, directly opposed to Christianity; but we profess to believe, that it was impossible they should lose the habit. We conceive indeed the propriety of exhorting them not to commit those faults which it is impossible they should commit. But why exhort them not to lose a habit which they cannot lose? Where is the propriety of alarming them with a destruction on the brink of which grace shall make them perfect? This is the difficulty we wish to solve; and this is the design of our third head.

But I would indeed wish to illustrate the subject without reviving the controversies it has excited. I would wish conformably to the views of a Christian (from which especially a gospel minister should never deviate,) to associate as far as the subject will admit, peace and truth. If the wish is not chimerical, we cannot, I think, better succeed, than by availing ourselves of a point unanimously allowed by the divines divided on this subject, in order to harmonize what seems calculated still to divide them.

It is a received maxim in every system, I would say, in every system of those who are divided on the doctrine of the inamissibility of

grace; that, to preserve the habit of holiness, without which they unanimously agree, we cannot be saved, we must use all the means prescribed in the sacred Scripture to preserve so valuable a disposition. Divines, whom difference of opinion has irritated against one another, reciprocally accuse their brethren of weakening this principle; but there is not one among them who does not sincerely embrace it, and complain of the reproach, when charged with having rejected it. Those who exclaim against the doctrine of the inamissibility of grace, are so far from rejecting it, that they pretend to be the only persons who establish it upon a sure foundation; and maintain that it cannot exist in systems opposed to the first. They say, that the doctrine of the inamissibility of grace is so far from opposing this principle, that it constitutes its foundation. And who among the advocates for this doctrine, ever affirmed that we can preserve the grace of perseverance, if we frequent the haunts of infamy; if we keep company with persons who tempt us to adultery and voluptuousness, and so with regard to other virtues? This then is a principle such as I would seek. It is a principle inculcated by every system, that in order to retain the habit of holiness, without which it is impossible to be saved, we must use all the means pointed out in the sacred Scriptures for the preservation of such an individual temper of mind.

This being granted, it is requisite in every system, to represent the calamities we incur by losing the habit of holiness, because it is the dread of incurring the calamities consequent on our fall, which the Scriptures point out as the most usual and powerful preservatives from apostasy. Hence they exhort us to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling." Hence they make one part of a good man's happiness to consist in *fearing always*. Hence they require us to *rejoice with trembling*. Each of you may collect a variety of parallel passages.

Our divines, to illustrate this subject, have sometimes employed a comparison, which, in my opinion, is well calculated to answer their purpose. It is that of a wise man at the top of a tower, who has all the necessary means of preserving himself from falling into the abyss open to his view. We may properly say, it is impossible such a man should fall. Why? Because, being a prudent man, and having all the necessary means, it is impossible his prudence should not prompt him to avail himself of their support. But in what consists one part of this means of safety? It is the faculty suggested by his prudence, of knowing, and never forgetting the risk he runs, should he neglect the means of safety. Thus fear, so circumstanced, is one part of his safety, and his safety is inseparable from his fear. The application of this comparison is easy; every one may make it without difficulty. It is sufficient, not indeed to remove all the difficulties of which the loss of grace is susceptible; but to answer the objection I have made of its being useless, on a supposition of the impossibility of falling from grace, to warn a real Christian of the calamities he may incur, should he lose his habit of piety.

IV. Three classes of people have consequences to deduce from the doctrine we have now advanced. We first address ourselves to those who seem least of all interested; I would say, those who have no cause to fear falling from grace; not because they are established, but because they never entertained the sincere resolutions of conversion. If people of this description would pay serious attention to their state; if they would read the Scriptures with recollection; if they would listen to our sermons with a real, not a vague and superficial design of reducing them to practice, I think the doctrine we have delivered would rouse them from their indolence; I think it would hinder them from going so intensely into the world, on withdrawing from devotion, as not to hear the voice of their conscience. What! the people of whom we speak should say, What! Christians of the first class; what! those distinguished saints who have devoted the whole of their life to duty; what! those who have "wrought out their salvation with fear and trembling;" can they promise themselves nothing from past efforts? What! are all the sacrifices they have made for Christianity useless, unless they persevere in piety; and, for having failed to run only a few steps of their course, will they fail of obtaining the prize promised to those only who finish the whole? And I, miserable wretch, who am so far from being the first of saints, that I am the chief of sinners;—I, who am so far from having run the race which Christ has set before his disciples, as to have put it far away;—I, who have been so far from working out my salvation, as to have laboured only by slander, by calumny, by perjury, by blasphemy, by fornication, by adultery, by drunkenness;—I, who have done nothing but obstruct the work, yet I am composed, I am tranquil! Whence proceeds this peace? Does it not proceed solely from this circumstance, that, my sins having constrained the Deity to prepare the sentence of my eternal condemnation, he has (among the calamities prepared for me by his justice,) the fatal condescension to make me become sensible of my misery, lest I should anticipate my condemnation, by the dreadful torments which the certainty of being damned would excite in my soul. Oh, dreadful calm! fatal peace! tranquillity to which despair itself is preferable, if there be any thing preferable in despair! Oh! rather, thou sword of divine vengeance, brandish before my eyes all thy terrors! Array in battle against me all the terrors of the mighty God, as in the awful day of judgment; and striking my soul with the greatness of my misery, give me, at least, if there be time, to emancipate myself! If there be yet time? And, if there be *not* time, why do you yet breathe? Why are there still open to you the gates of this temple? Why is the gospel still preached, if it is not that you may be recollected; if it is not that you may renounce the principles of your past folly; if it is not that you may yield to calls of grace, which publish to you the consoling declarations of the merciful God? "When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right; if the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he hath

robbed, walk in the statutes of life without committing iniquity, he shall surely live, he shall not die. None of his sins that he hath committed, shall be mentioned unto him," Ezek. xxxiii. 14—16.

A second sort of people, who ought to derive serious instruction from the words of my text, is those visionaries; who, while engaged in the habit of hating their neighbours, of fornication, of revenge, or in one or the other of those vices, of which the Scripture says, "they that do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God," fancy themselves to be in a state of grace, and believe they shall ever abide in that state, provided they never doubt of the work. People of this character,—whether it be that they have fallen into the hands of Antinomian guides, one of the greatest plagues with which justice punishes the crimes of men, and one of the most awful pests of the church; or whether it be the effect of those passions, which, in general, so fascinate the mind, as to prevent their seeing the most evident truths opposed to their system; but people of this class presumptuously apply to themselves the doctrine of the inamissibility of grace, at the time when we display the arm of God ready to pour the thunder of its vengeance upon their heads. But know, once for all, it is not to you that the inamissibility of grace belongs. Whether a true saint may fall, or whether he may not fall, it is the same thing with regard to you; and your corruption will gain nothing by the decision: for if the true saint may fall, I have cause to conclude that you are already fallen; since, notwithstanding the regeneration you pretend to have received, you now have no marks of real saints; and if a real saint cannot fall, I have cause to conclude that you were deluded in the notions you had formed of yourselves with regard to conversion. I have reason to believe that you never were true saints, because I see with my own eyes, that you no longer sustain the character. Here is the abridgement of the controversy. Here is a decision of the question between us. But if it do not agree with your systems, preserve those systems carefully; preserve them to the great day, when the Lord shall render unto every man according to his works; and endeavour,—endeavour in the presence of the Judge of all the earth, to defend your depravity by your opinions.

There is yet a third class of people, who ought to make serious reflections on the doctrine of perseverance. It is those who carry the consequences to an extreme; who, from a notion that they must endure to the end of their course to be saved, persuade themselves that they cannot be assured of their salvation till they come to that period. It is not to ministers who maintain so detestable a notion, that this article is addressed. It is not to captious, but to tender minds, and those tender minds who are divided between the exalted ideas they entertain of duty, and the fears of deviation. Fear, holy souls; but sanctify your fear. Entertain exalted views of your duty; but let those exalted views be a sure test that you will never deviate; and, while you never lose sight of the difficulties with which the race Christ has set before you is accompanied, never lose

sight of those objects which he has set before you, in order that you may be enabled to surmount them.

A Christian is supported in his course by the very nature of the difficulties which occur. These are many, and we shall have occasion to enumerate them in a subsequent discourse. But, with discerning Christians, all these things may promote the end they seem to oppose, and realize the words of St. Paul, that "all things work together for good to them that love God," Rom. viii. 28. One of those difficulties, for instance, to which a Christian is exposed in his race, is adversity; but adversity is so far from obstructing him in his course, as to become an additional motive to pursue it with delight; and to assist him in taking an unreluctant flight towards the skies. Another difficulty is prosperity; but prosperity assists him to estimate the goodness of God, and induces him to infer, that if his happiness here be so abundant, what must it be in the mansions of felicity, seeing he already enjoys so much in these abodes of misery. Another of those difficulties is health; which, by invigorating the body, strengthens the propensity to sin; but health, by invigorating the body, strengthens him also for the service of God. So it is with every obstruction.

A Christian is supported in his course, by those unspeakable joys which he finds in the advancement of his progress; by "the peace which passeth all understanding;" by the serenity of justification; by an anticipated resurrection; by a foretaste of paradise and glory, which descend into his soul, before he himself is exalted to heaven.

A Christian is supported in his course (as we have already intimated in this sermon,) by the consideration even of those torments, to which he would be exposed if he should come short. The patriarch Noah trembled, no doubt, on seeing the cataracts of heaven let loose, and the fountains of the great deep broke open, and the angry God execute his threatening, "I will destroy man whom I have created, from off the face of the earth; both man and beast, for it repenteth me that I have made them," Gen. vi. 7. But this fear apprised him of his privilege, being exempt in the ark from the universal desolation; which induced him to abide in his refuge.

A Christian is supported in his course by supernatural aid, which raise him above the powers of nature; which enable him to say, "when I am weak, then I am strong;" and to exclaim in the midst of conflicts, "blessed be God which always causeth us to triumph in Christ," 2 Cor. ii. 14. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me," Phil. iv. 13.

A Christian is supported in his course by the confidence he has of succeeding in the work in which he is engaged, and of holding out to the end. And where is the man in social life, who can have the like assurance with regard to the things of this world? Where is the general, who can assure himself of success by the dispositions he may make to obtain the victory? Where is the statesman, who can assure himself of warding off every blow which threatens the nation? The Christian,—the Christian

alone has this superior assurance. I fear nothing but your heart; answer me with your heart; answer me with your sincerity, and I will answer you for all the rest.

A Christian is supported in his course, above all, by the grandeur of the salvation with which he is to be crowned. What shall I say, my dear brethren, on the grandeur of this salvation? That I have not the secret of compressing into the last words of a discourse, all the traits of an object, the immensity of which shall absorb our thoughts and reflections to all eternity?

With such vast support, shalt thou, timorous soul, still be agitated with those distressing fears which discourage wicked men from entering on the course prescribed by Jesus Christ to his disciples? "Fear not, thou worm Jacob, for I am with thee. Thy Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel. They that are for us, are more than all they that are against us," 2 Kings, vi. 16. "When thou passest through the waters, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned," Isa. xliii. 2. To this adorable Deity, who opens to us so fine a course, who affords us such abundant means for its completion, be honour, glory, empire, and magnificence, now and ever. Amen.

SERMON LXXXIII.

ON THE EXAMPLE OF THE SAINTS.

PART I.

HEBREWS xii. 1.

Wherefore, seeing we are also compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us; and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.

THERE are few persons so very depraved, as not to admire the line of life prescribed by religion; but there are few sufficiently virtuous to follow it, or even to consider it in any other light than as a grand scheme captivating to an enlightened mind, but to which it is impossible to conform. To inquire, as soon as we are capable of reflection, what is the Being who gave us birth, to yield to a world of arguments which attest his existence and perfections; to join the consort of creation which publishes his glory; to devote one's self to him to whom we are indebted for all our comforts; and on whom all our hopes depend; to make continual efforts to pierce those veils which conceal him from our view, to seek a more concise and sure way of knowing him than that of nature; to receive revelation with avidity; to adore the characters of divine perfections which it traces; to take them for a rule of life; to sigh on deviation from those models of perfection, and repair, by reinvigorated efforts of virtue, whatever faults one may have committed against virtue, is the line of life prescribed by religion. And who so far depraved, as not to admire it? But who is so virtuous as to follow it, or even to believe that it can be followed? We look upon it, for the most part, as we do the notions

of an ancient philosopher respecting government. The principles, on which he established his system of politics, have appeared admirable, and the consequences he has deduced, have appeared like streams pure as their source. God, in creating men, says this philosopher, gave them all means of preservation from the miseries which seem appendant to their condition: and they have but themselves to blame if they neglected to profit by them. His bounty has supplied them with resources, to terminate the evils into which they fell by choice. Let them return to the practice of truth and virtue, from which they have deviated, and they shall find that felicity to which nothing but virtue and truth can conduct society. Let the states elect a sovereign like the God who governed in the age of innocence; let them obey the laws of God. Let kings and subjects enter into the same views of making each other mutually happy. The whole world has admired this fine notion; but they have only admired it: and regard it merely as a system. The princes and the people, to whom this philosopher wrote, are as yet unborn; hence we commonly say, *the republic of Plato*, when we wish to express a beautiful chimera. I blush to avow it, but truth extorts it from me, that this is the notion most men entertain of religion. They make its very beauty an argument for its neglect, and their own weakness an apology for the repugnance they feel in submitting to its laws: this is precisely the temper we propose to attack. We will prove, by evident facts, and by experience, which is consequently above all exception, that however elevated above the condition of man the scheme of religion may appear, it is a scheme which may be followed, seeing it has been followed already.

To this point we shall direct the subsequent part of our discourse on the text we have read. We have divided it into three parts;—distinguished duties,—excellent models,—and wise precautions. Of distinguished duties, "let us run with patience the race that is set before us," we have treated in our first discourse. Of wise precautions, "let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us," we hope to treat in a succeeding sermon. Of excellent models, "seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses," we shall speak to-day. Happy, if struck with so many heroic actions, about to be set before your eyes, you may be led to follow them, and to augment this cloud of witnesses, of whom the Holy Spirit himself has not disdained to make the eulogium. Happy, if we may say of you, as we now say of them, by faith they repelled the wisdom of this world; by faith they triumphed over the charms of concupiscence; by faith they endured the most cruel torments; by faith they conquered the celestial Jerusalem, which was the vast reward of all their conflicts. Amen.

"Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us run with patience the race which is set before us." What is this cloud, or multitude, of which the apostle speaks? The answer is not equivocal, they are the faithful enumerated in the preceding chapter. Of what were they

witnesses? Of that important truth, with which he would impress the minds of the Hebrews, and which alone was capable of supporting the expectation of martyrdom, that God "is the rewarder of all them that diligently seek him;" that how great soever the sacrifices may be we make for him, we shall be amply recompensed by his equity, or by his love: the faithful have witnessed this, not only by their professions, but by their conduct; some by sacrifices which cost the most to flesh and blood; some by abandoning their riches; others by devoting their lives. Happily this eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, is clearly known even to the less instructed of our hearers; this may supply our weakness, and the brevity of these exercises in making an analysis. We shall however run over it, remarking whatever may most contribute to illustrate the subject.

The first thing which not a little surprises us, is, that St. Paul has equally brought together, as models, men who seem to have been not only of very different, but of very opposite conduct. How could he class Samson, the slave of a prostitute: how could he class Rahab, of whom it is doubtful at least, whether she did not practice the most infamous of all professions: how could he put those two persons on a parallel with Joseph, who has been held up to all ages, not only as a model, but as the martyr for chastity? How could he place Jephthah, the oppressor of Ephraim, whom we deem worthy of censure for the most distinguished action of all his life; I would say the devotion of his only daughter, whether in sacrifice or celibacy, a question not to be examined here; how could he class this man in a rank with Abraham, who was ready to immolate his son at the divine command; with Abraham the most humane of conquerors, who made this magnanimous reply to the officers of an alliance he had received, "I have lift up my hand unto the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take from thee a thread even to a shoe-latchet, and I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldst say, I have made Abraham rich?" Gen. xiv. 22, 23. How could he put Gideon, who availed himself of the spoils of Midian by the supernatural aids of Heaven, to make an ephod, and to turn away the Israelites from the worship of the true God, on a scale with Moses, who "preferred affliction with the people of God, to the pleasures of sin which are but for a season?" Heb. xi. 25. I have too much reason to be convinced, that many of my hearers would wish to follow models of this description. I have too much reason to be convinced, that many would delight in a faith like that of Samson, like that of Jephthah, like that of Gideon. Without adopting or rejecting the solutions usually given of this difficulty, here is what may be replied.

You should keep in view, the design of St. Paul in placing this group of personages before the Hebrews. He would animate them with that faith, which as we expressed ourselves relying on the apostle's principles; that faith which persuades us, that how great soever the sacrifices may be we make for God,

we shall be rewarded by his equity, or by his love. Faith thus taken in its vaguest and most extended view, ought to be restricted to those particular circumstances in which it was exercised, and according to the particular kind of promises which it embraced, or, not losing sight of obedience, in regard to those particular kinds of sacrifice which God requires us to make. One man is called to march at the head of armies to defend an oppressed nation. God promises to reward his courage with victory. The man believes, he fights, he conquers. The object of his faith in this particular circumstance, is the promise I have mentioned; I am right then in defining faith as St. Paul, when he says, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," Heb. xi. 1. It is that disposition of heart, in approaching God, which enables us to believe, that he "is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him." By faith the man of whom I spoke obtained the victory.

But I will adduce the case of another, called to suffer martyrdom for religion. The particular objects of his faith in the case I have supposed, are the promises of salvation. I am right in defining faith as it is defined by St. Paul, when he says, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." It is that disposition of mind which enables him in approaching God, to believe that "he is the rewarder of all them that diligently seek him." By faith the man of whom I spoke obtained salvation.

You perceive, I flatter myself, in the first case I have adduced, that if the general persuasion this man had, that God "is the rewarder of all them that diligently seek him," did not embrace for its object all the promises of salvation, nor induce him to make all the sacrifices his salvation required; he is worthy however of imitation in this instance, his faith having embraced the particular promise which had been given him: and it is evident, if I do not know any thing of this man's life, except that his faith having been sufficiently strong for a particular sacrifice, I may presume what I cannot prove, it would have been adequate for every other sacrifice required by his salvation.

The doctrine discussed being considered, not only obviates the difficulty proposed, but satisfies the scruple which may be made concerning some of the saints whose example is proposed as a pattern by St. Paul.

Do you ask, why St. Paul arranges in the same class, and proposes as equal models, personages so distinguished by virtue, and others by vice? I answer, that whatever distance there might have been between the different personages, they are all worthy of imitation in regard to what is excellent in those instances to which the apostle refers.

But if you ask whether the faith which induced Samson, Jephthah, and Gideon, to make some particular sacrifices for God, prompted them to make every sacrifice which their salvation required? we answer, that whatever favourable presumption charity ought to inspire, no man is authorised to answer the question in the affirmative; for seeing some are found who have performed the first miracles of faith

without performing the second, we ought not to be confident that those doubtful characters performed the second because they ably performed the first.

But if you exclaim against this opinion, I will add, not only that Jesus Christ has affirmed he will say to many in the great day, who had miraculous faith, "I know you not;" but we have proof that many of those, whose example the apostle has adduced in the eleventh chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, were detestable characters, notwithstanding their endowment of miraculous faith. Here is our proof: St. Paul has arranged in the class of those whose faith he extols, all the Israelites who passed through the Red Sea. Now, it is evident that a vast proportion of these were detestable men; then, draw yourselves the consequence. And here you have the reason of St. Paul's having happily proposed to the Hebrews, the examples of the miracles achieved by the faith of those whom I call doubtful characters. Those miracles were admirably calculated to encourage the minds of the Hebrews, and to imbolden their purposes of making distinguished sacrifices for religion: but you have the reason, also, of his not being satisfied with merely setting before them those examples. You have the reason of his not being satisfied with setting before him the example of a faith, concerning which the Scriptures are silent, if it had only particular promises for its object; he sets before them the example of those saints, whose faith had particularly in view the promises of eternal felicity. But were there, indeed, among those saints enumerated by the apostle, men, whose faith had, for its object, the promises of eternal felicity? Did the obscurity of the dispensation, in which they lived, permit them to pierce the veil which still concealed from their view a happier life than what they enjoyed on earth? Let us not doubt it, my brethren: to avoid one extreme, let us not fall into the opposite one. St. Paul has proved it, not only by his own authority, but also by the nature of the case, and by the testimony of the Jews of his own age.

From the example of the patriarchs, he adduces, first, that of Abel. An ancient tradition of the Jews informs us, that the subject of dispute, between him and Cain, turned on the doctrine of future rewards. Cain maintained that none were to be expected in a future life; Abel supported the contrary proposition. The former of those brothers supplied argument by violence; unable to convince Abel, he assassinated him. It is from this tradition that some of our learned think we ought to understand those words of the apostle, "who being dead yet speaketh." They translate, "We have still extant a tradition, that he died for his faith; namely, the doctrine of a future state."

He cites the example of Enoch, who was so powerfully persuaded of a life to come, as to obtain a translation, exempting him from the painful path which others must travel to glory; I would say, from tasting the horrors of death.

He adduces the example of Noah, who not only escaped the calamities of the deluge, but

"became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." What is this "heritage of righteousness by faith." It is, according to the style of the sacred authors, eternal life. Hence the many parallel explications we find in other places; as in the first chapter of this epistle. "Are not the angels all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation?" That, also, in the second chapter of the catholic Epistle of St. James, "God hath chosen the poor of this world to be heirs of the kingdom, which he hath promised to them that love him."

He farther alleges the example of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, and of Joseph. The confidence which the patriarchs reposed in the promise of an earthly Canaan, proves that they expected a heavenly inheritance; because they continued faithful followers of God, though they never inherited the terrestrial country, which was apparently promised to them, but continued to be "strangers and sojourners." "I am," says Abraham to the Egyptians, "a stranger among you." And Jacob to Pharaoh, "The days of my pilgrimage,"—or the time of my life, during which period I have been a stranger and a sojourner:—"the days of my pilgrimage are not equal to those of my fathers." St. Paul's remark on these expressions of the patriarchs is worthy of regard. "They that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they come out, they might have had opportunity to have returned; but now they seek a better country; that is, an heavenly," Heb. xi. 14—16. That is to say, those holy men could but consider two sorts of countries as their own, either the land of their fathers, or the land of Canaan, of which God had promised to give them possession. They had not this notion of the land of Canaan, seeing they considered themselves as "strangers and sojourners;"—seeing that Abraham there possessed only so much land as was sufficient for a sepulchre;—seeing Joseph's sole happiness, in this view, was to command his children to carry up his bones, when they went to possess it. They could no longer consider Chaldea, in which their fathers were born, as their country: in that case, they would have returned on finding themselves strangers in the land of Canaan. Hence it is evident from their conduct, that they still sought their country; a country better than their fathers', and a better than their children expected to possess; "They showed that they expected a better, that is, an heavenly habitation."

St. Paul adduces to the Hebrews the example of Moses: for if the faith of Moses merely respected terrestrial glory, why should he (as the Jews say) have cast to the ground, and trampled on the crown that Tharmutis had placed on his head? Why should he on coming to years, as says the apostle, have "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." He farther, according to the same epistle, "esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. This expression may be taken in a double sense. By "the reproach of Christ," we may understand the cross he so frequently inculcated on his disciples. By the reproach of Christ, we may likewise understand

the bondage which oppressed the Jews in the time of Moses. The word Christ, signifies anointed, and men favoured of God are frequently called his anointed, because of the grace they had received; of which the holy oil, poured on some extraordinary personages by his command, was a figure. So God has said by the psalmist, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm." Ps. cv. 15. So the prophet Habakkuk, "Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, even for salvation with thine anointed," Hab. iii. 13. Which sense soever we may adopt, the afflictions of Moses prove, according to St. Paul, "that he had respect unto the recompense of the reward," Heb. xi. 26. As no motive but the hope of glory can induce Christians to bear the reproach of Christ their head; so no other consideration could have induced a preference in Moses, of the sufferings of the Israelites to the enjoyments of a crown.

In short, St. Paul adduces to the Hebrews a great number of martyrs, who sacrificed their lives for their religion. In this class is the venerable Eleazar; who died under the strokes of his executioners, 2 Maccab. vi. It is probably in allusion to this case when the apostle says, "they were tortured." The Greek word signifies they were extended in torture; and it is designed to express the situation of persons executed in this cruel way. In this class is Zechariah, who was slain between the temple and the altar, by the command of Joash. To him the apostle properly alludes when he says, "they were stoned." In this class is Isaiah, whom Manasseh executed with a saw, if we may credit an apocryphal book quoted by Origen. To him the apostle probably alludes when he says, "they were sawn asunder." In this class were Micah, John the Baptist, and St. James, since the time of the Maccabees. In all probability the apostle had them in view when he says, "they were slain with the sword." This is sufficient to illustrate what St. Paul has said in the chapter preceding our text, respecting the faithful, whom he adduces as models. It is evident, that those illustrious examples were admirably calculated to make deep impressions on the minds of the Hebrews, and to animate them to sacrifice their lives for their religion, if called to suffer. But I would improve the precious moments of attention you may yet deign to give, having destined them to investigate the impression, which the examples of those illustrious saints must naturally make on our minds, and to press the exhortation. "Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us run with patience the race that is set before us."

I have too high an opinion of my hearers, not to persuade myself, that they cannot contemplate those illustrious models, without corresponding impressions; but I think enough has been said to force an objection which most of you will make, should I devote the rest of the hour to enforce those high examples. You will say, they are fine examples; but too high for our imitation. The personages, from whom they are derived, were extraordinary men, with whom we have no claims of competition. They were *saints*, we are *sinners*. Hence, the more admirable these examples appear, the less you

conceive yourselves obligated to make them the model of your life. I would wish to go to the source of this evil: hence, instead of confining myself to an eulogium on those sacred characters, I would prove, that they were men like you, in order that you shall be saints like them. There is between them and you a similarity of nature—a similarity of vocation—a similarity of temptations—a similarity of motives—a similarity of assistance.—The sole difference between you is, that they had a sincere determination to prefer their salvation and duty to every other consideration: whereas we prefer a thousand and a thousand things to our salvation. This is the awful difference I would now remove, in order to disclose the perfect parallel between you and those illustrious characters.

1. There is between those saints and you a *similarity of nature*; I would say, they had the same principles of natural depravity. There is, I grant, much confusion respecting certain theories which are termed in the schools, Original Sin. It has too often happened, in opposing this doctrine to certain blasphemous objections against the divine justice, that they have strengthened the objections they endeavoured to obviate. On the other hand, it is extremely astonishing that there should be any divines so unacquainted with human nature, as to deny our being all born with those principles of depravity. Two considerations will demonstrate the fallacy of this notion.

1. Man, circumscribed in knowledge, and exposed to strong contests, which cannot be supported without a vast chain of abstract truths, is very liable to shrink in the contest. I say not that it is impossible to avoid it; but that he is very liable to shrink. It may be avoided; because, in the warmth of disputation, by an effort of genius, he might possibly turn his views to those arguments which would ensure his triumph. He is, however, very liable to shrink; because warm debates engross so large a proportion of the mental capacity, that it is difficult for a man thus prepossessed to pay proper attention to the motives which would enable him to conquer.

2. We are not only all born with a general propensity to vice: but we are all likewise born with a propensity to some particular vice. Let a man pay attention to children in the early years of life, and he will be convinced of the fact: he will see that one is born with a propensity to anger, another to vanity, and so with regard to the other vices. These propensities sometimes proceed from the temperature of our bodies. It is natural, that persons born with a phlegmatic constitution, and whose spirits flow with difficulty, should be inclined to insensibility, to indolence, and effeminacy. It is natural also for persons born with a gay and volatile temperature, to be inclined to pleasure, and anger. But these dispositions are sometimes found in the essence of the soul. For, why are some men born jealous, and ambitious? Why have they peculiar propensities which have no connexion with the body, if there be not, in the essence of the soul, principles which impel some to one, and some to another vice?

This being granted, I affirm, that there is between those distinguished saints, namely, those venerable personages enumerated by St.

Paul in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews,—that there is, between them and us, “a similarity of nature.” They had principles of depravity in common with us. The sole difference between them and us is, that they counteracted, and endeavoured to eradicate those principles; whereas we suffer them to predominate and superadd the force of habit to the infirmity of nature.

1. That those distinguished men were born with an understanding circumscribed as ours, requires no proof. Seeing they have resisted the temptations into which our limited understanding has permitted us to fall; it evidently follows, that the difference between them and us is, that when the objects of temptation were presented, they endeavoured to turn, and fix their thoughts on the motives which enabled them to triumph; but we suffer those objects entirely to engross the capacity of our souls.

3. Those distinguished men were born, as we are, with certain propensities to some particular vices. There were in the disposition of their bodies, and in the essence of their souls, as in ours, certain seeds, which prompted some to one vice, and some to another. The history of those saints is too concise to state this truth in all its lustre; but it is so far known as to be evident to a certain degree. Moses was naturally of an uncouth and warm temper; witness his remonstrances with God when commanded to speak to Pharaoh: witness his indignation when he broke both the tables of the law; and when he struck the rock twice. David was born with a lascivious disposition: witness his intercourse with Bathsheba. He was born with a vindictive temper: witness the hasty resolution he formed against Nabal, and accompanied with an oath so unbecoming a saint. “So and more also do God unto the enemies of David, if I leave of all that pertaineth unto him by the morning light, either man or beast,” 1 Sam. xxv. 22. What we have said of David, and of Moses, we might confirm by other saints. Hence, if the love of God was predominant, in the soul of those illustrious saints, over concupiscence, while concupiscence in us so frequently predominates over the love of God:—if they “ran with patience the race set before them;” whilst we are so frequently interrupted in the course:—it was not because those saints were not born with the same principles of depravity which prompt us to particular sins, but because we abandon ourselves to those principles, and make no efforts to oppose them! whereas they struggled hard lest they should commit the crimes, to which they were inclined by nature.

II. There is between those illustrious saints and us a *similarity of vocation*. Does this article require proof? Can you be so little acquainted with religion, as to suppose that they were called to make a constant progress in holiness, but that you are called only to a certain degree of virtue? That they were called to give victorious effect to the love of God over depravity, and that you are called to permit depravity to predominate over the love of God? That they were called to a habit, and a constant habit of piety, but that God merely requires you to do a few virtuous actions, to acquire a temporary habit of holiness, and then allows you to lay it

aside? Is not the law equal? Are not you called to be holy as they were holy? Is it not said to you, as well as to them, “Be ye perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect,” Matt. v. 48. The abridgement of the law, and the prophets,—is it not of the same force with regard to you, as to them, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind?” Matt. xxii. 37.

I am fully aware, that there is a difference between the effects of the love which God requires of you, and which he required of them: but that diversity of effects does not suppose any change in the efficient cause. The efficient cause must be the same, how diversified soever the effects may be: and if you are not called to make similar sacrifices, you are called to be ready to do so, should they be required. You are not called, like Abraham, to immolate in sacrifice to God your only son; but you are called to have the same radical attachment and preference, which induced him to sacrifice his son, if required by your maker. And if you have not this profound attachment, or at least, if you do not daily endeavour to obtain it, deceive not yourselves, my brethren, you can have no hope of salvation. You are not called, like Moses, to sacrifice a crown for religion, but you are called to have the same preference and esteem for God which he had, provided a crown were offered. If you have not this preference of affection; at least, if you do not endeavour to obtain it, deceive not yourselves, my brethren, you can have no hopes of salvation. The difference between those illustrious saints and us, is not in the variety of vocation in which Providence has called us, but in the manner of our obedience. They understood their vocation, and were obedient; but we, we overlook it, or take as much pains to disguise it, as they did to know it; and when we are constrained to know it, and our conscience is constrained to discover its duty, we violate in practice those very maxims we have been obliged to acknowledge in theory.

III. Human depravity has not only innumerable subtleties, but we even urge them. Sometimes, in order to excuse our deviations from those illustrious saints, we allege the superiority of their temptations over those, to which Providence has exposed us; and sometimes, on the contrary, the superiority of their temptations over those, to which Heaven exposes us, over those to which it exposed them. Be it so; but after you have proved that they did not resist any temptation which we would not have resisted had we been in their situation; I will prove that we are not exposed to any such violent temptations over which they have not obtained the same victories which are required of us. What are the violent temptations with which you are captivated, and whose violence you are accustomed to allege, in order to excuse your falls?

Are they temptations of poverty?—How difficult is it, when we want means to supply the pressing calls of nature not to be exercised with anxiety! How difficult is it, when we expect to perish with hunger, to believe ourselves the favourites of that Providence which “feeds the fowls of heaven, and clothes the lilies of the fields,” Matt. vi. 26. 28. And when we

are stripped of every comfort, an ordinary consequence of poverty, to find in communion with God a compensation for those base friends who suffer us to starve! The saints magnified as models by St. Paul, have vanquished this temptation. See Job, that holy man, and once the richest man of all the East, possessing seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, and servants without number:—see him stripped of all his wealth, and saying in that deplorable situation, “Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord and shall we not receive evil?” Job ii. 10. “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord,” Job i. 21. See David wandering from wilderness to wilderness, and saying, “When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up,” Ps. xxvii. 10.

Are they temptations of prosperity? The temptations of prosperity are incomparably more dangerous than those of adversity; at least, the objects of adversity remind us of our indigence and inability; and removing the means of gratification, the passions become either subdued, or restrained and mortified. But prosperity ever presents us with a flattering portrait of ourselves; it prompts us to aspire at independence, and strengthens all our corrupt propensities by the facility of gratification.—The saints, proposed as models by the Holy Spirit, have vanquished those temptations.—See Abraham surrounded with riches; behold him ever mindful of that divine injunction, “Walk before me, and be thou perfect,” Gen. xvii. 1. See Job,—see him ever employing his wealth for him from whom he received it! See him preventing the abuse his children might have made of his opulence, rising early in the morning after their feasts, and offering sacrifice on their account; “It may be,” said he, “my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts,” Job i. 5. See David on the throne,—see him making a sacred use of his power. “Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful in the land, that they may dwell with me; he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me. I will early destroy all the wicked of the land, that I may cut off all the wicked doers from the city of the Lord,” Ps. ci. 6—8. See him laudably employed in resuming those pleasures of piety retarded by the affairs of state. What he could not do in the vicissitudes of the day, he reserved for the shades of night. He contemplated the marvels of his Maker, displayed by the night. Thus he expressed his sentiments, “When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and 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. 3, 4.

Are they temptations arising from the length of the course, which seems to have no end, and which always requires fresh exercise of piety? It is incomparably more easy to make a hasty sacrifice for religion, than to do it daily by degrees. Virtue is animated on great occasions, and collects the whole of its resources and strength; but how few have the resolution to sustain a long career. The saints, whom St. Paul adduces as models, have vanquished this kind of temptation. See Moses,—behold him

for forty tedious years in the wilderness, having to war with nature and the elements, with hunger and with thirst, with his enemies, and with his own people; and, what was harder still, having sometimes to contend with God himself, who was frequently on the point of exterminating the Israelites, committed to the care of this afflicted leader. But Moses triumphed over a vast course of difficulties; ever returning to duty, when the force of temptation, for the moment, had induced him to deviate; ever full of affection for that people, and ever employing in their behalf, the influence he had over the bowels of a compassionate God.

Are there temptations arising from persecution?—Nature shrinks not only at the idea of suffering, but also at the ingenious means which executioners have invented to extort abnegations. The saints, whom St. Paul adduces as models, have vanquished this class of temptations. Look only at the conduct of those noble martyrs, to whom he is desirous of calling the attention of the Hebrews. Look at the tragic but instructive history of that family, mentioned in the seventh chapter of the second Book of Maccabees. The barbarous Antioch, says the historian, seized on a mother and her seven sons, and resolved, by whips and scourges, to force them to eat swine’s flesh. The eldest of the seven boldly asserted his readiness to die for his religion. The king, enraged with anger, commanded the iron-pans, and brazen chaldrons, to be heated, and him who first spake to be flayed alive; his tongue cut out; the extremities of his limbs to be cut off, in presence of his mother and brethren; and his body to be roasted while yet alive, in one of the burning pans. O my God! what a sight for the persons so tenderly united to this martyr! But this scene, very far from shaking their constancy, contributed to its support. They animated one another to an heroic death; affirming that God would sustain their minds, and assuage their anguish. The second of those brothers, the third, the fourth, the fifth, and sixth, sustained the same sufferings, and with the same support, in presence of their mother. What idea do you form of this woman, you timorous mothers, who hear me to-day? In what language, think you, did she address her sons? Do you think that nature triumphed over grace; that, after having offered to God six of her sons, she made efforts, at least to save the seventh, that he might afford her consolation for the loss sustained in the other six? No, says the historian, she exhorted him to die like a martyr: Antioch compelled her to present the seventh that she might prevent his death. But she said, “O my son, have pity upon me, that bare thee nine months in my womb, and gave thee suck three years, and nourished thee, and brought thee up unto this age, and endured the troubles of education. I beseech thee, my son, look upon the heaven and the earth, and all that is therein, and know the author of thy being. Fear not this tormentor; but, being worthy of thy brethren, take thy death, that I may receive thee again in mercy with thy brethren.”

Perhaps the historian has embellished his heroes; perhaps he has been more ambitious to astonish than to instruct; and to flatter the por-

trait, than to paint the original. The history of our own age confirms the past age; the history of our own tyrants, substantiates all that is said of the Jewish tyrants: and the constancy of our modern Maccabees, is a sure test of what is said concerning the constancy of the ancient Maccabees. What has been the seed of the reformed church? It is the blood of the reformers, and of the first reformed. What was the rise of this republic? It was the light of fagots kindled to consume it. Inhabitants of these provinces, what were your ancestors? Confessors and martyrs. And you, my dear fellow-countrymen, whence are you come? "Out of great tribulation." What are you? "Brands plucked from the burning." Fathers, who have seen their children die for religion; children who have seen their fathers die for religion. O that God may forbear hearkening to the voice of so much blood, which cries to Heaven for vengeance on those who shed it! May God, in placing the crown of righteousness on the heads of those who suffered, pardon those who caused their death! May we be, at least, permitted to recount the history of our brethren, who have conquered in the fight; to encourage those who have yet to combat, but who so disgracefully draw back. Ah! generation of confessors and martyrs, would you degrade the nobility of your descent? Your fathers have confessed their religion amid the severest tortures: and would you deny in these happy provinces, enlightened by the truth? Have they sacrificed their lives for religion, and will you refuse to sacrifice a portion of your riches? Ah, my brethren, "Seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us run with patience the race that is set before us."

IV. I have said that there is, between us and those illustrious saints, proposed as models by the Holy Spirit, a *similarity of motives*. It implies a contradiction, to suppose that they had more powerful motives to animate them in their course, than those we have proposed to you. Yes, it implies a contradiction, that the Abrahams, quitting their country, the land of their nativity, and wandering they knew not where, in obedience to the divine call:—it implies a contradiction, that the Moseses preferred "affliction with the people of God, to the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season:"—it implies a contradiction, that this multitude of martyrs, some of whom were tormented, others were stoned, others were sawn asunder, others were killed by the sword:—it implies a contradiction, that those illustrious saints have beheld, at the close of their course, a more valuable prize than that extended to you. This prize is a blissful immortality. Here the whole advantage is on your side. This prize is placed more distinctly in your sight, than it was in the view of those illustrious characters. This, I really think, was St. Paul's view at the close of the chapter, in which he enumerates the saints, whose virtues have formed the leading subject of this discourse. "These all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise; God having provided some better things for us, that they, without us, should not be made perfect." What is implied in their "not having received the promise?" Does it mean that they

did not know the doctrine of a future state? St. Paul affirms quite the contrary. What is meant by their "not being made perfect without us?" Is it as some of the primitive fathers, and as some of our modern divines have thought, that the Old Testament saints were not received into heaven till the ascension of Jesus Christ? This is contrary to other passages of our Scriptures. But "they received not the promise," that is to say, with the same clearness as Christians. "They without us were not made perfect;" the perfect knowledge of immortality and life being the peculiar prerogative of the Christian church. Whatever be the sense of those words of St. Paul, we will show, that this doctrine of immortality and life is no longer covered with a veil, as it was previously to the introduction of the gospel; but it is demonstrated by a multitude of arguments which sound reason, though less improved than that of the ancients, enables us to adduce for conviction; and they are placed in evidence by Jesus Christ. Let us introduce this Jesus to you; let us cause you to hear this Jesus animating you by doctrine and example in the course; "Him that overcometh," says he, "will I grant to sit down with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne," Rev. iii. 21.

V. The last article,—happily adapted to silence those who avail themselves of the distinguished virtues of those saints for not accepting them as models; or, to conclude in a manner more correspondent to our ministry, an article well calculated to support us in the race God has set before all his saints—is, that between us and those who have finished it with joy, there is a *similarity of assistance*. By nature they were like us, incapable of running the race; and by the assistance of grace we become capable of running like them. Let us not imagine that we honour the deity by making a certain sort of absurd complaints concerning our weakness; let us not ascribe to him what proceeds solely from our corruption: it is incompatible with his perfections to expose a frail creature to the force of temptation, and exhort him to conquer it without affording the aid requisite to obtain the victory. Be not discouraged, Christian champion, at the inequality God has made in the proportion of aids afforded to them, and to thee; be not discouraged on seeing thyself led by the plain paths of nature, while nature was inverted for them; while they walked in the depth of the sea; while they "threw down the walls of Jericho by the sound of rams'-horns, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of the fire, escaped the edge of the sword, waxing valiant in fight, and turning to fight the armies of the aliens." We might perform all those prodigies, and not obtain salvation. Yes, we might put to flight the armies of the aliens, display invincible valour in the warfare, escape the edge of the sword, quench the violence of the fire, stop the mouths of lions, overturn walls, force a passage through the sea, and yet be numbered with those to whom Christ will say, "I know you not." And dost thou fear, Christian combatant, dost thou fear to attain salvation without those miraculous aids? The requisite assistance

for thy salvation is promised. "The fountain is open to the whole house of David," Zech. xiii. 1. "Seek, and ye shall find; ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened. If you, being evil, know how to give good things unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven, give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him? If any of you lack wisdom let him ask of God that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not."

O! if we knew the value of wisdom! If we knew what miracles of virtue can be wrought by a soul actuated by the Holy Spirit! If we know how to avail ourselves of this promise! Let us, my dear brethren, avail ourselves of it. Let us ask of God those aids, not to flatter our indolence and vice, but to strengthen us in all our conflicts. Let us say, "Lord, teach my hands to war, and my fingers to fight," Ps. cxliv. Seeing so many enemies combine to detach us from his favour, let us thus invite him to our aid. "Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered, let them also that hate him, flee before him." Let us pour into his bosom all those anxieties, which enfeeble the mind. Then he will reply, "My grace is sufficient for thee, my strength shall be made perfect in thy weakness." Then shall all the enemies of our salvation fly, and be confounded before us. Then shall all the difficulties, which discourage us by the way, disappear. Then shall we exclaim in the midst of conflicts, "Blessed be God, who always causeth us to triumph in Christ." Amen. To him be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON LXXXIII.

ON THE EXAMPLE OF THE SAINTS.

PART II.

HEBREWS xii. 1.

Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.

We proceed this day, my brethren, to show you the way which leads to the end proposed in our two preceding discourses. The words we have now read for the third time, placed three things before your view,—distinguished duties,—excellent models,—and wise precautions. The distinguished duties are illustrated in the perseverance we pressed in our first discourse. The excellent models are the saints of the highest order, and, in particular, the "cloud of witnesses with which we are surrounded." Of these, St. Paul has made an enumeration and eulogium in the chapter preceding that from which our text is read; and whose virtues we have traced in our last discourse. But, by what means may we attain an end so noble? By what means may we discharge duties so distinguished, and form ourselves on models so excellent? This shall be the inquiry in our present discourse. It is by "laying aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us.—Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud

of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us."

Enter, my brethren, on the consideration of this subject with that sacred diffidence, with which frail creatures should be actuated on contemplating the difficulties with which our course is strewed; but enter with all the magnanimity with which an idea of the powerful and promised aids should inspire the mind of a Christian. Be impressed with this thought, and we conjure you to keep it constantly in view during this discourse: that there is no way of running the race like those illustrious characters adduced as models, but by endeavouring to equal them in holiness; and that there is no way of equalling them in holiness, but by adopting the precautions of which they availed themselves to attain perfection. Happy those of you, my brethren, infinitely more happy than the tongue of mortals can express, happy those whom this consideration shall save from that wretched state of indolence into which the greatest part of men are plunged, and whom it shall excite to that vigilance and energy of life, which is the great design of Christianity, and the grand characteristic of a christian! Amen.

We shall now illustrate the expressions in our text by a few remarks.

The first is, that they are figurative. St. Paul represents our Christian vocation by the idea of those races, so ancient and celebrated among the heathen: and pursuing the same thought, he represents the precautions used by athletics to obtain the prize, as those which we must use in order to be crowned. The *weights* of flowing robes, such as were once, and such as are still worn by oriental nations, would very much encumber those who ran in the course. Just so, inordinate cares, I would say, cares concerning temporal things, and criminal purposes, exceedingly encumber those who enter on the course of salvation. I not only allude to criminal purposes (for who can be so ignorant of religion as to deny it,) but also to excessive cares. St. Paul, in my opinion, had this double view. He requires us not only to lay sin aside, but every weight; that is, all those secular affairs unconnected with our profession. In St. Paul's view, these affairs are to the Christian, what the flowing robes would have been to the athletics of whom we spake. How instructive is this idea! How admirably calculated, if seriously considered, to rectify our notions of morality! I do not wish to make the Christian to become an anchorite. I do not wish to degrade those useful men, whom God seems to have formed to be the soul of society; and of whom we may say in the political world, as St. Paul has said in the ecclesiastical, "I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians," Rom. i. 14. "Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches," 2 Cor. xi. 28.

On the other hand, we often deceive ourselves with regard to what is called in the world—business! Take an example of a man born with all the uprightness of mind compatible with the loss of primitive innocence. While left to the reflection of his own mind in early

life, he followed the dictates of reason, and the sentiments of virtue. His mind, undisturbed with the anxieties inseparable from the management of a large fortune, applied almost wholly to the study of truth, and the practice of virtue. But some officious friends, a proud and avaricious family, the roots of vanity, and love of exterior grandeur, scarcely ever eradicated, have induced him to push his fortune, and distinguish himself in the world. He aspires to civil employment. The solicitations to which he must descend, the intrigues he must manage, the friends with whom he must temporize to obtain it, have suspended his first habits of life. He accomplishes the object of his wishes. The office with which he is invested, requires application. Distraction becomes an indispensable duty. The corruption of his heart, but slightly extinguished, rekindles by so much dissipation. After having been some time without the study of truths, once his favourite concern, he becomes habituated not to think of them at all. He loses his recollection of them. He becomes exhausted in the professional duties he has acquired with so much solicitude. He must have a temporary recess from business. The study of truth, and the practice of virtue, should now be resumed. But he must have a little recreation, a little company, a little wine. Meanwhile age approaches, and death is far advanced. But, when is he to enter on the work of salvation? Happy he, my brethren, who seeks no relations in life, than those to which he is called by duty! Happy he, who in retirement, and if you please, in the obscurity of mediocrity, far from grandeur and from courts, makes salvation if not his sole, at least his principal concern. Excessive cares, as much as criminal pursuits, are weights which retard exceedingly the Christian in his course. "Let us lay aside every weight and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." This is St. Paul's idea in the words of my text: and it is the first remark requisite for its illustration.

The second devolves on the peculiar situation in which the Hebrews were placed, to whom the advice is given. These Hebrews, like ourselves, were Christians. They were called, as we are called, to run the race of virtue, without which no man can obtain the prize promised by the gospel. In this view, they required the same instructions which are requisite with regard to ourselves.

But the Christians, to whom this epistle was addressed, lived, as was observed in our first discourse, in an age of persecution. They were daily on the eve of martyrdom. It was for this that the apostle prepares them throughout the whole of this epistle. To this he especially disposes them in the words which immediately follow those I have discussed. "Consider diligently," says he, adducing the author and finisher of our faith, who so nobly ran the career of martyrdom; "Consider diligently him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be weary and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin," Heb. xii. 3, 4. What does he mean by their not having yet resisted unto blood? Here is still a reference

to the games of the heathen: not indeed to the sports of the course, as in the words of my text, but to the cest,* in which the wrestlers sometimes received a mortal blow. And this idea necessarily includes that of martyrdom. But, O! how evasive is the flesh, when placed in those critical circumstances! What excuses will it not make rather than acquiesce in the proposition! Must I die for religion? Must I be stretched on the rack? Must I be hung in chains on a gibbet? Must I mount a pile of fagots? St. Paul has therefore doubled the idea in my text. He was desirous to strengthen the Hebrews with a twofold class of arguments: viz. those required against the temptations common to all Christians; and those peculiar to the afflictive circumstances in which they were placed by Providence. It was proper to press this double idea. This is our second remark for the illustration of our text.

The third turns on the progress the Hebrews had already made in the Christian religion. The nature of this progress determines farther the very character of the advice required, and the precise meaning of those expressions, "Laying aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us." We never give to a man who has already made a proficiency in an art or science, the instructions we would give to a pupil. We never warn a mariner, who has traversed the seas for many years, not to strike against a rock which lifts its summit to the clouds, and is perceived by all who have eyes. We never caution a soldier, blanched in the service, not to be surprised by manœuvres of an enemy, which might deceive those who are entering on the first campaign. There were men among the Hebrews to whom the apostle wrote, who, according to his own remark, had need to be taught again "the principles of the doctrine of Christ:" that is, the first elements of Christianity. We find many among the catechumens, who, according to an expression he uses, had need of milk, and were unable to digest strong meat, Heb. v. 12. But we ought not to conceive the same idea of all the Hebrews. The progress many of them had made in religion, superseded, with regard to them, the instructions we might give to those entering on the course. I cannot think, that those Hebrews, who in former days had been enlightened;—those Hebrews, who had "endured a great fight of afflictions;"—those Hebrews, who, according to the force of the Greek term, used in the tenth chapter of this epistle, "had been exposed on the theatre of the world, by affliction and by becoming a gazing-stock;—those Hebrews, "who had taken joyfully the spoiling of their goods," Heb. xi. 33, 34;—I cannot think that they had need of precautions against the gross temptations, by which Satan seduces those who have only an external acquaintance with Christianity. The principal design of the apostle, in the words of my text, is, to fortify them against those subtle snares, and plausible pretences, which sometimes induced Christians to relapse, who seemed the most established. These are

* The Cestus was a severe mode of fighting, in which the pugilists were armed either with a cudgel, or with a ball of lead sewed in leather. See Virgil's *Æneids* Book v.

the kind of snares, these are the kind of sophisms, the apostle apparently had in view, when he speaks of "weights, and the sin that doth so easily beset us."

Thanks be to God, my dear brethren, that though we are right, on the one hand, in saying that some among you, "have need to be taught again the first principles of the doctrine of Christ; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat," Heb. v. 12; thanks be to God, that you afford us, on the other hand, the consolation granted to our apostle, of seeing among you cultivated minds, geniuses conversant with the sublime mysteries of Christianity, and with the severest maxims of morality. Hence I should deem it an injustice to your discernment and knowledge, if, in the instructions I may give to-day, whether for the period of persecution, or for the ordinary conduct of life, I should enlarge on those truths which properly belong to young converts. What? in a church cherished by God in so dear a manner: what in a church which enjoys a ministry like yours, is it necessary to affirm, that people are unworthy of the Christian name, when, during the period of persecution, they anticipate, if I may so speak, every wish of the persecutors, when they carry in their bosoms, formularies which abjure their religion; when they attend all the services of superstition; when they enjoy, in consequence of their apostasy, not only their own property, but the property of those "who have gone with Jesus Christ without the camp, bearing his reproach?" What! in a church like this, would it be requisite to preach, that men are unworthy of the Christian name, who, in the time of ecclesiastical repose, deliberately live in habits of fornication and adultery; who, in the face of heaven and earth, entice their neighbour's wife, who wallow in wickedness, who are ever disposed either to give or to receive "the wages of unrighteousness?" Oh! my very dear brethren, these are not plausible pretences; these are not subtle snares; they are the sensible sophisms, the broad snares which deceive those only who are resolved to be deceived. There are, however, subtle snares, which deceive the most established Christians. To these the apostle has immediate reference when he exhorts us to "lay aside every weight, and the sin that does so easily beset us." On this shall turn chiefly the explication we shall give of the terms. What are those peculiar kinds of temptations? What are the precautions we must take to resist them? These are the two leading subjects of this discourse; to these subjects I will venture to solicit the continuation of the attention with which you have designed to favour me.

I. Let us begin with the temptations, to which we are exposed in the time of ecclesiastical tribulation.

1. The devil would sometimes inspire us with sentiments of *unbelief* respecting the truth of the promises God has given the church. It seems a difficult task, to reconcile the magnificence of those promises with the deluge of calamities which have inundated it in periods of persecution. What is this church, according to the prophets? It is a society, which was to be completely irradiated with the glory of God.

It was a society to which kings were to be the nursing-fathers, and queens the nursing-mothers. It is a society, whose prosperity should have no end, which should realize this prediction: "Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment; but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished," Isa. li. 6. It is a society, whose prosperity made the prophets exclaim, "Break forth into joy; sing together ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the Lord hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem. The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God," Isa. lii. 9, 10. To say all in one word, it is a society built upon the rock, and of which Jesus Christ has said, "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it," Matt. xvi. 18. What is the conformity between these promises and the event! or if you please, what likeness is there between the portrait and the original! Does not hell prevail against the church, when her enemies exile her pastors, scatter her flock, suppress her worship, and burn her sanctuaries? Do all nations see the salvation of God, the arm of the Lord made bare, to effectuate distinguished events in behalf of this society; when they are given up to the fury of their tyrants; when Pilate and Herod are confederated to destroy them; when they obtain over them daily new victories? Do the waste places of Jerusalem sing, when the ways of Zion mourn, "when her priests sigh," and when "her virgins are afflicted?" Does her salvation remain for ever, when the church has scarcely breathed in one place, before she is agitated in another; when she has scarcely survived one calamity, before she is overtaken with another; when the beast causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, bond and free, to receive his mark in their hand, or in their forehead? Rev. xiii. 16. Are kings nursing-fathers to the church, and queens nursing-mothers, when they snatch the children from her breasts; when they populate the deserts with fugitives; and cause the dead bodies of her witnesses to lie in the streets of the great city, which is called Sodom and Egypt? Rev. xi. 8.

It is against this first device of Satan, St. Paul would fortify the Hebrews in the words of my text. Hear his admonitions and instructions; have you forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children; my son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he, whom the Father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons," Heb. xii. 5—8.

I have no need to arm you with any other shield against the sentiments of unbelief, with which some of you are assailed on viewing the calamities of the church. Ecclesiastical persecutions are paternal chastisements, which God inflicts upon her members. I would ask our brethren, who complain of the length of

the persecution, and are ever saying, Alas! what, always in exile, always in the galleys? I would ask them, as they seem astonished, and are bold enough to complain of their duration, whether they have profited by these afflictions? God, in chastising the church, is desirous of correcting the abuse you have made of prosperity. Have you profited by this chastisement? Have you learned to make a right use of prosperity? God, in chastising the church, is desirous to correct the indifference you have entertained for public worship. Have you profited by this chastisement? Have you learned to sacrifice your dearest interests to attend his worship? And if you have made those sacrifices, have you learned to worship with affections correspondent to the sacrifices you have made for him? God, in chastising the church, is desirous to correct the strong attachment you have conceived for this world. Have you profited by this chastisement? Called to choose between riches and salvation, have you ever preferred the salvation of your souls, to exterior happiness?

2. In the time of tribulation, the devil strongly prompts us to presumption. Here the commands of Jesus Christ are explicit, "When they persecute you in one city, flee to another," Matt. x. 23. The decision of wisdom is extremely positive; "they who love the danger, shall perish by it," Matt. xxiv. 2. Experience is a convincing test. St. Peter, who presumed to go into the court of Caiaphas, under a pretence of following Jesus, denied him there. Is not this what we have represented a thousand and a thousand times, to those of our unhappy brethren, whom this part of our discourse particularly respects? We have proved, that we must either leave the places in which the truth is persecuted, or calmly submit to martyrdom. We have made it appear that no man can assure himself of constancy to suffer martyrdom, unsupported by the extraordinary aids of the Holy Spirit. We have demonstrated that it is presumption to promise themselves those aids, while they neglect the means offered by Providence to avoid the danger. They do violence to reason. They resist demonstration. They presume on their own strength. They rely wholly on supernatural power. They promise themselves a chimerical conquest. Hence those frequent abnegations. Hence those awful falls. Hence those scandalous apostacies. I have therefore done wrong in placing the temptations of presumption among those subtle snares, those plausible pretences, which impose on the most established Christians. I am mistaken; they are the broadest snares, and grossest sophisms of the enemy of our salvation; and he is weak indeed, who suffers himself to be surprised. What! have you proved your weakness a hundred and a hundred times, and do you still talk of power? What! have you at this day scarcely resolution to sacrifice a part of your property for religion, and do you presume that you can sacrifice your life? What! have you not fortitude to follow Jesus Christ into peaceful countries, and do you presume to hope that you can follow him to the cross?

3. Those, whom Satan cannot destroy by presumption, he endeavours, and it is a third

snares with which he assails the church in tribulation, he endeavours, I say, to destroy by *distrust*. "I am weak," says a man who discourages himself by temptations of this nature; "I am weak: I shall not have constancy to sustain the miseries inseparably attendant on those who devote themselves to voluntary exile, by going into places where the truth is professed; nor fortitude to endure the tortures inflicted on those who avow it in places where it is persecuted. I am weak; I have not courage to lead a languishing life in unknown nations, to beg my bread with my children, and to hear my poverty sometimes reproached by those to whom the cause for which I suffer ought to render it venerable. I am weak: I shall never have constancy to endure the stink of dungeons, the weight of the oar, and all the terrific apparatus of martyrdom."

You say, I am weak! say rather I am wicked, and pronounce upon yourselves beforehand the sentence which the gospel has pronounced against persons of this description. You are weak! But is it not to the weak that are made (provided their intentions are really sincere) the promises of those strong consolations, which enable them to say, "When I am weak, then I am strong," 2 Cor. vii. 10. You are weak! But is it not said to the weak, "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it?" 1 Cor. x. 13. You are weak! But is it not the weak to whom God has realized the truth of his magnificent promises? I will not refer you to those marvellous ages, when men, women, and children, sustained the most terrific tortures with a courage more than human. I will not adduce here the example of those saints, enumerated in the chapter, preceding my text; of saints who were stoned, who were killed with the sword, who were tortured, who were fettered, and who displayed more constancy in suffering, than their persecutors and hangmen, in the infliction of torments. But go to those myriads of exiles, who have inundated England, Germany, and these provinces, all of whom are protestant nations; those myriads of exiles, "who have gone to Jesus Christ without the camp, bearing his reproach;" destitute of every earthly comfort, but delighted to have gotten their souls for a prey; were not they by nature weak as you? And, with the assistance of grace, may not you become strong as they? But those fathers, but those mothers, who have torn themselves away from their children, and the separation of whom from creatures so dear, seemed as tearing away their own flesh, were they not by nature weak as you? But those Abrahams, who taking their children by the hand, went in some sort, to sacrifice them to hunger and thirst, to cold and rain; and who replied to the piercing complaints of those innocent victims, "The Lord will provide, my children; in the mountain of the Lord it shall be seen," Gen. xxii. 14. But those fathers, those mothers, were they not naturally weak as you? And with the help of God, may not you become as strong as they? You are weak! But those slaves who have now been thirty years on board the galleys; those *Rois*, those

Broussons, those *Marolles*, and such a multitude of our martyrs, who have sealed the evangelical doctrine with their blood, who have ascended the scaffold, not only with resignation, but with joy, with transports, with songs of triumph, exclaiming, amid their sufferings, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me," Phil. i. 13. "Thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ," 2 Cor. ii. 14. "Blessed be the Lord, who teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight," Ps. cxliv. 1. Were not those venerable men naturally weak as you? And with the help of God, may not you become strong as they? Are you weak! It is still added, say rather, I am wicked, and blush for your impiety.

4. There are yet more plausible insinuations, and more subtle snares; and consequently, the more likely to entangle those who are defective in precautions of defence. The enemy of our salvation sometimes borrows weapons from conscience, in order to give it mortal wounds. The advice we give to the persecuted, is that of Jesus Christ; "If any man will come after me, let him take up his cross, and follow me," Matt. xvi. 24. "Come out of Babylon, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not her plagues," Rev. xviii. 4. To this duty, they oppose other duties; and family duties in particular. What would become of my father, should I leave him in his old age? What would become of my children should I forsake them in their infancy? They allege the duties of benevolence. What would become of so many poor people who procure bread in my employment? So many starving families, who subsist on my alms? So many people in perplexity, who are guided by my advice? What would become of these, if, neglecting their happiness, I should solely seek my own? They allege the duties of zeal. What would become of religion in this place, in which it was once so flourishing, if all those who know the truth should obey the command, "Come out of Babylon."

Let us, my brethren, unmask this snare of the devil. He places these last duties before your eyes, in order that you may neglect the first, without which all others are detestable in the sight of God our sovereign Judge; who whenever he places us in a situation in which we cannot practise a virtue without committing a crime, prohibits that virtue. God assumes to himself the government of the world, and he will not lay it on your shoulders; he still asserts the same language he once addressed to St. Paul, when that prince under the pretence of obedience to a precept, had violated an express prohibition. "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," 1 Sam. xv. 22.

5. But is it public worship; (and this is a fifth snare, a fifth insinuation; and a fifth class of those "sins which so easily beset us;")—is it public worship which constitutes the essence of religion? Does not true devotion wholly consist in worshipping in Spirit, and in truth? May we not retain religion secretly in our heart, though we apparently suspend the ex-

terior service? And though external worship be required, must it always be presented in the presence of a multitude? May not private devotion be a substitute for public worship? And may we not offer to God in the closet, the devotion which the calamity of the time does not allow us to offer in temples consecrated to his glory, and perform in our families the offices of piety which tyrants prevent our performing in numerous assemblies?

(1.) I answer; what are the private devotions performed in places in which the truth is persecuted! Ridiculous devotions; many of those who perform them being divided between Christ and Belial, between true and idolatrous adoration. In the morning, before the altar of false gods; in the evening, before the altar of the Supreme Jehovah. In the morning, denying Jesus Christ in public; in the evening confessing him in private. In the morning making a parade of error; in the evening, pretending to acknowledge the truth. Devotions in which they are in continual alarms; in which they are obliged to conceal themselves from their enemies, from many of their friends, and to say in secret, who sees me? who hears me? who suspects me? Devotions in which they are afraid of false brethren, afraid of the walls, or afraid of themselves!

(2.) The inward disposition, you say constitutes the essence of religion. I ask, what sort of inward disposition is that of the Christians whom we attack? Show us now, this religion which consists wholly of inward dispositions; this worship in spirit and in truth. What! this gross ignorance a necessary consequence of privation of the ministry, those absurd notions of our mysteries, those vague ideas of morality; is this the inward religion, is this "the worship in spirit and in truth?" What! this abhorrence they entertain of the communion of the persecutor, who they know scarcely possesses the first principles of the persecuted? Is this the inward religion, is this the "worship in spirit and in truth?" What! this kind of deism, and deism certainly of the worst kind, which we see maintained by the persons in question! Is this the inward religion, is this the "worship in spirit and in truth?" What! this tranquillity with which they enjoy not only the riches they have preserved at the expense of their soul; but the riches of these who have sacrificed the whole of their property for the sake of the gospel? Is this the inward religion, is this the "worship in spirit and in truth?" What! this participation in the pleasures of the age, at a period when they ought to weep: those frantic joys, if I may so speak, over the ruins of our temples, after renouncing the doctrines there professed? Is this the inward religion, is this the "worship in spirit and in truth?" What! those marriages they contract, in which it is stipulated, in case of issue, they shall be baptized by the ministers of error, and educated in their religion? Is this the inward religion, is this the "worship in spirit and in truth?"

6. I will add but one illusion more, and that is the illusion of *security*. If we offend, say the persons we attack;—if we offend in submitting to the pressure of the times, we do it through weakness, and weakness is an object

of divine clemency. It is not possible, that a merciful God, a God who "knows whereof we are made," a God who has formed us with the attachment we have for our property, our relatives, and our lives; it is not possible that this God should condemn us to eternal misery, because we have not had the fortitude to sacrifice the whole. A double shield, my brethren, shall cover you against this temptation, if you have prudence to use it; a double reflection shall defend you against this last illusion.

First, the positive declarations of our Scriptures. God is merciful, it is true; but he is an arbitrator of the terms on which his mercy is offered: or, as it is written, he extends mercy to whom he pleases; and God who extends mercy to whom he pleases, declares that he will show no mercy to those who refuse to honour his truth. He declares, that "he will deny those before his Father, who deny him before men," Matt. x. 33. He declares, that "he who loveth father or mother more than him, is not worthy of him," Matt. x. 37. He declares, that "they who receive the mark of the beast, or worship his image, shall be cast alive into the lake of fire, burning with brimstone," Rev. xix. 20. He declares, that he will class in the great day, "the fearful;" that is, those who have not had courage to confess their religion, with the "unbelieving," with "the abominable," with "the murderers," with "the whoremongers," with "the sorcerers," with "the idolaters," with "the liars." He declares, that "the fearful shall," in common with others, be cast into the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death," Rev. xxi. 8.

The second reflection, which should be a shield for repelling this illusion of the devil, arises from the nature of the crime itself, accounted a mere infirmity. Four characters contribute to the atrocity of a crime. 1. When it is not committed in a moment of surprise, in which we are taken unawares. 2. When we persist in it not only for a few hours, or days, but live in it for whole years. 3. When during those years of criminality, we have all the opportunities we could reasonably ask of emancipation. 4. When this crime not only captivates the solitary offender, but draws a great number more into the same perdition. These four characters all associate with the crime in question, the crime reckoned a weakness, and obstinately classed among the infirmities of nature. But I have not resolution to enlarge upon this subject, and to prove, that our unhappy brethren are in such imminent danger of destruction. And the expiration of my time is a subordinate inducement to proceed to other subjects.

II. Were it possible for the discourses introduced into this pulpit to be finished pieces, in which we were allowed to exhaust the subjects; were you capable of paying the same attention to exercises, which turn on spiritual subjects, you bestow on business or pleasure, I would present you with a new scheme of arguments; I would reduce, to different classes, the temptations which Satan employs to obstruct you in the course. But we should never promise ourselves the completion of a subject in the scanty limits to which we are prescribed.

I shall take a shorter course, harmonizing the extent and importance of the remaining subject

with the brevity of my time. I shall proceed to give a portrait of the life common to persons who attain the utmost age God has assigned to man. I shall conduct him from infancy to the close of life, tracing to you, in each period it is presumed he shall pass, the various temptations which assail him; and by which it is impossible he should fall, if he keep in view the apostle's exhortation, "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us." Let every one who hears this sermon with a view to profit, carefully apply to himself those traits which have the nearest resemblance to his state. Hence I would presume every one of you to be the man who shall attain the age of eighty years: these are the temptations he will find in his course.

1. Scarcely will you be liberated from the arms of the nurse, when you fall under the care of weak and indulgent people; who will, through a cruel complaisance, take as much pains to cherish the corrupt propensities of nature, as they ought to take for their subjugation. At this early period they will sow in your heart awful seeds, which will produce an increase of thirty, sixty, or an hundred-fold. They will make a jest of your faults, they will applaud your vices, and so avail themselves of your tender age, to give a thousand and a thousand wounds to your innocence, that all your application will scarcely heal, when you shall be capable of application. If you do not avail yourselves of the first sentiments of piety and reason, to resist so far as the weakness of childhood will permit, those dangerous snares, you will find yourselves very far advanced in the road of vice before your situation is perceived.

2. Is infancy succeeded by youth? Fresh snares, new temptations, occur. On the commencement of reflection, you will discover existing, in your constitution and temperature, principles grossly opposed to the law of God. Perhaps the evil may have its principal seat in the soul, perhaps in the body. In the temperature of the soul, you will find principles of envy, principles of vanity, or principles of avarice. In the temperature of the body, you will find principles of anger, principles of impurity, or principles of indolence. If you are not aware of this class of temptations, you will readily suffer yourselves to be carried away by your propensity, and you will obey it without remorse; you will invest it with privilege to do with innocence, what the rest of the world cannot do without a crime. You must expect to find in your temperature principles which will dispense with virtue, and to be captivated by maxims which too much predominate in the world, and which you will daily hear from the mouths of your companions in dissipation. These maxims are, that youth is the age of pleasure; that it is unbecoming a young man to be grave, serious, devout, and scrupulous; that now we ought to excuse not only games, pleasure, and the theatres, but even debauchery, drunkenness, luxury, and profaneness; that swearing gives a young man an air of chivalry becoming his age, and debauchery an air of gallantry which does him credit in the world. Caution yourselves against this class of temptations: reject the sin which so easily destroys you, if you should relax in one single instance. Ah!

think, my son, that you may never survive those years you devote to the world, think that the small-pox, a fever, a single quarrel, or one act of debauchery, may snatch away your life. Think, though you should run your full course, you will never have such flexible organs, so retentive a memory, so ready a conception, as you have to-day; and consequently, you will never have such a facility for forming habits of holiness. Think how you will one day lament to have lost so precious an opportunity. Consecrate your early life to duty, dispose your heart, at this period, to ensure salvation. "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, in which thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them," Eccles. xii. 1.

3. After having considered the period of youth, we proceed to maturer age. A new stage, fresh snares, more temptations. What profession can you choose, which the spirit of the world has not infected with its venom; and which has not, so to speak, its peculiar morality?

The peculiar morality of a *soldier*, whose duty is to defend society, to maintain religion, to repress licentiousness, to oppose rapine by force: and to deduce, from so many dangers, which open the way of death, motives to render the account which Heaven will require: but it is a profession in which a man thinks himself authorized to insult society, to despise religion, to foment licentiousness, to lend his arm, to sacrifice his life, to sell his person for the most ambitious designs, the most iniquitous conquests, and sanguinary enterprises of sovereigns.

The peculiar morality of the *statesman* and *magistrate*, whose profession is to preserve the oppressed, to weigh with calmness a long detail of causes and consequences, to avail himself of the dignity to which he is elevated to afford examples of virtue; but it is a profession in which he thinks himself entitled to become inaccessible to the injured, to weary them out with mortifying reserves, with insupportable delays, and to dispense with labour and application, abandoning himself to dissipation and vice.

The peculiar morality of the *lawyer*, whose duty is to restrict his ministry to truth and justice, never to plead for a cause which has not the appearance of equity, and to be the advocate of those who are inadequate to reward his services: but it is a profession in which a man thinks himself authorized to maintain both falsehood and truth, to support iniquity and falsehood, and to direct his efforts to the celebrity he may acquire, or the remuneration he may receive.

The peculiar morality of the *merchant*, whose duty is to detest short weights and false measures, to pay the revenue, and to be satisfied with a moderate profit: but a profession in which he thinks himself authorized to indulge those very vices he ought in particular to avoid.

The peculiar morality of the *minister*. What is the vocation of a minister? Is it not to devote himself entirely to virtue? Is it not to set a pattern to all the church? Is it not to visit the hospitals, and houses of affliction, and to alleviate, as far as he can, the pressure of their calamities? Is it not to direct his studies, not to subjects by which he may acquire celebrity for learning and eloquence, but to those which may

render him most useful? Is it not to determine on the choice of a text, not by the caprice of the people, which on this point is often weak, and mostly partial, but by the immediate wants of the flock? Is it not to pay the same attention to a dying man, born of an obscure family, stretched on a couch of grass, and unknown to the rest of the world, as to him who possesses a distinguished name, who abounds in wealth, who provides the most splendid coffin and magnificent funeral? Is it not to "cry aloud, to lift up his voice like a trumpet, to show the people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins; to know no man after the flesh;" and when he ascends this pulpit, to reprove vice with firmness, however exalted may be the situation of the offender? But what is the morality of a pastor? "Enter not into judgment with thy servants, O Lord; for we cannot answer thee one of a thousand." Caution yourselves against this class of temptations. The world is neither your legislator, nor your judge; Jesus Christ, and not the world, is the sovereign arbitrator. It is the morality of Jesus Christ, and not the maxims of men, which you should follow.

4. Having reviewed human life in infancy, youth, and manhood, I proceed to consider it in *old age*; in that old age, which seems so distant, but which is, in fact, within a few years; in that old age which seems, in some sort, at the distance of eternity, but which advances with astonishing rapidity. A new state, fresh snares, more temptations occur: infirmities, troubles, and cares, arrive with age. The less there remains on earth to defend, the more men are resolved not to let it go. The love of life having predominated for fifty or sixty years, sometimes unites and attaches itself, so to speak, yet more closely to the short period, which they think is still promised. It is so rooted and entrenched in the heart, as to be immovable by all our sermons on eternity. They look on all who witness the calamities they suffer, as though they were the cause: it seems as though they were reproached for having lived so long, and they make them atone for this imaginary fault, as though they were really guilty. The thoughts of death they put away with the greater care, as it approaches nearer, it being impossible to avoid the idea, without these efforts to remove it. They call to their aid amusements, which would scarcely be excusable in the age of infancy: thus they lose the precious remains of life,—granted by the long-suffering of God,—as they have lost the long course of years, of which nothing now remains but the recollection.

Be on your guard, aged men, against this class of temptations, and against these illusions, which will easily beset you, unless the whole of your strength be collected for precaution and defence. Let prayer be joined to vigilance: let those hands, trembling and enfeebled with the weight of years, be raised to heaven: let that voice, scarcely capable of articulating accents, be addressed to God: entreat him, who succoured you in the weakness of infancy, in the vigour of youth, in the bustle of riper age, still to sustain you, when the hand of time is heavy upon your head.

Hitherto, my dear brethren, I have address-

ed you, merely concerning the dangers peculiar to each age. What would you not say now, if we should enter into a detail of those which occur in every situation of life? We find, in every age, temptations of adversity, temptations of prosperity, temptations of health, temptations of sickness, temptations of company, and temptations of solitude: and who is able fully to enumerate all the sins which so easily beset us in the various ages of life? How should one be rich without pride, and poor without complaint? How may one fill the middle rank of fortune, without the disgust naturally consequent on a station, which has nothing emulous and animating; which can be endured by those only, who discover the evils from which they are sheltered, and the dangers from which they are freed? How can one enjoy health without indulging in the dissipations of life, without immersion into its cares, or indulging in its pleasures? How can one be sick, without admitting complaint against that gracious Providence, which distributes both good and evil? How can one be in solitude, without being captivated with reveries and corrupt propensities? How can one be in company, without receiving the poison which is there respired, without receiving a conformity to every surrounding object? How see one's self obscure in the world, and unknown to our fellow-creatures, without indulging that anxiety, which is less exercised in the world for the love of virtue, than to avoid the odium consequent on an open violation of its laws? How can one enjoy reputation without ostentation, and blending some grains of incense with what we receive of others? Every where snares, every where dangers, beset us!

From the truths we have delivered, there necessarily arises an objection, by which you are struck, and many of you, perhaps, already discouraged. What! are we always to be thinking about religion, being in constant danger of losing it, should we suffer it to escape our minds? What! must we always watch, always pray, always fight? Yes, my brethren, always, at all times. On seeing the temptations of youth, you should guard against those of riper age. On seeing the temptations of solitude, you should guard against those of company. On seeing the temptations of adversity, you should guard against those of prosperity. On seeing the temptations of health, you should guard against those of sickness. And on seeing the temptations of sickness, you should guard against those of death. Yes; always watching, always fighting, always praying.

I do not say, if you should happen to relax a moment from the work; I do not say, if you should happen to fall by some of the temptations to which you are exposed from the world, that you are lost without resource, that you should instantly go from sin to punishment, from the abuse of time to an unhappy eternity. Perhaps God will grant you a day, or a year, for repentance; but perhaps he will not. Perhaps you may repent; but perhaps you may not. Perhaps you may be saved; but perhaps not. Perhaps hell—perhaps heaven. What repose can you enjoy in so awful an alternative? What delight can you enjoy in certain vices, the perpetration of which requires time?

What repose can you enjoy in a criminal intrigue, saying to yourself, perhaps God will pardon me after having brought this intrigue to an issue: but perhaps, also, during the course of the crime, he will pronounce the sentence it deserves. What repose can you enjoy in the night preceding a day destined to a complication of crimes, saying to yourself, perhaps I shall see the day devoted to so dreadful a purpose: but perhaps this very night "my soul shall be required:" what delight can you take in a tour of pleasure, when it actually engrosses the time you have devoted to search your conscience, to examine your state, to prepare for death, to make restitution for so many frauds, so many extortions, so many dissipations? What satisfaction can you take, saying to yourself, perhaps I shall see the day devoted to so great a work, but perhaps it will never come?

Ah! my brethren, have you any proper idea of the shortness of life: have you any proper idea of the eternity which follows, when you start the objection, What! always pray, always fight, always watch? This life, the whole of which we exhort you to devote to your salvation; this life, of which you say; always—always; this is the life, on the shortness of which you make so many exaggerated declamations: I mistake, the shortness of which can scarcely be exaggerated. This life, of which you say, when we exhort you to devote it entirely to your salvation; this life of which you say, What! always—always; this life, which is but a vapour dissipated in the air; this life, which passes with the swiftness of a weaver's shuttle; this life, which like a flower blooms in the morning, and withers at night: this life, which like a dream amuses the fancy for a night, and of which not a vestige remains at the dawn of day:—this is the life which is but like a thought. And eternity, concerning which you regret to be always employed; that abyss, that gulf, are those mountainous heaps of years, of ages, of millions and oceans of ages, of which language the most expressive, images the most sublime, geniuses the most acute, orators the most eloquent, I have almost said, the most audacious, can give you but imperfect notions.

Ah! life of fourscore years! A long duration in the estimation of the heart, when employed in wrestling against the flesh; but a short period when compared with eternity. Ah! life of fourscore years, spent wholly in watchfulness, prayer, and warfare; but thou art well spent when we obtain the prize of a blissful immortality! My brethren, my dear brethren, who can live but fourscore years,——What do I say? Who among us can expect to see the age of fourscore years? Christians, who are already arrived at thirty, others at forty, others at fifty, and another already at fourscore years. My dear brethren, some of you must die in thirty, some of you in twenty, some of you in ten years, and some in a single day. My dear brethren, let us consecrate to eternity the remnant of our days of vanity. Let us return to the testimonies of the Lord, if we have had the misfortune to deviate. Let us enter on the race of salvation, if we have had the presumption to defer our entrance into it to the present period. Let us run with patience the race, if we have already made a progress; and let the

thought, the attracting, the ravishing thought of the prize, which terminates the race, dispel from our mind, every idea of the difficulties which obstruct the way. Amen! May God give us grace so to do. To whom be honour and glory, dominion, and magnificence, now and for ever. Amen.

SERMON LXXXIV.

SAINT PAUL'S DISCOURSE BEFORE FELIX AND DRUSILLA.

ACTS xxiv. 24, 25.

And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered; Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.

MY brethren, though the kingdom of the righteous be not of this world, they present, however, amidst their meanness, marks of dignity and power. They resemble Jesus Christ. He humbled himself so far as to take the form of a servant, but frequently exercised the rights of a sovereign. From the abyss of humiliation to which he condescended, emanations of the godhead were seen to proceed. Lord of nature, he commanded the winds and seas. He bade the storms and tempests subside. He restored health to the sick, and life to the dead. He imposed silence on the Rabbins: he embarrassed Pilate on the throne; and disposed of paradise, at the moment he himself was pierced with the nails, and fixed on the cross. Behold the portrait of believers! "They are dead. Their life is hid with Christ in God," Col. iii. 3. "If they had hope only in this life, they were of all men most miserable," 1 Cor. xv. 19. Nevertheless, they discover I know not what superiority of birth. Their glory is not so concealed, but we sometimes perceive its lustre; just as the children of a king, when unknown and in a distant province, betray in their conversation and carriage indications of illustrious descent.

We might illustrate this truth by numerous instances. Let us attend to that in our text. There we shall discover that association of humility and grandeur, of reproach and glory, which constitutes the condition of the faithful while on earth. Behold St. Paul, a Christian, an apostle, a saint. See him hurried from tribunal to tribunal, from province to province; sometimes before the Romans, sometimes before the Jews, sometimes before the high-priest of the synagogue, and sometimes before the procurator of Cesarea. See him conducted from Jerusalem to Cesarea, and summoned to appear before Felix. In all these traits, do you not recognise the Christian walking in the narrow way, the way of tribulation, marked by his Master's feet? But consider him nearer still. Examine his discourse, look at his countenance; there you will see a fortitude, a courage, and a dignity, which constrains you to acknowledge that there was something really grand in the

person of St. Paul. He preached Jesus Christ, at the very moment he was persecuted, for having preached him. He preached, even when in chains. He did more; he attacked his judge on the throne. He reasoned, he enforced, he thundered. He seemed ready to exercise the function of judging the world, which God has reserved for the saints. He made Felix tremble. Felix felt himself borne away by a superior force. Unable to hear St. Paul any longer without appalling fears, he sent him away. "After certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ," &c.

We find here three considerations which claim attention. An enlightened preacher, who discovers a very peculiar discernment in the selection of his subjects. A conscience appalled, and confounded on the recollection of its crimes, and of that awful judgment where they must be weighed. We find, in fact, a sinner alarmed, but not converted; a sinner who desires to be saved, but delays his conversion; a case, alas! but of too common occurrence.

You perceive already, my brethren, the subject of this discourse; I. That St. Paul reasoned before Felix and Drusilla, of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come; II. That Felix trembled; III. That he sent the apostle away: three considerations which shall divide this discourse. May it produce on your hearts, on the hearts of Christians, the same effects St. Paul produced on the soul of this heathen; but may it have a happier influence on your lives. Amen.

I. Paul preached before Felix and Drusilla, "on righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come." This is the first object of discussion. Before, however, we proceed farther with our remarks, we must first sketch the character of this Felix, and this Drusilla, which will serve as a basis to the first proposition.

After the sceptre was departed from Judah, and the Jewish nation subjugated by Pompey, the Roman emperors governed the country by procurators. Claudius filled the imperial throne while St. Paul was at Cesarea. This emperor had received a servile education from his grandmother Lucia, and from his mother Antonia; and, having been brought up in obsequious meanness, evinced, on his elevation to the empire, marks of the inadequate care which had been bestowed on his infancy. He had neither courage nor dignity of mind. He who was raised to sway the Roman sceptre, and consequently to govern the civilized world, abandoned his judgment to his freed-men, and gave them a complete ascendancy over his mind. Felix was one of those freed-men. "He exercised," and these are the words of a Roman historian (Tacitus,) "he exercised in Judea, the imperial functions with a mercenary soul." Voluptuousness and avarice were the predominant vices of his heart. We have a proof of his avarice immediately after our text, where, it is said, he sent for Paul,—not to hear him concerning the truth of the gospel which this apostle had preached with so much power;—not to inquire whether this religion, against which the Jews had raised the standard, was contrary to the interest of the state;—

but because he hoped to have received money for his liberation. Here is the effect of avarice.

Josephus recites an instance of his voluptuousness. It is his marriage with Drusilla. She was a Jewess, as is remarked in our text. King Azizus, her former husband, was a heathen; and in order to gain her affections, he had conformed to the most rigorous ceremonies of Judaism. Felix saw her, and became enamoured of her beauty. He conceived for her a violent passion; and, in defiance of the sacred ties which had united her to a husband, he resolved to become master of her person. His addresses were received. Drusilla violated her former engagements, preferring to contract with Felix an illegitimate marriage, to an adherence to the chaste ties which united her to Azizus. Felix the Roman, Felix the procurator of Judea, and the favourite of Cesar, appeared to her a noble acquisition. It is indeed a truth, we may here observe, that grandeur and fortune are charms which mortals find the greatest difficulty to resist; and against which the purest virtue has need to be armed with all its constancy. Recollect those two characters of Felix and Drusilla. St. Paul, before those two personages, treated concerning "the faith in Christ;" that is, concerning the Christian religion, of which Jesus Christ is the sum and substance, the author and the end; and from the numerous doctrines of Christianity, he selected "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come."

Here is, my brethren, an admirable text; but a text selected with discretion. Fully to comprehend it, recollect the character we have given of Felix. He was covetous, luxurious, and governor of Judea. St. Paul selected three subjects, correspondent to these characteristics. Addressing an avaricious man, he treated of righteousness. Addressing the governor of Judea, one of those persons who think themselves independent, and responsible to none but themselves for their conduct, he treated of "judgment to come."

My brethren, when a man preaches for popularity, instead of seeking the glory of Christ, he seeks his own; he selects subjects calculated to display his talents, and flatter his audience. Does he preach before a professed infidel, he will expatiate on morality; and be ashamed to pronounce the venerable words—*covenant—satisfaction*. Does he address an Antinomian audience, who would be offended were he to enforce the practical duties of religion; he makes every thing proceed from election, reprobation and the irresistibility of grace. Does he preach in the presence of a profligate court, he will enlarge on the liberty of the gospel, and the clemency of God. He has the art,—(a most detestable art, but too well understood in all ages of the church,)—he has the art of uniting his interests and his ministry. A political preacher endeavours to accommodate his preaching to his passions. Minister of Christ, and minister of his own interests, to express myself with this apostle, he "makes a gain of godliness;" on this principle had Felix expressed a desire to understand the gospel, St. Paul had a favourable opportunity of paying his court in a delicate manner. The Christian religion has a favourable aspect towards every

class of men. He might have discussed some of those subjects which would have flattered the governor. He might have discoursed on the dignity of princes, and on the relation they have to the Supreme Being. He might have said, that the magistrate "beareth not the sword in vain," Rom. xiii. 4. That the Deity himself has said, "ye are gods, and ye are all the children of the most High," Ps. lxxxii. 6. But all this adulation, all this finesse, were unknown to our apostle. He sought the passions of Felix in their source. He forced the sinner in his last retreat. He boldly attacked the governor with "the sword of the Spirit," and with "the hammer of the word." Before the object of his passion, and the subject of his crime, before Drusilla, he treated of "temperance." When Felix sent for him to satiate his avarice, he talked of "righteousness." While the governor was in his highest period of splendour, he discoursed "of a judgment to come."

Preachers of the court, confessors to princes, pests of the public, who are the chief promoters of the present persecution, and the cause of our calamities! O that I could animate you by the example of St. Paul: and make you blush for your degeneracy and turpitude! My brethren, you know a prince;—and would to God we knew him less! but let us respect the lustre of a diadem; let us venerate the Lord's anointed in the person of our enemy. Examine the discourses delivered in his presence; read the sermons pompously entitled, "Sermons preached before the king;" and see those other publications, dedicated to—the perpetual conqueror, whose battles were so many victories—terrible in war—adorable in peace. You will there find nothing but flattery and applause. Who ever struck in his presence, at ambition and luxury? Who ever ventured there to maintain the rights of the widow and the orphan? Who, on the contrary, has not magnified the greatest crimes into virtues; and, by a species of idolatry before unknown, made Jesus Christ himself subservient to the vanity of a mortal man?

Oh! but St. Paul would have preached in a different manner! Before Felix, before Drusilla, he would have said that, "fornicators shall not inherit the kingdom of God," 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. In the midst of an idolatrous people, he would have painted, in the liveliest colours, innocence oppressed, the faith of edicts violated, the Rhine overflowing with blood, the Palatinate still smoking, and buried in its own ashes. I check myself; we again repeat it; let us respect the sacred grandeur of kings, and let us deplore their grandeur, which exposes them to the dangerous poison of adulation and flattery.

This suggests an important reflection; a reflection concerning the necessity which should induce sovereigns to have ecclesiastics about their persons, who would address them with frankness, and prompt them to the recollection of their duty. Grandeur, power, and applause, (we are obliged to make the observations in our pulpits, in places where decorum requires attention; for we are of no consideration in the bustle of a splendid court;) grandeur, power, and applause, are charms against which it is very difficult for the human mind to retain

its superiority. Amid so many dangers, if a man have no guide but himself, no preacher but his conscience; if, instead of attending to the sober dictates of truth, he is surrounded with flatterers, how can he resist so many attractions? And, if he do not resist, how can he be saved? For in fact, the same laws are given to the high and the low; to the rich and the poor; to the sovereign and the subject.

In society, there is a gradation of rank. One is king, another is a subject; one tramples a carpet of purple and gold under his feet, another leads a languishing life, begging a precarious pittance of bread: one is drawn in a superb carriage, another wades through the dirt. But before the judgment-seat of Christ, all these distinctions will be no more. There will then be no respect of persons. The same nothing is our origin; the same dust is our end; the same Creator gave us being; the same Saviour accomplished our redemption; and the same tribunal must decide our eternal destiny. How very important is it, when a man is elevated to dignities, inaccessible, so to speak, to reflections of this nature,—how very important is it to have a faithful friend, a minister of Christ, a St. Paul, fully enlightened in the knowledge of the truth, and bold enough to declare it to others!

The commission is arduous to execute. It is difficult in the ordinary course of life to give advice to equals. The repugnance which men evince on being told of their faults, occasions their being seldom cautioned. How much more difficult then to speak impartially to those, in whose presence our minds are mostly assailed with intimidating bashfulness, and who hold our life and fortune in their hands?

It behoves, notwithstanding, the ministers of Christ to maintain the dignity of their character. Never had orators a finer field for commanding attention. Never were subjects susceptible of a more grave and manly eloquence, than those which they discuss. They have motives the most powerful to press, and passions the most impetuous to move. They have an eternity of glory to promise, and an eternity of misery to denounce. They are ambassadors of a Potentate, in whose presence, all the kings of the earth are but “as the small dust of the balance.” Behold St. Paul, fully impressed with the grandeur of his mission. He forgot the grandeur of Felix. He did more; he made him forget himself. He made him receive admonition with reverence. “He reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come.”

Ministers of Jesus Christ, here is our tutor, who prepares us for the sanctuary. And you, Christians, here is our apology. You complain when we interfere with the shameful secrets of your vice; consider St. Paul. He is the model God has set before us. He requires us to speak with freedom and force; to exhort “in season and out of season;” to thunder in our pulpits; to go even to your houses, and disturb that fatal security which the sinner enjoys in the commission of his crimes. He requires us to say, to the revenue-officers, “exact no more than that which is appointed;” to the soldiers, “do violence to no man, and be content with your wages;” to Herod, “it is

not lawful for thee to have thy brother Philip’s wife,” Luke iii. 12—14. You are not higher than Felix, neither are we in chains like St. Paul. But though we were yet more deeply abased; and though the character we sustain seemed to you yet more vile; and though to the rank of Jewish governor, you should superadd, that of Roman emperor, and sovereign of the world; despising all this vain parade, we would maintain the majesty of our Master. So St. Paul conducted himself before Felix and Drusilla. “He reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come.”

But who can here supply the brevity of the historian, and report the whole of what the apostle said to Felix on these important points? It seems to me, that I hear him enforcing those important truths he has left us in his works; and placing in the fullest lustre those divine maxims interspersed in our Scriptures. “He reasoned of righteousness.” There he maintained the rights of the widow and the orphan. There he demonstrated, that kings and magistrates are established to maintain the rights of the people, and not to indulge their own caprice; that the design of supreme authority is to make the whole happy by the vigilance of one, and not to gratify one at the expense of all; that it is meanness of mind to oppress the wretched who have no defence but cries and tears; that nothing is so unworthy of an enlightened man as that ferocity, with which some are inspired by dignity; and which obstructs their respect for human nature, when undisguised by worldly pomp; that nothing is so noble as goodness and grandeur, associated in the same character; that this is the highest felicity; that in some sort it transforms the soul into the image of God; who, from the high abodes of majesty in which he dwells surrounded with angels and cherubim, deigns to look down on this mean world which we inhabit, and “leaves not himself without witness, doing good to all.”

“He reasoned of temperance.” There, he would paint the licentious effects of voluptuousness. There he would demonstrate how opposite this propensity is to the spirit of the gospel; which every where enjoins retirement, mortification, and self-denial. He would show how it degrades the finest characters, who have suffered it to predominate. Intemperance renders the mind incapable of reflection. It debases the courage. It debilitates the mind. It softens the soul. He would demonstrate the meanness of a man called to preside over a great people, who exposes his foibles to public view: not having resolution to conceal, much less to vanquish them. With Drusilla, he would make human motives supply the defects of divine; with Felix, he would make divine motives supply the defects of human. He would make this impudent woman feel that nothing on earth is more odious than a woman destitute of honour; that modesty is an appendage of the sex; that an attachment, uncemented by virtue, cannot long subsist; that those who receive illicit favours, are the first, according to the fine remark of a sacred historian, to detest the indulgence: “The hatred wherewith Amnon, son of David, hated his sister, after the gratification of his brutal passion, was

greater than the love wherewith he had loved her," 2 Sam. xiii. 15. He would make Felix perceive, that however the depravity of the age might seem to tolerate a criminal intercourse among persons of the other sex, with God, who has called us all to equal purity, the crime was not less heinous.

"He reasoned," in short, "of judgment to come." And here he would magnify his ministry. When our discourses are regarded as connected only with the present period, their force I grant is of no avail. We speak for a Master, who has left us clothed with infirmities, which discover no illustrious marks of Him, by whom we are sent. We have only our voice, only our exhortations, only our entreaties. Nature is not inverted at our pleasure. The visitations of heaven do not descend at our command to punish your indolence and revolts: that power was very limited, even to the apostles. The idea of a future state, the solemnities of a general judgment supply our weakness; and St. Paul enforced this motive; he proved its reality: he delineated its lustre, he displayed its pomp. He resounded in the ears of Felix, the noise, the voices, the trumpets. He showed him the small and great, the rich man and Lazarus, Felix the favourite of Cesar, and Paul the captive of Felix, awoke by that awful voice; "Arise ye dead, and come to judgment."

But not to be precipitate in commending the apostle's preaching. Its encomiums will best appear by attending to its effects on the mind of Felix. St. Jerome wished concerning a preacher of his time, that the tears of his audience might compose the eulogy of his sermons. We shall find in the tears of Felix occasion to applaud the eloquence of our apostle. We shall find that his discourses were thunder and lightning in the congregation; as the Greeks used to say concerning one of their orators. While St. Paul preached, Felix felt I know not what agitations in his mind. The recollection of his past life; the sight of his present sins; Drusilla, the object of his passion and subject of his crime; the courage of St. Paul; all terrified him. His "heart burned," while that disciple of Jesus Christ expounded the Scriptures. The word of God was quick and powerful. The apostle, armed with the two-edged sword, dividing the soul, the joints, and the marrow, carried conviction to the heart. Felix trembled, adds our historian, Felix trembled! The fears of Felix are our second reflection.

II. What a surprising scene, my brethren, is here presented to your view? The governor trembled, and the captive spoke without dismay. The captive made the governor tremble. The governor shivered in presence of the captive. It would not be surprising, brethren, if we should make an impression on your hearts (and we should do so indeed, if our ministry is not, as usual, a sound of empty words:) it would not be surprising if we should make some impression on the hearts of our hearers. This sanctuary, these solemnities, these groans, this silence, these arguments, these efforts,—all aid our ministry, and unite to convince and persuade you. But here is an orator destitute

of these extraneous aids: behold him without any ornament but the truth he preached. What do I say, that he was destitute of extraneous aids? See him in a situation quite the reverse;—a captive, loaded with irons, standing before his judge. Yet he made Felix tremble. Felix trembled! Whence proceeded this fear, and this confusion? Nothing is more worthy of your inquiry. Here we must stop for a moment: follow us while we trace this fear to its source. We shall consider the character of Felix under different views: as a *heathen*, imperfectly acquainted with a future judgment, and the life to come: as a *prince*, or *governor*, accustomed to see every one humble at his feet: as an *avaricious magistrate*, loaded with extortions and crimes: in short, as a *voluptuous man*, who had never restricted the gratification of his senses. These are so many reasons of Felix's fears.

First, we shall consider Felix as a *heathen*, imperfectly acquainted with a future judgment, and the life to come: I say, imperfectly acquainted, and not as wholly ignorant, the heathens having the "work of the law written in their hearts," Rom. ii. 15. The force of habit had corrupted nature, but had not effaced its laws. They acknowledged a judgment to come, but their notions were confused concerning its nature.

Such were the principles of Felix; or rather, such was the imperfection of his principles, when he heard this discourse of St. Paul. You may infer his fears from his character. Figure to yourselves a man, hearing for the first time, the maxims of equity and righteousness inculcated in the gospel. Figure to yourselves a man who heard corrected the immorality of pagan theology; what was doubtful, illustrated; and what was right, enforced. See a man, who knew of no other God but the incestuous Jupiter, the lascivious Venus, taught that he must appear before Him, in whose presence the seraphim veil their faces, and the heavens are not clean. Behold a man, whose notions were confused concerning the state of souls after death, apprised that God shall judge the world in righteousness. See a man, who saw described the smoke, the fire, the chains of darkness, the outer darkness, the lake of fire and brimstone; and who saw them delineated by one animated by the Spirit of God. What consternation must have been excited by these terrific truths!

This we are incapable adequately to comprehend. We must surmount the insensibility, acquired by custom. It is but too true, that our hearts, instead of being impressed by these truths, in proportion to their discussion—our hearts are the more obdurate. We hear them without alarm, having so frequently heard them before. But if, like Felix, we had been brought up in the darkness of paganism; and if another Paul had come and opened our eyes, and unveiled those sacred terrors, how exceedingly should we have feared? This was the case with Felix. He perceived the bandage to drop in a moment, which conceals the sight of futurity. He heard St. Paul, that herald of grace, and ambassador to the gentiles. He heard him reason on temperance, and a judg-

ment to come. His soul was amazed; his heart trembled; his knees smote one against another.

Amazing effects, my brethren, of conscience! evident argument of the vanity of those gods, which idolatry adores, after it has given them form! Jupiter and Mercury, it is true, had their altars in the temples of the heathens; but the God of heaven and earth has his tribunal in the heart: and, while idolatry presents its incense to sacrilegious and incestuous deities, the God of heaven and earth, reveals his terrors to the conscience, and there loudly condemns both incest and sacrilege.

Secondly, consider Felix, as a prince; and you will find in this second office, a second cause of his fear. When we perceive the great men of the earth devoid of every principle of religion, and even ridiculing those very truths which are the objects of our faith; we feel that faith to waver. They excite a certain suspicion in the mind, that our sentiments are only prejudices; which have become rooted in man, brought up in the obscurity of humble life. Here is the apology of religion. The Caligulas, the Neros, those potentates of the universe, have trembled in their turn as well as the meanest of their subjects. This independence of mind, so conspicuous among libertines, is consequently an art,—not of disengaging themselves from prejudices,—but of shutting their eyes against the light, and of extinguishing the purest sentiments of the heart. Felix, educated in a court, fraught with the maxims of the great, instantly ridicules the apostle's preaching. St. Paul, undismayed, attacks him, and finds a conscience concealed in his bosom: the very dignity of Felix is constrained to aid our apostle, by adding weight to his ministry. He demolishes the edifice of Felix's pride. He shows, that if a great nation was dependent on his pleasure, he himself was dependent on a sovereign, in whose presence the kings of the earth are as nothing. He proves that dignities are so very far from exempting men from the judgment of God; that, for this very reason, their account becomes the more weighty, riches being a trust which Heaven has committed to the great: and "where much is given, much is required." He makes him feel this awful truth, that princes are responsible, not only for their own souls, but also for those of their subjects; their good or bad example influencing, for the most part, the people committed to their care.

See then Felix in one moment deprived of his tribunal. The judge became a party. He saw himself rich and in need of nothing; and yet he was "blind, and naked, and poor." He heard a voice from the God of the whole earth, saying unto him, "Thou profane and wicked prince, remove the diadem, and take off the crown. I will overturn, overturn, overturn it, and it shall be no more," Ezek. xxi. 25, 26. "Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord," Obad. 4. Neither the dignity of governor, nor the favour of Cesar, nor all the glory of empire shall deliver thee out of my hand.

Thirdly, I restrict myself, my brethren, as much as possible, in order to execute without

exceeding my limits, the plan I have conceived; and proceed to consider Felix as an avaricious man; to find in this disposition a farther cause of his fear. Felix was avaricious, and St. Paul instantly transported him into a world, in which avarice shall receive its appropriate and most severe punishment. For you know that the grand test by which we shall be judged is charity. "I was hungry, and ye gave me meat;" and of all the obstructions of charity, covetousness is the most obstinate and insurmountable.

This unhappy propensity renders us insensible of our neighbour's necessities. It magnifies the estimate of our wants: it diminishes the wants of others. It persuades us that we have need of all, that others have need of nothing. Felix began to perceive the iniquity of this passion, and to feel that he was guilty of double idolatry. Idolatry in morality, idolatry in religion. Idolatry in having offered incense to gods, who were not the makers of heaven and earth; idolatry in having offered incense to mammon. For, the Scriptures teach, and experience confirms, "that covetousness is idolatry." The covetous man is not a worshipper of the true God. Gold and silver are the divinities he adores. His heart is with his treasure. Here then is the portrait of Felix;—a portrait drawn by St. Paul in the presence of Felix; and which reminded this prince of innumerable prohibitions, innumerable frauds, innumerable extortions; of the widow and the orphan he had oppressed. Here is the cause of Felix's fears. According to an expression of St. James, the "rust of his gold and silver began to witness against him, and to eat his flesh as with fire," James v. 3.

Fourthly, consider Felix as a voluptuous man. Here is the final cause of his fear. Without repeating all we have said on the depravity of this passion, let one remark suffice; that, if the torments of hell are terrific to all, they must especially be so to the voluptuous. The voluptuous man never restricts his sensual gratification; his soul dies on the slightest approach of pain. What a terrific impression must not the thought of judgment make on such a character! Shall I, accustomed to indulgence and pleasure, become a prey to the worm that dieth not, and fuel to the fire which is not quenched! Shall I, who avoid pain with so much caution, be condemned to eternal torments! Shall I have neither delicious meats, nor voluptuous delights! This body, my idol, which I habituate to so much delicacy, shall it be "cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, whose smoke ascendeth up for ever and ever!" And this effeminate habit I have of refining on pleasure, will it render me only the more sensible of my destruction and anguish!

Such are the traits of Felix's character; such are the causes of Felix's fear. Happy, if his fear had produced that "godly sorrow, and that repentance unto salvation not to be repented of." Happy, if the fear of hell had induced him to avoid its torments. But, ah no! he feared, and yet persisted, in the causes of his fear. He trembled, yet said to St. Paul, "Go thy way for this time." This is our last reflection.

III. How preposterous, my brethren, is the

sinner! What absurdities does he cherish in his heart! For, in short, had the doctrines St. Paul preached to Felix been the productions of his brain;—had the idea, which he gave him of rectitude and injustice, been a prejudice;—had the thought of a future judgment been a chimera, whence proceeded the fears of Felix? Why was he so weak as to admit this panic of terror? If, on the contrary, Paul had truth and argument on his side, why did Felix send him away? Such are the contradictions of the sinner. He wishes; he revolts; he denies; he grants; he trembles, and says, "Go thy way for this time." Speak to him concerning the truths of religion; open hell to his view, and you will see him affected, devout, and appalled; follow him in life, and you will find that these truths have no influence whatever on his conduct.

But are we not mistaken concerning Felix? Did not the speech of St. Paul make a deeper impression upon him than we seem to allow? He sent the apostle away, it is true, but it was "for this time only." And who can censure this delay? We cannot be always recollected and retired. The infirmities of human nature require relaxation and repose. Felix could afterward recall him. "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will send for thee."

It pains me, I confess, my brethren, in entering on this head of my discourse, that I should exhibit to you in the person of Felix, the portrait of whom? Of wicked men? Alas! of nearly the whole of this assembly; most of whom seem to us living in negligence and vice, running with the children of this world "to the same excess of riot." One would suppose, that they had already made their choice, having embraced one or the other of these notions, either that religion is a phantom, or that, all things considered, it is better to endure the torments of hell, than to be restricted to the practice of virtue. O no; that is not their notion. Ask the worst among them. Ask whether they have renounced their salvation? You will not find an individual who will say, that he has renounced it. Ask them again, whether they think it attainable by following this way of life? They will answer, No. Ask them afterward, how they reconcile things so opposite, as their life, and their hope? They will answer, that they are resolved to reform, and by and by they will enter on the work. They will say, as Felix said to St. Paul, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." Nothing is less wise than this delay. At a future period I will reform. But who has assured me, that at a future period I shall have opportunities of conversion? Who has assured me that God will continue to call me, and that another Paul shall thunder in my ears?

I will reform at a future period! But who has told me, that God at a future period will accompany his word with the powerful aids of grace? While Paul may plant and Apollos may water, is it not God who gives the increase? How then can I flatter myself, that the Holy Spirit will continue to knock at the door of my heart, after I shall have so frequently obstructed his admission?

I will reform in future! But who has told me, that I shall even desire to be converted? Do not habits become confirmed in proportion as they are indulged? And is not an inveterate evil very difficult to cure? If I cannot bear the excision of a slight gangrene, how shall I sustain the operation when the wound is deep?

I will reform in future! But who has told me, that I shall live to a future period? Does not death advance every moment with gigantic strides? Does he not assail the prince in his palace, and the peasant in his cottage? Does he not send before him monitors and messengers;—acute pains, which wholly absorb the soul;—deliriums, that render reason of no avail;—deadly stupors, which benumb the brightest and most piercing geniuses? And what is still more awful, does he not daily come without either warning or messenger? Does he not snatch away this man without allowing him time to be acquainted with the essentials of religion; and that man, without the restitution of riches ill-acquired; and the other, before he is reconciled to his enemy?

Instead of saying, "Go thy way for this time," we should say, stay for this time. Stay, while the Holy Spirit is knocking at the door of my heart; stay, while my conscience is alarmed; stay, while I yet live; "while it is called to-day." The arguments confound my conscience: no matter. "Thy hand is heavy upon me:" no matter still. Cut, strike, consume; provided it procure my salvation.

But, however criminal this delay may be, we seem desirous to excuse it. "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." It was Felix's business then which induced him to put off the apostle. Unhappy business! Awful occupation! It seems an enviable situation, my brethren, to be placed at the head of a province; to speak in the language of majesty; to decide on the fortunes of a numerous people; and in all cases to be the ultimate judge. But those situations, so happy and so dazzling in appearance, are in the main dangerous to the conscience! Those innumerable concerns, this noise and bustle, entirely dissipate the soul. While so much engaged on earth, we cannot be mindful of heaven. When we have no leisure, we say to St. Paul, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee."

Happy he, who, amid the tumult of the most active life, has hours consecrated to reflection, to the examination of his conscience, and to ensure the "one thing needful!" Or rather, happy he, who, in the repose of the middle classes of society,—placed between indigence and affluence,—far from the courts of the great,—having neither poverty nor riches according to Agur's wish, can in retirement and quietness see life sweetly glide away, and make salvation, if not the sole, yet his principal concern!

Felix not only preferred his business to his salvation, but he mentions it with evasive disdain. "When I have a convenient season, I will call for thee."—"When I have a convenient season!" Might we not thence infer, that the truths discussed by St. Paul were not of serious importance? Might we not infer,

that the soul of Felix was created for the government of Judea; and that the grand doctrines of righteousness, temperance, and a judgment to come, ought to serve at most but to pass away the time, or merely to engross one's leisure? "When I have a convenient season."—

Ah! unhappy Felix, what hast thou to do of such vast importance? Is it to execute the imperial commission? But art thou not a subject of the King of kings, in whose presence Cesar himself is but a worm of earth? Has not God given thee a soul to improve, virtues to acquire, and an eternal kingdom to conquer? Was it to immerse thyself in sensual pleasures? But how canst thou taste those pleasures, after the terrific portrait of a future judgment, which has been exhibited to thy view? Does not the voice of St. Paul perpetually resound in thy ears; and, like a fury obstinately attending thy steps, does it not disturb thy indolence and voluptuous delight.

We suspend here the course of our meditation, to close with a few reflections on the truths we have delivered. We have affirmed in the body of this discourse, and with the greatest propriety, that we should commence the application with regard to ourselves. St. Paul here communicates an important lesson to all ministers of the gospel. His sincerity, his courage, his constancy, are perfect models; on which every faithful pastor should form himself. Let us follow, my most honoured brethren, this illustrious model. "Let us be followers of him, even as he was of Christ." Like him, let us never temporize with the sinner. Like him, let us speak of righteousness to the covetous; of temperance to the voluptuous; of a future judgment to the great of this world, and to all those whom objects less terrific are incapable to alarm. Let us never say, "peace, peace, when there is no peace." Let us thunder, let us expostulate, let us shoot against them the arrows of the Almighty's wrath; not fearing the Felixes and Drusillas of our age. Here is our vocation. Here is the charge which God now delivers to every one who has the honour of succeeding Paul in the order of the ministry.

But how shall we discharge the duty? What murmuring would not a similar liberty excite among our hearers? If we should address you as St. Paul addressed Felix; if we should declare war against you individually; if we should unmask the many mysteries of iniquity in which you are involved; if we should rend the veil which covers so many dishonourable practices; you would interrupt us; you would retaliate on our weakness and infirmities; you would say, "Go thy way for this time;" carry elsewhere a ministry so disgusting and revolting.

Well! we will accommodate ourselves to your taste. We will pay all deference to your arguments, and respect even a false delicacy. But if we exercise this indulgence towards you, permit us to expect the same in return, and to make for the moment this chimerical supposition. You know the character of St. Paul; at least you ought to know it. If you are unacquainted with it, the discourse he delivered in the presence of Felix is sufficient to delineate its excellence. Suppose, instead of

the sermon you have heard, that St. Paul had addressed this assembly. Suppose, instead of what we have now advanced, this apostle had preached, and filled the place in which we now stand. Suppose that St. Paul, that sincere preacher, that man, who, before Felix and Drusilla, "reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come." Suppose he had preached to-day before the multitude now present: let us speak ingenuously. What sort of application would he have made? What subject would he have discussed? What vices would he have reprov'd? What estimate would he have formed of most of your lives? What judgment would he have entertained concerning this worldly spirit, which captivates so great a multitude? What would he have said of that insatiable avarice in the acquisition of wealth, which actuates the general mass; which makes us like the grave, incessantly crying, *Give, give, and never says, It is enough?* What would he have said concerning the indifference about religion said to be found among many of us, as though the sacrifices, formerly made for our reformation, had been the last efforts of expiring religion, which no longer leaves the slightest trace upon the mind? What would he have said of those infamous debaucheries apparently sanctified by a frantic custom, and which ought not to be named among Christians? Extend the supposition. It is St. Paul who delivers those admonitions. It is Paul himself who expands to your view the hell he opened before Felix and Drusilla: who conjures you by the awful glory of the God, who will judge the living and the dead, to reform your lives, and assume a conduct correspondent to the Christian name you have the honour to bear.

To the ministry of the apostle, we will join exhortations, entreaties, and fervent prayers. We conjure you by the mercies of that God who took his Son from his own bosom and gave him for you, and by the value of your salvation, to yield a ministry so pathetic.

Be mindful of "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come." Observe this equity in your dealings; never indulge the propensity to unlawful gain. "Render to Cesar the things that are Cesar's," Mark xii. 17. Respect the rights of the sovereign. Pay "tribute to whom tribute is due," Rom. xiii. 7. Let the indigence and obscurity of your labourers and lowest artists be respectable in your sight; recollecting that the "little that a righteous man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked," Ps. xxxvii. 16. Do not narrow the rules of rectitude; keep in view, that God did not send you into the world to live for yourselves. To live solely for ourselves is a maxim altogether unbecoming a Christian; and to intrench ourselves in hoards of gold and silver, placed above the vicissitudes of human life, is a conduct the most incompatible with that religion whose sole characteristic is compassion and benevolence.

Observe also this *temperance*. Exclude luxury from every avenue of your heart. Renounce

* In Pratt's Gleanings, we have an account of dancing rooms in Holland, where ruined girls dance under the lash of a superior. To these, and other shameful establishments, Saurin seems to refer in several of his sermons.

all unlawful pleasures, and every criminal intrigue. Caution your conduct, especially in this licentious place, in which the facility of vice is a continual temptation to its charms. Let your chastity be apparent in your dress, in your furniture, in your conversation. "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt," Col. iv. 6. According to St. Peter's advice, "Let not the adorning of women be that outward adorning, of plaiting the hair, and of wearing gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price," 1 Pet. iii. 3, 4. Recollect, that the law of God is spiritual; that there is an impurity of the mind, an adultery of the heart; that certain desires to please, certain disguised emotions, certain lascivious airs, and certain attempts to wound the virtue of others (though we may apparently observe the most rigid rules of decorum,) may be as heinous before God as the most glaring faults into which a man may have been reluctantly precipitated by his passions, and in which the will may have had the less concern.

Keep constantly in view, "the judgment to come." Think, O think, that an invisible eye watches over all your actions. Think that they are all registered in a faithful journal which shall be produced before the universe, in the great day, when Jesus Christ shall descend in glory from heaven.

My dear brethren, be not ingenious to enfeeble conviction by accounting the object remote. The trumpet is ready to sound, the books are about to be opened, and the throne is already prepared. The views of the soul are circumscribed, like the sight of the body. The narrow circle of surrounding objects engrosses nearly the whole of our attention; and retards the extension of thought to superior concerns. The reality of a judgment comprises so many amazing revolutions in the universe, that we cannot regard the design as ready for execution. We cannot conceive the face of nature to change with such rapidity; and that those awful revolutions which must precede the advent of the Son of God, may occur in a few ages. But let us not be deceived. I grant you are right in the principle, but you err in the consequence. There is nothing in the most distant occurrence of this period which can flatter security. If the judgment be remote with regard to the world, it is near with respect to you. It is not necessary, with regard to you, for the face of nature to be changed, the Jews to be called into the covenant, the sound of the gospel to go to the end of the earth, the moon to be turned to darkness, the stars to fall from heaven, the elements to melt with fervent heat, the heavens to pass away with a great noise, and the earth to be dissolved. There is only wanting a deficiency of humours in your body; only a little blood out of its place; only some fibre disorganized; only an inflammation in the head, a little diminution or augmentation of heat or cold in the brain;—and behold your sentence is pronounced. Behold, with regard to you, the world overturned, the sun darkened, the moon become bloody, the gospel preached, the

Jews converted, the elements dissolved, the heavens folded up as a garment, the foundations of the earth shaken, and its fashion passed away.

Enter seriously into these reflections. And, since each of the duties we have just prescribed requires time and labour, avoid dissipation and excess of business. My brethren, it is here that we would redouble our zeal, and would yet find the way to your hearts. We will not enter the detail of your engagements; we will not turn over the pages of your account. We will not visit your counting-houses. We will not even put the question, whether your business is always lawful; whether the rights of the sovereign and the individual are punctually discharged. We will suppose that all is fair on these points. But consider only that the most innocent engagements become criminal, when pursued with excessive application, and preferred to the work of salvation.

This maxim belongs to you, merchants, dealers, tradesmen. You see, at this period, the poverty and wretchedness which assail an infinite number of families. The soldier languishes in the midst of war without employment, and he is in some sort obliged to beg his bread. The nobleman, far from his means—a thousand times more unhappy than the peasant—has no industry to procure his bread. The learned man is even a burden; and the productions of the greatest geniuses, so far from receiving remuneration, are not even noticed.

Amidst such a series of calamities, you alone have means for the acquisition of riches. A government mild and lenient, a commerce vast and productive, opens, if I may so speak, all the avenues of fortune. The eastern and western world seem to concur in the augmentation of your wealth. You live not only with ease, but elegance. Your houses are sumptuously furnished, your tables deliciously served; and after the enjoyment of these advantages, you transmit them to posterity; even after death you still taste and enjoy them in the persons of your children. But it would have been a thousand times better that you should have lived to augment the number of the wretched; if you permit these favours of Heaven to frustrate your salvation; and put off the apostle, saying, as to unhappy Felix, "When I have seen a convenient season, I will recall thee. Go thy way for this time." I have payments to meet, I have orders to write.

Let us seclude ourselves from bustle and tumult. Let us seek retirement, recollection and silence. And may the death which is at hand, expressing myself with a prophet, induce us to "make haste and not delay returning to the testimonies of the Lord," Ps. cxix. 59, 60.

My brethren, you are not sufficiently impressed with this thought. But we,—we, to whom God has committed the superintendance of a great people;—we, if I may so speak, who are called to exercise our ministry in a world of dead and dying men, who see lopped off in succession every member of a numerous flock; we are alarmed, when we consider the delays which predominate in the conduct of

most Christians. We never ascend the pulpit, but it seems that we address you for the last time. It seems that we should exhaust the whole of religion, to pluck our heroes from the world, and never let them go till we have intrusted them in the arms of Jesus Christ. It seems that we should bid you an eternal farewell; that we are stretched on our bed of death, and that you are in a similar situation.

Yes, Christians, this is the only moment on which we can reckon. It is, perhaps, the only acceptable time. It is, perhaps, the last day of our visitation. Let us improve a period so precious. Let us no longer say,—by and by—at another time; but let us—to-day—this moment—even now. Let the pastor say, I have been insipid in my sermons, and remiss in my conduct; having been more solicitous, during the exercise of my ministry, to advance my family, than to build up the Lord's house. I will preach hereafter with fervour and with zeal. I will be vigilant, sober, rigorous, and disinterested. Let the miser say, I have riches ill acquired. I will purge my house with illicit wealth. I will overturn the altar of Mammon, and erect another to the Supreme Jehovah. Let the prodigal say, I will extinguish the unhappy fires by which I am consumed, and kindle in my bosom the flame of divine love. Ah, unhappy passions, which war against my soul; sordid attachments; irregular propensities; emotions of concupiscence; law in the members; I will know you no more. I will make with you an eternal divorce, I will from this moment open my heart to the Eternal Wisdom, who condescends to ask it.

If we are in this happy disposition, if we thus become regenerate, we shall enjoy from this moment foretastes of the glory, which God has prepared. From this moment, the truths of religion, so far from casting discouragement and terror on the soul, shall heighten its consolation and joy; from this moment, heaven shall open on this audience, paradise shall descend into your heart, and the Holy Spirit shall come and dwell there. He will bring that peace, and those joys, which pass all understanding. And, commencing our felicity on earth, he will give us the earnest of his consummation. God grant us the grace! To him, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be honour and glory, now and ever. Amen.

SERMON LXXXV.

ON THE COVENANT OF GOD WITH THE ISRAELITES.

DEUT. xxix. 10—19.

Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord your God; your captains of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, with all the men of Israel, your little ones, your wives, and thy stranger that is in thy camp, from thy heaver of wood, unto the draver of thy water: that thou shouldst enter into covenant with the Lord thy God, and into his oath which the Lord thy God maketh with thee this day: that he may establish thee to-day, for a people unto himself: and that he may be unto thee a God, as he hath been unto

thee, and as he hath sworn unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. Neither with you only do I make this covenant and this oath; but with him that standeth here with us this day before the Lord your God, and also with him that is not here this day (for ye know that we have dwelt in the land of Egypt, and how we came through the nations which ye passed by. And ye have seen their abominations, and their idols, wood and stone, silver and gold, which were among them:) lest there should be among you man or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the Lord your God, to go and serve the gods of these nations; lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood, and it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace though I walk in the imagination of mine heart.

My brethren, this sabbath is a covenant-day between God and us. This is the design of our sacraments; and the particular design of the holy supper we have celebrated in the morning service. So our catechists teach; so our children understand; and among the less instructed of this assembly there is scarcely one, if we should ask him what is a sacrament, but would answer, "it is a symbol of the covenant between God and Christians."

This being understood, we cannot observe without astonishment the slight attention, most men pay to an institution, of which they seem to entertain such exalted notions. The tendency would not be happy in conciliating your attention to the discourse, were I to commence by a humiliating portrait of the manners of the age; in which some of you would have occasion to recognise your own character. But the fact is certain, and I appeal to your consciences. Do we take the same precaution in contracting a covenant with God in the eucharist, which is exercised in a treaty on which the prosperity of the state, or domestic happiness depends? When the latter is in question, we confer with experienced men, we weigh the terms, and investigate with all possible sagacity, what is stipulated to us, and what we stipulate in return. But when we come to renew the high covenant, in which the immortal God condescends to be our God, in which we devote ourselves to him, we deem the slightest examination every way sufficient. We frequently even repel with indignation a judicious man, who would venture, by way of caution, to ask, "What are you going to do? What engagements are you about to form? What calamities are you about to bring on yourselves?"

One grand cause of this defect, proceeds, it is presumed, from our having for the most part, inadequate notions of what is called contracting, or renewing, our covenant with God. We commonly confound the terms, by vague or confused notions: hence one of the best remedies we can apply to an evil so general, is to explain their import with precision. Having searched from Genesis to Revelation, for the happiest text affording a system complete and clear on the subject, I have fixed on the words you have heard. They are part of the discourse Moses addressed to the Israelites, when he arrived on the frontiers of the promised

land, and was about to give an account of the most important ministry God had ever entrusted to any mortal.

I enter now upon the subject. And after having again implored the aid of Heaven; after having conjured you, by the compassion of God, who this day pours upon us such an abundance of favours, to give so important a subject the consideration it deserves; I lay down at once a principle generally received among Christians. The legal, and the evangelical covenant. The covenant God contracted with the Israelites by the ministry of Moses, and the covenant he has contracted this morning with you, differ only in circumstances, being in substance the same. Properly speaking, God has contracted but one covenant with man since the fall, the covenant of grace upon Mount Sinai; whose terrific glory induced the Israelites to say, "Let not God speak with us, lest we die," Exod. xx. 19. Amid so much lightnings and thunders, devouring fire, darkness and tempest; and notwithstanding this prohibition, which apparently precluded all intercourse between God and sinful man, "Take heed—go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: there shall not a hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through;" upon this mountain, I say, in this barren wilderness, were instituted the tenderest ties God ever formed with his creature: amid the awful punishments which we see so frequently fall upon those rebellious men; amid fiery serpents which exhaled against them a pestilential breath, God shed upon them the same grace he so abundantly pours on our assemblies. The Israelites, to whom Moses addresses the words of my text, had the same sacraments: they "were all baptized in the cloud; they did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual rock which followed them, and that rock was Christ," 1 Cor. x. 2, 3. The same appellations; it was said to them as to you, "If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people, for all the earth is mine," Exod. xix. 5. The same promises; for "they saw the promises afar off, and embraced them," Heb. xi. 13.

On the other hand, amid the consolatory objects which God displays before us at this period, in distinguished lustre; and notwithstanding these gracious words which resound in this church, "Grace, grace unto it." Notwithstanding this engaging voice, "Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden;" and amid the abundant mercy we have seen displayed this morning at the Lord's table; if we should violate the covenant he has established with us, you have the same cause of fear as the Jews. We have the same Judge, equally awful now, as at that period; "for our God is a consuming fire," Heb. xii. 29. We have the same judgments to apprehend. "With many of them, God was not well pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were for our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as some of them. Neither let us commit fornication as some of them committed, and fell in one day twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt

Christ as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer," 1 Cor. x. 5—10. You know the language of St. Paul.

Farther still: whatever superiority our condition may have over the Jews; in whatever more attracting manner he may have now revealed himself to us; whatever more tender bands, and gracious cords of love God may have employed, to use an expression of a prophet, will serve only to augment our misery, if we prove unfaithful. "For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" Heb. ii. 2, 3. "For ye are not come unto the mountain 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 Zion, 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 God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel. 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," Heb. xii. 18—25.

Hence the principle respecting the legal, and evangelical covenant is indisputable. The covenant God formerly contracted with the Israelites by the ministry of Moses, and the covenant he has made with us this morning in the sacrament of the holy supper are but one covenant. And what the legislator said of the first, in the words of my text, we may say of the second, in the explication we shall give. Now, my brethren, this faithful servant of God required the Israelites to consider five things in the covenant they contracted with their Maker.

I. The sanctity of the place: "Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord; that is, before his ark, the most august symbol of his presence."

II. The universality of the contract: "Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord, the captains of your tribes, your elders, your officers, and all the men of Israel: your little ones, your wives, and the stranger who is in the midst of your camp, from the hewer of wood to the drawer of water."

III. Its mutual obligation: "That he may, on the one hand, establish thee to-day for a people unto himself; and on the other, that he may be unto thee a God."

IV. The extent of the engagement: an engagement with reserve. God covenants to give himself to the Israelites, as he had sworn to their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Israelites covenant to give themselves to God, and abjure not only gross, but refined idolatry: Take heed, "lest there should be among you man or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the

Lord your God, to go and serve the gods of these nations; lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood."

V. The oath of the covenant; "Thou enterest into the covenant and the execration by an oath."

I. Moses required the Israelites to consider the sanctity of the place in which the covenant was contracted with God. It was consecrated by the divine presence. "Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord." Not only in the vague sense in which we say of all our words and actions, "God sees me; God hears me; all things are naked and open to him in whose presence I stand;" but in a sense more confined. The Most High dwells not in human temples. "What is the house ye build to me, and where is the place of my rest? Behold the heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee, much less the house that I have built." He chose, however, the Tabernacle for his habitation, and the Ark for his throne. There he delivered his oracles; there he issued his supreme commands. Moses assembled the Israelites, it is presumed, near to this majestic pavilion of the Deity, when he addressed to them the words of my text; at least I think I can prove, from correspondent passages of Scripture, that this is the true acceptation of the expression, "Before the Lord."

The Christians having more enlightened notions of the Divinity than the Jews, have the less need to be apprized that God is an omnipresent Being, and unconfined by local residences. We have been taught by Jesus Christ, that the true worshippers restrict not their devotion to Mount Zion, nor Mount Gerizim; they worship God in spirit and in truth. But let us be cautious, lest, under a pretence of removing some superstitious notions, we refine too far. God presides in a peculiar manner in our temples, and in a peculiar manner even "where two or three are met together in his name:" more especially in a house consecrated to his glory; more especially in places in which a whole nation come to pay their devotion. The more august and solemn our worship, the more is God intimately near. And what part of the worship we render to God, can be more august than that we have celebrated this morning? In what situation can the thought, "I am seen and heard of God;" in what situation can it impress our hearts if it have not impressed them this morning?

God, in contracting this covenant with the Israelites on Sinai, which Moses induced them to renew in the words of my text, apprized them that he would be found upon that holy hill. He said to Moses, "Lo I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever. Go unto the people, and sanctify them to-day, and to-morrow, and let them wash their clothes, and be ready against the third day: for the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people, upon Mount Sinai," Exod. xix. 9. It is said expressly, that Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders, should ascend the hill, and contract the covenant with God in the name of the whole congregation; they saw evident marks of the Divine presence, "a paved work of sapphire-stone, and as it were the body of heaven

in its clearness;" an emblem which God chose perhaps, because sapphire was among the Egyptians an emblem of royalty; as is apparent in the writings of those who have preserved the hieroglyphics of that nation.

The eyes of your understanding, were not they also enlightened this morning? God was present at this house; he was seated here on a throne, more luminous than the brightest sapphire, and amid the myriads of his host. It was before the presence of the Lord descended in this temple as on Sinai in holiness, that we appeared this morning; when, by the august symbols of the body and blood of the Redeemer of mankind, we came again to take the oath of fidelity we have so often uttered, and so often broken. It was in the presence of God that thou didst appear, contrite heart! Penitent sinner! he discerned thy sorrows, he collected thy tears, he attested thy repentance. It was in the presence of the Lord thy God that thou didst appear, hypocrite! He unmasked thy countenance, he pierced the specious veils which covered thy wretched heart. It was in the presence of the Lord thy God that thou didst appear, wicked man! Thou, who in the very act of seeming to celebrate this sacrament of love, which should have united thee to thy brother as the soul of Jonathan was knit to David, wouldst have crushed him under thy feet. What a motive to attention, to recollection! What a motive to banish all vain thoughts, which so frequently interrupt our most sacred exercises! What a motive to exclaim, as the patriarch Jacob, "How dreadful is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

II. Moses required the Israelites in renewing their covenant with God, to consider the universality of the contract. "Ye stand all of you before the Lord." The Hebrew by descent, and the strangers; that is, the proselytes, the heads of houses, and the hewers of wood, and drawers of water; those who filled the most distinguished offices, and those who performed the meanest services in the commonwealth of Israel; the women and the children; in a word, the whole without exception of those who belonged to the people of God. It is worthy of remark, my brethren, that God, on prescribing the principal ceremonies of the law, required every soul who refused submission to be cut off, that is, to sustain an awful anathema. He hereby signified, that no one should claim the privileges of an Israelite, without conformity to all the institutions he had prescribed. So persuaded were the people of this truth, that they would have regarded as a monster, and punished as a delinquent, any man, whether an Israelite by choice, or descent, who had refused conformity to the passions, and attendance on the solemn festivals.

Would to God that Christians entertained the same sentiments! Would to God, that your preachers could say, on sacramental occasions, as Moses said to the Jews in the memorable discourse we apply to you: "Ye stand all of you this day before the Lord your God; the captains of your tribes, your elders, your officers, your wives, your little ones, from the hewer of wood to the drawer of water." But alas! how defective are our assemblies on those solemn oc-

casions! But alas! where were you, temporizers, Nicodemuses, timorous souls? Where have you been? it is now a fortnight since you appeared before the Lord your God, to renew your covenant with him. Ah! degenerate men, worthy of the most pointed and mortifying reproof, such as that which Deborah addressed to Reuben: Why didst thou stay "among the sheep-folds, to hear the bleating of the flocks," Judges v. 16. You were with your gold, with your silver, sordid objects, to which you pay in this nation the homage which God peculiarly requires in climates so happy. You were, perhaps, in the temple of superstition; while we were assembled in the house of the Most High. You were in Egypt, preferring the garlic and onions to the milk and honey of Canaan; while we were on the borders of the promised land, to which God was about to give us admission.

Poor children of those unhappy fathers! Where were you, while we devoted our offspring to God who gave them; while we led those for admission to his table, who were adequately instructed; while we prayed for the future admission of those who are yet deprived by reason of their tender age? Ah! you were victims to the indifference, the cares, and avarice of those who gave you birth! You are associated by them with those who are enemies to the reformed name; who, unable to convince the fathers, hope, at least, to convince the children, and to extinguish in their hearts the minutest sparks of truth! O God! if thy justice have already cut off those unworthy fathers, spare, at least, according to thy clemency, these unoffending creatures, who know not yet their right hand from their left; whom they would detach from thy communion, before they are acquainted with its purity!

Would to God that this was all the cause of our complaint! Oh! where were you, while we celebrated the sacrament of the Lord's supper? You, inhabitants of these provinces, born of reformed families, professors of the reformation! You, who are married, who are engaged in business, who have attained the age of forty or fifty years, without ever participating of the holy eucharist! There was a time, my brethren, among the Jews, when a man who should have had the assurance to neglect the rites which constituted the essence of the law, would have been cut off from the people. This law has varied in regard to circumstances; but in essence it still subsists, and in all its force. Let him apply this observation, to whom it peculiarly belongs.

III. Moses required the Israelites, in renewing their covenant with God, to consider what constituted its essence: which, according to the views of the Lawgiver, was the *reciprocal engagement*. Be attentive to this term *reciprocal*; it is the soul of my definition. What constitutes the essence of a covenant, is the reciprocal engagements of the contracting parties. This is obvious from the words of my text; *that thou shouldst (stipulate or) enter*. Here we distinctly find mutual conditions; here we distinctly find that God engaged with the Israelites to be their God; and they engaged to be his people. We proved, at the commencement of this discourse, that the covenant of God with the Israelites, was in substance the same as that contracted

with Christians. This being considered, what idea ought we to form of those Christians (if we may give that name to men who can entertain such singular notions of Christianity,) who ventured to affirm, that the ideas of *conditions*, and *reciprocal engagements*, are dangerous expressions, when applied to the evangelical covenant; that what distinguishes the Jews from Christians is, that God then promised and required; whereas now he promises, but requires nothing. My brethren, had I devoted my studies to compose a history of the eccentricities of the human mind, I should have deemed it my duty to have bestowed several years in reading the books, in which those systems are contained, that I might have marked to posterity the precise degrees to which men are capable of carrying such odious opinions. But having diverted them to other pursuits, little, it is confessed, have I read of this sort of works: and all I know of the subject may nearly be reduced to this, that there are persons in these provinces who both read and believe them.

Without attacking by a long course of causes and consequences, a system so destructive of itself, we will content ourselves with a single test. Let them produce a single passage from the Scriptures, in which God requires the acquisition of knowledge, and engages to bestow it, without the least fatigue of reading, study, and reflection. Let them produce a passage, in which God requires us to possess certain virtues, and engages to communicate them, without enjoining us to subdue our senses, our temperance, our passions, our inclination, in order that we may attain them. Let them produce one passage from the Scriptures to prove, that God requires us to be saved by the merits of Jesus Christ, and engages to do it, without the slightest sorrow for our past sins,—without the least reparation of our crimes,—without precautionary measures to avoid them,—without the qualifying dispositions to participate the fruits of his passions. What am I saying! Let them produce a text which overturns the hundred, and the hundred more passages which we oppose to this gross supralapsarian system, and with which we are ever ready to confront its advocates.

We have said, my brethren, that this system destroys itself. Hence it was less with a view to attack it, that we destined this article, than to apprise some among you of having adopted it, at the very moment you dream that you reject and abhor it. We often fall into the error of the ancient Israelites; frequently forming as erroneous notions of the covenant which God has contracted with us, as they did of that he had contracted with them. This people had violated the stipulations in a manner the most notorious in the world. God did not fulfil his engagements with them, because they refused to fulfil their engagements to him. He returned the blessings he had so abundantly poured upon them; and, instead of ascribing the cause to themselves, they had the assurance to ascribe it to him. They said, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord," Jer. vii. 4. We are the children of Abraham; forget not thy covenant.—And how often have not similar sentiments been cherished in our hearts? How often has not the

same language been heard proceeding from our lips? How often, at the moment we violate our baptismal vows; at the moment we are so far depraved as to falsify the oath of fidelity we have taken in the holy sacrament; how often, in short, does it not happen, that at the moment we break our covenant with God, we require him to be faithful by alleging—the cross—the satisfaction—the blood of Jesus Christ. Ah! wretched man! fulfil thou the conditions to which thou hast subscribed; and God will fulfil those he has imposed on himself. Be thou mindful of thy engagements, and God will not be forgetful of his. Hence, what constitutes the essence of a covenant is, the mutual stipulations of the contracting parties. This is what we engaged to prove.

IV. Moses required the Israelites to consider, in renewing their covenant with God, the extent of the engagement: "That thou shouldest enter into covenant with the Lord thy God, and into his oath; that he may establish thee to-day for a people unto himself; and that he may be unto thee a God." This engagement of God with the Jews implies, that he would be their God; or to comprehend the whole in a single word, that he would procure them a happiness correspondent to the eminence of his perfections. Cases occur, in which the attributes of God are at variance with the happiness of men. It implies, for instance, an inconsistency with the divine perfections, not only that the wicked should be happy, but also that the righteous should have perfect felicity, while their purity is incomplete. There are miseries inseparable from our imperfections in holiness; and, imperfections being coeval with life, our happiness will be incomplete till after death. On the removal of this obstruction, by virtue of the covenant, God having engaged to be our God, we shall attain supreme felicity. Hence our Saviour proved by this argument, that Abraham should rise from the dead, the Lord having said to Moses, "I am the God of Abraham; God is not the God of the dead, but of the living," Matt. xxii. 32. This assertion, "I am the God of Abraham," proceeding from the mouth of the Supreme Being, was equivalent to a promise of making Abraham perfectly happy. Now he could not be perfectly happy, so long as the body to which nature had united him, was the victim of corruption. Therefore, Abraham must rise from the dead.

When God engaged with the Israelites, the Israelites engaged with God. Their covenant implies, that they should be *his people*; that is, that they should obey his precepts so far as human frailty would admit. By virtue of this clause, they engaged not only to abstain from gross idolatry, but also to eradicate the principle. Keep this distinction in view: it is clearly expressed in my text. "Ye have seen their abominations, and their idols, wood and stone, silver and gold." Take heed, "lest there should be among you man or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away from the Lord, to go and serve the gods of these nations." Here is the gross act of idolatry. "Lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood." Here is the principle. I would not enter into a critical

illustration of the original terms which our versions render "gall and wormwood." They include a metaphor taken from a man, who, finding in his field weeds pernicious to his grain, should crop the strongest, but neglecting to eradicate the plant, incurs the inconvenience he wished to avoid.

The metaphor is pertinent. In every crime we consider both the plant and the root productive of gall and wormwood; or, if you please, the crime itself, and the principle which produced it. It is not enough to crop, we must eradicate. It is not enough to be exempt from crimes, we must exterminate the principle. For example, in theft, there is both the root, and the plant productive of wormwood and gall. There is theft gross and refined; the act of theft, and the principle of theft. To steal the goods of a neighbour is the act, the gross act of theft; but, to indulge an exorbitant wish for the acquisition of wealth;—to make enormous charges;—to resist the solicitations of a creditor for payment;—to be indelicate as to the means of gaining money;—to reject the mortifying claims of restitution, is refined fraud; or, if you please, the principle of fraud productive of wormwood and gall.—It is the same with regard to impurity; there is the act and the principle. The direct violation of the command, "thou shalt not commit adultery," is the gross act. But to form intimate connexions with persons habituated to the vice, to read licentious novels, to sing immodest songs, to indulge wanton airs, is that refined impurity, that principle of the gross act, that root which speedily produces wormwood and gall.

V. Moses lastly required the Israelites to consider the oath and execration with which their acceptance of the covenant was attended: "that thou shouldest enter into covenant," and into *this oath*. What is meant by their entering into the oath of execration? That they pledged themselves by oath, to fulfil every clause of the covenant; and in case of violation, to subject themselves to all the curses God had denounced against those who should be guilty of so perfidious a crime.

And, if you would have an adequate idea of those curses, read the awful chapter preceding that from which we have taken our text, "If thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and do all his commandments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day, then all these curses shall come upon thee. Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field; in the fruit of thy body, in the fruit of thy land, in the increase of thy cattle. Cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and cursed shalt thou be when thou goest out. The Lord shall send upon thee cursing and vexation, in all thou settest thine hand for to do, until thou be destroyed; because of the wickedness of thy doings, whereby thou hast forsaken me. And thy heaven, that is over thy head, shall be brass; and the earth that is under thee shall be iron. The Lord shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies, thou shalt go out one way against them, and flee seven ways before them; and thou shalt be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth. And thou shalt grope at noonday, as the blind gropeth in dark-

ness. Thy sons and thy daughters shall be given unto another people. Thine eyes shall see it; because thou servest not the Lord thy God with joyfulness, and gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things. Therefore thou shalt serve thine enemies which the Lord shall send against thee, in hunger, nakedness, and want. The Lord shall bring against thee a nation swift as the eagle; a nation of fierce countenance. He shall besiege thee in all thy gates, until thy high and fenced walls come down, wherein thou trustedst. And thou shalt eat the fruit of thy own body, the flesh of thy sons and thy daughters, in the siege, and in the straitness. So that the man that is tender among you, and very delicate, his eye shall be evil towards his brother, and towards the wife of his bosom; so that he will not give to any of them of the flesh of his children whom he shall eat." Deut. xxviii. 15, &c.

These are but part of the execrations which the infractors of the covenant were to draw upon themselves. And to convince them that they must determine, either not to contract the covenant, or subject themselves to all its execrations, God caused it to be ratified by the awful ceremony, which is recorded in the chapter immediately preceding the quotations I have made. He commanded one part of the Levites to ascend Mount Ebal, and pronounce the curses, and all the people to say, Amen. By virtue of this command, the Levites said, "Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother; and all the people said, Amen. Cursed be he that perverteth the judgment of the stranger, the fatherless, and widow; and all the people said, Amen. Cursed be he that smiteth his neighbour secretly; and all the people said, Amen. Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them; and all the people said, Amen;" Deut. xvii. 17—26.

The words which we render, "that thou shouldest enter into covenant," have a peculiar energy in the original, and signify, "that thou shouldest pass into covenant." The interpreters of whom I speak, think they refer to a ceremony formerly practised, in contracting covenants, of which we have spoken on other occasions.

On immolating the victims, they divided the flesh into two parts, placing the one opposite to the other. The contracting parties passed in the open space between the two, thereby testifying their consent to be slaughtered as those victims, if they did not religiously confirm the covenant contracted in so mysterious a manner.

The sacred writings afford examples of this custom. In the fifteenth chapter of Genesis, Abraham, by the divine command, took a heifer of three years old, and a ram of the same age, and dividing them in the midst, he placed the parts opposite to each other: "and behold, a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp passed between those pieces." This was a symbol that the Lord entered into an engagement with the patriarch, according to the existing custom: hence it is said, that "the Lord made a covenant with Abraham."

In the thirty-fourth chapter of the prophecies of Jeremiah, we find a correspondent pas-

sage. "I will give the men that have transgressed my covenant, which have not performed the words of the covenant, that they made before me, when they cut the calf in twain, and passed between the parts, the princes of Judah,—I will even give them into the hands of their enemies." If we do not find the whole of these ceremonies observed, when God contracted the covenant on Sinai, we should mark what occurs in the twenty-fourth chapter of Exodus; "Moses sent the young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt-offerings, and sacrificed peace-offerings of oxen unto the Lord. And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basins: and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar; and the other half he sprinkled on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you. And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, all that the Lord hath said, will we do, and be obedient. What is the import of this ceremony, if it is not the same which is expressed in my text, that the Israelites, in contracting the covenant with God, enter into the execration oath; subjecting themselves, if ever they should presume deliberately to violate the stipulations, to be treated as the victims immolated on Sinai, and as those which Moses probably offered, when it was renewed, on the confines of Palestine.

Perhaps one of my hearers may say to himself, that the terrific circumstances of this ceremony regarded the Israelites alone, whom God addressed in lightnings and thunders from the top of Sinai. What! was there then no victim immolated, when God contracted his covenant with us? Does not St. Paul expressly say, that "without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins?" Heb. ix. 22. And what were the lightnings, what were the thunders of Sinai? What were all the execrations, and all the curses of the law? They were the just punishments every sinner shall suffer, who neglects an entrance into favour with God. Now, these lightnings, these thunders, these execrations, these curses, did they not all unite against the slaughtered victim, when God contracted his covenant with us;—I would say, against the head of Jesus Christ? O my God! what revolting sentiments did not such complicated calamities excite in the soul of the Saviour! The idea alone, when presented to his mind, a little before his death, constrained him to say, "Now is my soul troubled," John xii. 17. And on approaching the hour; "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death. O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me," Matt. xxvi. 38, 39. And on the cross; "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" Matt. xxvii. 46.—Sinner! here is the victim immolated on contracting thy covenant with God! Here are the sufferings thou didst subject thyself to endure, if ever thou shouldest perfidiously violate it! Thou hast entered, thou hast passed into covenant, and into the oath of execration which God has required.

APPLICATION.

My brethren, no man should presume to dis-

guise the nature of his engagements, and the high characters of the gospel. Because, on the solemn festival-day, when we appear in the presence of the Lord our God;—when we enter into covenant with him; and after the engagement, when we come to ratify it in the holy sacrament;—we not only enter, but we also pass into covenant, according to the idea attached to the term: we pass between the parts of the victim divided in sacrifice; we pass between the body and blood of Christ, divided from each other to represent the Saviour's death. We then say, "Lord! I consent, if I should violate the stipulations of thy covenant, and if after the violation, I do not recover by repentance, I consent, that thou shouldst treat me as thou hast treated thy own Son, in the garden of Gethsemane, and on Calvary. Lord! I consent that thou shouldst shoot at me all the thunderbolts and arrows which were shot against him. I agree, that thou shouldst unite against me all the calamities which were united against him. And, as it implies a contradiction, that so weak a mortal as I should sustain so tremendous a punishment, I agree, that the duration of my punishment should compensate for the defects of its degree; that I should suffer eternally in the abyss of hell, the punishments I could not have borne in the limited duration of time."

Do not take this proposition for a hyperbole, or a rhetorical figure. To enter into covenant with God, is to accept the gospel precisely as it was delivered by Jesus Christ, and to submit to all its stipulations. This gospel expressly declares, that "fornicators, that liars, that drunkards, and the covetous, shall not inherit the kingdom of God." On accepting the gospel, we accept this clause. Therefore, on accepting the gospel, we submit to be excluded the kingdom of God, if we are either drunkards, or liars, or covetous, or fornicators; and if after the commission of any of these crimes, we do not recover by repentance. And what is submission to this clause, if it is not to enter into the execration oath, which God requires of us, on the ratification of this covenant?

Ah! my brethren, we unto us should we pronounce against ourselves so dreadful an oath, without taking the precautions suggested by the gospel to avert these awful consequences. Ah! my brethren, if we are not sincerely resolved to be faithful to God, let us make a solemn vow before we leave this temple, never to communicate, never to approach the Lord's table.

What! never approach his table! never communicate! Disdain not to enter into the covenant which God does not disdain to make with sinners! What a decision! Great God, what an awful decision! And should this be the effect of my discourse! Alas! my brethren, without this covenant, without this table, without this oath, we are utterly lost! It is true, we shall not be punished as violators of vows we never made: but we shall be punished as madmen; who, being actually in the abyss of perdition, reject the Redeemer, whose hand is extended to draw us thence. Let us seek that hand, let us enter into this covenant with God.

The engagements, without which the covenant cannot be confirmed, have, I grant, some-

thing awfully solemn. The oath, the oath of execration which God tenders, is, I farther allow, very intimidating. But what constitutes the fear, constitutes also the delight and consolation. For what end does God require these engagements? For what end does he require this oath? Because it is his good pleasure, that we should unite ourselves to him in the same close, constant, and indissoluble manner as he unites himself to us.

Let us be sincere, and he will give us power to be faithful. Let us ask his aid, and he will not withhold the grace destined to lead us to this noble end. Let us say to him, "Lord, I do enter into this oath of execration; but I do it with trembling. Establish my wavering soul; confirm my feeble knees; give me the victory; make me more than conqueror in all the conflicts, by which the enemy of my salvation comes to separate me from thee. Pardon all the faults into which I may be drawn by human frailty. Grant, if they should suspend the sentiments of fidelity I vow to thee, that they may never be able to eradicate them." These are the prayers which God loves, these are the prayers which he hears. May he grant us to experience them! Amen.

SERMON LXXXVI.

THE SEAL OF THE COVENANT.

(For the day of Pentecost.)

2 COR. i. 21, 22.

He which establisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

How distinguished soever this sabbath may be, it affords a humiliating consideration to us. How glorious soever the event might be to the church, whose anniversary we now celebrate, it cannot be recollected, without deploring the difference between what God once achieved for his saints, and what he is doing at the present period. In the first Pentecost, the heavens visibly opened to the brethren; but we, we alas! are unable to pierce the vaults of this church. The Holy Spirit then miraculously descended with inspiration on those holy men, who were designated to carry the light of the gospel throughout the world; but now, it is solely by the efforts of meditation and study, that your preachers communicate knowledge and exhortation. The earth shook; the most abstruse mysteries were explained; languages the least intelligible became instantaneously familiar; the sick were healed; the dead were raised to life; Ananias and Sapphira expired at the apostles' feet; and such a multitude of prodigies were then achieved, in order to give weight to the ministry of the first preachers of the gospel, that no one among us can be unacquainted with those extraordinary events. But good wishes, prayers, entreaties, are all we can now exert to insinuate into your hearts, and conciliate your attention.

What then is the Holy Spirit, who once descended with so much lustre on the primitive

Christians, refused to us? What then! shall we have no participation in the glory of that day? shall we talk of the prodigies seen by the infant church, solely to excite regret at the darkness of the dispensation, in which it has pleased God to give us birth? Away with the thought! The change is only in the exterior aspect, not in the basis and substance of Christianity; whatever essential endowments the holy spirit once communicated to the primitive Christians, he now communicates to us. Hear the words we have read, "He which stablisheth you with us, in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." On these operations of the Holy Spirit in the heart, we now purpose to treat, and on which we shall make three kinds of observations.

I. It is designed to develop the manner in which this operation is expressed in the words of my text.

II. To explain its nature, and prove its reality.

III. To trace the disposition of the man who retards, and the man who farther the operations of the Holy Spirit.

This comprises the outlines of our discourse.

I. We shall easily comprehend the manner in which St. Paul expresses the operation of the Holy Spirit, if we follow the subsequent rules.

1. Let us reduce the metaphor to its genuine import. St. Paul wishes to prove the truth and certainty of the promises, God had given the church by his ministry; "All the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen," 2 Cor. i. 20. These are Hebrew modes of speech. The Jews, in order to designate deceitful speeches, say, that there are men with whom yea is nay, and nay is yea; on the contrary, the yea of a good man is yea, and nay, is nay. Hence the maxim of a celebrated Rabbi, "Let the disciples of the wise, give and receive in fidelity and truth, saying, yea, yea; nay, nay." And it was in allusion to this mode of speech, that our Saviour said to his disciples, "Let your yea be yea, and your nay be nay; whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil," Matt. v. 37.

St. Paul, to prove that the promises God has given us in his word, are yea and amen; that is, sure and certain, says, he has established them in a threefold manner: by the *anointing*, the *seal*, and the *earnest*. These several terms express the same idea, and mark the diversified operations of the Holy Spirit, for the confirmation of the Evangelical promises. However, if another will assert, that we are to understand different operations by these three terms, I will not controvert his opinion. By the *unction*, we may here understand, the miraculous endowments afforded to the apostles, and to a vast number of the primitive Christians, and the inferences enlightened men would consequently draw in favour of Christianity. It is a metaphor taken from the oil poured by the special command of God, on the head of persons selected for grand achievements, and particularly on the head of kings and priests. It implied that God had designated those men for distinguished offices, and communicated to them the necessary en-

dowments for the adequate discharge of their duty. Under this idea, St. John represents the gift of the Holy Spirit, granted to the whole church: "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things," 1 John, ii. 20.

By the *seal*, of which the apostle here says, "God hath sealed us," the sacraments may be understood. The metaphor is derived from the usages of society in affixing seals to covenants and treaties. Under this design are the sacraments represented in the Scriptures. The term is found applied to those exterior institutions in the fourth chapter of St. Paul's epistle to the Romans. It is there said that "Abraham received the sign of circumcision, as a seal of the righteousness of faith. By the institution of this sign, to Abraham and his posterity, God distinguished the Jews from every nation of the earth; marked them as his own, and blessed them with the fruits of evangelical justification. This is the true import, provided the interior grace be associated with the exterior sign; I would say, sanctification, or the image of God; purity being inculcated on us in the Scriptures by the symbol of a seal. This, in our opinion, is the import of that fine passage, so distorted by the schoolmen; "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his: let every one that nameth," (or invoceth) "the name of Christ depart from iniquity," 2 Tim. ii. 19. What is God's seal? How does God know his own?" Is it by the exterior badges of sacraments? Is it by "the circumcision which is in the flesh?" No, it is by this more hallowed test, "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

In fine, by the *EARNESTS of the Spirit*, we understand those foretastes of heaven which God communicates to some of those he has designated to celestial happiness. An earnest (or *earnest* as in the Greek.) is a deposit of part of the purchase money for a bargain. St. Paul says, and in the sense attached to the term, "We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burthened: not that we would be unclothed, but clothed, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God; who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit," 2 Cor. v. 4, 5.

Whether, therefore, each of these terms, *unction*, *seal*, *earnest*, express the same thing; as I think could be proved, by several texts of Scripture, in which they are promiscuously used;—or whether they convey three distinct ideas;—they all indicate that God confirms to us the evangelical promises in the way we have described.

This is the idea, my brethren, one should attach to the metaphors in our text. In order to comprehend the Scriptures, you should always recollect that they abound with these forms of speech. The sacred writers lived in a warm climate; whose inhabitants had a natural vivacity of imagination, very different from us who reside in a colder region, and under a cloudy sky; who have consequently a peculiar gravity, and dulness of temperature. Seldom, therefore, did the men of whom we have been speaking, employ the simple style. They borrowed bold figures; they magnified objects;

they delighted in amplitude and hyperbole. The Holy Spirit, employing the pen of the sacred authors, did not change, but sanctify their temperature. It was his pleasure that they should speak in the language used in their own time; and avail themselves of those forms of speech, without which they would neither have been heard nor understood.

2. Let us reduce the metaphor to precision, and the figure to truth. But under a notion of reducing it to truth, let us not enfeeble its force; and wishful to reject imaginary mysteries, let us not destroy those which are real. This second caution is requisite in order to supersede the false glosses which have been attached to the text. Two of these we ought particularly to reject;—the one on the word *Spirit*;—the other on the words, *seal, unction and earnest*, which we have endeavoured to explain.

Some divines have asserted, that the word *Spirit*, ought to be arranged in the class of metaphors designed to express, not a person of the Godhead, but an action of Providence; and that we should attach this sense to the term, not only in this text, but also in all those we adduce to prove, that there is a divine person distinct from the Father and the Son, called the Holy Spirit.

We have frequently, in this pulpit, avowed our ignorance concerning the nature of the divine essence, if I may be allowed the expression. We have often declared, that we can determine nothing concerning God, except what we are obliged to know from the works he has created, and from the truths he has revealed. We have more than once acknowledged, that even those truths, which we trace from reason and revelation, are as yet very imperfect; and that the design of the Scriptures, when speaking of God, is less to reveal what he is, than the relation in which he stands to us. Hence I conceive, that the utmost moderation, and deference of judgment; and, if I may so speak, the utmost pyrrhonism, on this subject, is all that reasonable men can expect, from the philosopher and the divine.

When we find in the Scriptures, certain ideas of the Divinity;—ideas, which have not the slightest dissonance to those afforded by his works; ideas, moreover, clearly expressed and repeated in a variety of places, we admit them without hesitation, and condemn those, who, by a false notion concerning propriety of thought, and precision of argument, refuse their assent. Now, it seems to me, that they fall into this mistake who refuse to acknowledge, in the texts we adduce, a declaration of a Divine Person.

I shall cite one single passage only from the sixteenth chapter of the gospel by St. John; "When he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and show it unto you." I challenge here, this propriety of thought, and precision of argument, of which the persons we attack make a profession, I had almost said a parade, to say whether these can

obstruct the perception of three persons in the words we have read? Can they obstruct our perceiving the Father, to whom all things belong; the Son, who participates in all things which belong to the Father: the Holy Spirit, who receives and reveals those things to the church? I ask again, whether by this propriety of thought, and precision of argument, we can understand an action of Providence, from what is ascribed to the Holy Spirit? And whether, without offering violence to the laws of language, one may substitute for the term *spirit*, the words *action* and *Providence*, and thus paraphrase the whole passage; "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when this action of Providence is come, even this action of Providence, it will guide you into all the truth; for it shall not speak of itself; but whatsoever it shall hear, that shall it speak; for it shall receive of mine, and shall show them unto you." We frankly confess, my brethren, nothing but the reluctance we have to submit our notions to the decision of Supreme Wisdom can excite an apprehension, that a distinct person is not designated in the words we have cited. And, when it is once admitted, that the Holy Spirit sent to the church is a divine person, can one, on comparing the words of our text with those we have quoted, resist the conviction, that the same Spirit is intended in both these passages?

In the class of those, who, under a pretext of not admitting imaginary mysteries, reject such as are real, we arrange those divines, who deny the agency of this adorable person on the heart, in what the apostle calls, *unction, seal, and earnest*: those supralapsarian teachers, who suppose, that all the operation of the Holy Spirit on the regenerate, consists in enabling him to preach; that he does not afford them the slightest interior aid, to surmount those difficulties which naturally obstruct a compliance with the grand design of preaching. The Scriptures assert, in so many places, the inefficacy of preaching without those aids, that no doubt can, in my opinion, be admissible upon the subject. But, if some divines have degraded this branch of Christian theology, by an incautious defence, to them the blame attaches, and not to those who have established it upon solid proof. Those divines, who, by a mode of teaching much more calculated to confound, than defend, orthodox opinions, have spoken of the unction of the Spirit, as though it annihilated the powers of nature, and as though they made a jest;—yes, a jest, of the exhortations, promises, and threatenings addressed to us in the Scriptures:—Those divines, if there are such, shall give an account to God for the discord they have occasioned in the church, and even for the heresies to which their mode of expounding the Scriptures has given birth.

You, however, brethren, embrace no doctrines but those explicitly revealed in the Scriptures;—you, who admit the agency of the Holy Spirit on the heart, unsolicitous to define its nature. You, who say with Jesus Christ, "the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth," John

ni. 8. You, who especially admit, that the more conscious we are of the want of grace, the more we should exert our natural gifts; that, the more need we have of interior aids, the more we should profit by exterior assistance, by the books we have at hand, by the favourable circumstances in which we may be providentially placed, by the ministry which God has graciously established among us! Fear not to follow those faithful guides, and to adopt precautions so wise; under a pretext of reducing metaphors to precision, never enfeeble their force; and, under a plea of not admitting imaginary mysteries, never reject the real. This was our second rule.

And here is the third. In addresses to society in general, what belongs to each should be distinguished. St. Paul here addressed the whole church: but the whole of its numerous members could not have been in the same situation. Hence, one of the greatest faults we commit in expounding the Scriptures, and especially in expounding texts which treat of the agency of the Spirit, is, the neglecting to distinguish what we had designed. This is one cause of the little fruit produced by sermons. We address a church, whose religious attainments are very unequal. Some are scarcely initiated into knowledge and virtue; others approach perfection; and some hold a middle rank between the two. We address to this congregation certain general discourses, which cannot apply with equal force to all; it belongs to each of our hearers, to examine how far each argument has reference to his own case.

Apply now to the words of our text the general maxim we have laid down; you will recollect the ideas we have attached to the terms used by the apostle, to express the agency of the Holy Spirit on the heart. We have said that these terms, *unction, seal, earnest*, excite three ideas. And we can never understand those Scriptures, which speak of the operations of the Holy Spirit, unless those three effects of the divine agency are distinguished. Every Christian has not been confirmed by the Spirit of God in all those various ways. All have not received the threefold unction, the threefold seal, the threefold earnest. To some the Holy Spirit has confirmed the first, availing himself of their ministry for the achievement of miracles, or by causing them to feel that a religion, in favour of which so many prodigies, have been achieved, could not be false. To others, the second confirmation was added to the first; at the moment he carried conviction to the mind, he sanctified the heart. With regard to others, he communicated more; not only persuading them that a religion, which promises celestial felicity, is true; not only enabling them to conform to the conditions on which this felicity is promised, but he also gives them foretastes here below.

II. and III. I could better explain my sentiments, did I dare engage, in discussing the second part of my subject, to illustrate the nature, and prove the reality of the Spirit's agency on the heart. But how can I attempt the discussion of so vast a subject in one discourse, when so many considerations restrict

me to brevity? We shall, therefore, speak of the nature and reality of the Spirit's agency on the heart, so far only as is necessary to furnish matter for our third head, on which we are now entering; and which is designed to trace the dispositions that favour, and such as retard, the operations of the Spirit: a most important discussion, which will develop the causes of the anniversary of Pentecost being unavailing in the church, and point out the dispositions for its worthy celebration.

What we shall advance on this subject, is founded on a maxim, to which I solicit your peculiar attention; namely, that every motion of the Spirit on the heart of good men, requires correspondent co-operation; without which his agency would be unavailing. The refusal to co-operate is called in Scripture, "quenching—grieving—resisting—and doing despite to the Spirit." Now, according to the style of St. Paul, this quenching—grieving—resisting—and doing despite to the Holy Spirit, is to render his operation unavailing.

Adequately to comprehend this maxim, and at the same time to avoid a mistaken theology, and a corrupt morality, concerning the agency of the Spirit, make the following reflection: that the Holy Spirit may perhaps be considered in one of these three respects; either as the omnipotent God; or as a wise lawgiver: or as a wise lawgiver and the omnipotent God, in the same character. Hence the man on whom he works, may perhaps be considered, either, as a physical, or a moral being; or as a being in whom both these qualities associate. To consider the Holy Spirit in the work of regeneration as the omnipotent God, and the man for whose conversion he exerts his agency, as a being purely physical: and to affirm that the Holy Spirit acts solely by irresistible influence, man being simply passive, is, in our opinion, a morality extremely corrupt. To consider the Holy Spirit simply as a lawgiver, and man merely as a moral being, capable of vice and virtue; and to affirm, that the Holy Spirit only proposes his precepts, and that man obeys them, unassisted by the divine energy attendant on their promulgation, is to propagate a theology equally erroneous. But, to consider the Holy Spirit as the omnipotent God, and legislator in the same character, and man as a being both moral and physical, is to harmonize the laws moral and divine, and to avoid, on a subject so exceedingly controverted, the two equally dangerous rocks, against which so many divines have cast themselves away.

The adoption of this last system (which is here the wisest choice,) implies an acknowledgment, that there are dispositions in man which retard, and dispositions which cherish, the successful agency of God on the heart. What are these? They regard the three ways, in which we said the Holy Spirit confirms to the soul the promises of "immortality and life." These he confirms, first, by the persuasion he affords, concerning the truth of the gospel; causing it to spring up in the heart on review of the miracles performed by the first Christians. Secondly, he confirms them by the inward work of sanctification. Thirdly, he confirms them by foretastes of celestial de-

light, communicated to some Christians, even here below. Each of these points we shall resume in its order.

First, the gift of miracles was a seal, which God affixed to the ministry of the first heralds of the gospel. Miracles are called seals: such is the import of those distinguished words of Christ; "Labour not for the meat that perisheth; but for that meat which endureth unto eternal life, which the Son of man shall give unto you, for him hath the Father sealed," John vi. 27. The seal which distinguished Jesus Christ, was the gift of miracles he had received of God, to demonstrate the divine authority of his mission: so he himself affirmed to the multitudes; "The works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness that the Father hath sent me," John v. 36.

The inference, with regard to the Lord, is of equal force with regard to the disciples. The miraculous endowments, granted to them, sanctioned their mission; as the mission of the Master was sanctioned by the miraculous powers with which it was accompanied. What seal more august could have been affixed to it? What demonstrations more conclusive can we ask of a religion which announces them to us, than all these miracles which God performed for its confirmation? Could the Deity have communicated his omnipotence to impostors? Could he even have wished to lead mankind into mistake? Could he have allowed heaven and earth, the sea and land to be shaken for the sanction of lies?

As there are dispositions which retard the agency of the Spirit, who comes to impress the heart with truth, so there are others which favour and cherish his work. With regard to those which retard, I would not only include infidelity of heart, whose principle is malice; I would not only include here those eccentric men, who resist the most palpable proofs, and evident demonstrations, and think they have answered every argument by saying, "It is not true. I doubt, I deny."—Men that seem to have made a model of the Pharisees, who, when unable to deny the miracles of Christ, and to elude their force, ascribed them to the devil. This is a fault so notorious, as to supersede the necessity of argument. But I would also convince you Christians, that the neglect of studying the history of the miracles we celebrate to-day, is an awful source of subversion to the agency we are discussing. Correspond, by serious attention and profound recollection, to the efforts of the Holy Spirit in demonstrating the truth of your religion. On festivals of this kind, a Christian should recollect and digest, if I may so speak, the distinguished proofs which God gave of the truth of Christianity on the day whose anniversary we now celebrate. He should say to himself: "I wish to know, whether advantage be taken of my simplicity, or whether I am addressed as a rational being; when I am told, that the first heralds of the gospel performed the miracles, attributed to their agency."

"I wish to know, whether the miracles of the apostles have been narrated, (Acts ii.) and inquire whether those holy men have named the place, the time, the witnesses, and circum-

stances of the miracles: whether it be true that those miracles were performed in the most public places, amid the greatest concourses of people, in presence of Persians, of Medes, of Parthians, of Elamites, of dwellers in Mesopotamia, in Judea, in Cappadocia, in Lybia; among Cretes, Arabs, and Jews.

"I wish to know, in what way these miracles were foretold; whether it be true, that these were the characteristics of evangelical preachers, which the prophets had traced so many ages before the evangelical period; and whether we may not give another interpretation to these distinguished predictions: 'Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land. And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come,' Hag. ii. 5, 6. I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy. Your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, fire, and pillars of smoke," Joel ii. 28—30.

"I wish to know, how these miracles were received; whether it be true, that the multitudes, the myriads of proselytes, who had it in their power to investigate the authenticity of the facts, sacrificed their ease, their reputation, their fortune, their life, and every comfort which martyrs and confessors have been accustomed to sacrifice: I wish to know, whether the primitive Christians made these sacrifices on embracing a religion chiefly founded on a belief of miracles.

"I wish to know, in what way these miracles were opposed; whether it be true, that there is this distinguished difference between the way in which these facts were attacked in the first centuries, and in the present. Whether it be true, that instead of saying, as our infidels assert, that these facts were fabulous, the Celsuses, the Porphyrys, the Zosimuses, who lived in the ages in which these facts were recent, took other methods to evade their force; attributing them to the powers of magic, or confounding them with other pretended miracles."

This is the study to which we should proceed; we be to us if we regard it as a tedious task, and excuse ourselves on inconsiderable pretexts! Is there any thing on earth which should interest us more than those important truths, announced by the apostles; and especially those magnificent promises they have delivered in the name of God? Mortal as we all are, merely appearing on the stage of life, most of us having already run the greater part of our course, called every moment to enter into the invisible world, destined there to destruction, or eternal existence, is there a question more interesting than this? "Is it for destruction, or eternal existence, I am designated by my Maker? Are the notions I entertain of immortality; of pleasures for evermore at God's right hand; fulness of joy around his throne; of intimate intercourse with the adorable Being; of society with angels, with archangels, with cherubim and seraphim; for ages, millions of ages, an eternity with the blessed God, are the notions I entertain, realities, or

chimeras?" No, my brethren, neither in a council of war, nor legislative assembly, nor philosophical society, never were questions more important discussed. A rational man should have nothing more at heart than their elucidation. Nothing whatever should afford him greater satisfaction, than when engaged in researches of this nature, in which he discovers some additional evidence of immortality; and when he finds stated with superior arguments, the demonstrations we have of the Holy Spirit's descent upon the apostles, the anniversary of which we now celebrate.

2. If there are dispositions which retard, and cherish, the first agency of the Holy Spirit on the heart, there are also dispositions which retard and cherish the second. The Holy Spirit, we have said in the second place, confirms to us the promises of the gospel, by communicating the grace of sanctification. What success can be expected from his gracious efforts to purify the heart, while you oppose the works? Why have those gracious efforts hitherto produced, with regard to most of you, so little effect? Because you still oppose. Desirous to make you conscious of the worth of holiness, the Holy Spirit addresses you for that purpose in the most pointed sermons. In proportion as the preacher addresses the ear, the Holy Spirit inwardly addresses the heart, alarming it by that declaration, "The unclean shall not inherit the kingdom of God," 1 Cor. vi. 10. But you have opposed his gracious work; you have abandoned the heart to irregular affection; you have pursued objects calculated to inflame concupiscence, or enkindle it with additional vigour.

The Holy Spirit, desirous to humble the heart, exhibits the most mortifying portraits of your weakness, your ignorance, your dissipation, your indigence, your mortality and corruption,—a train of humiliating considerations in which your own character may be recognised. But you have opposed his work; you have swelled your mind with every idea calculated to give plausibility to the sophisms of vanity; you have flattered yourselves with your birth, your titles, your dignities, your affected literature, and imaginary virtues. Improve this thought, my brethren, confess your follies; yield to the operations of grace, which would reclaim you from the sins of the age, and make you partakers of the divine purity, in order to a participation of the divine felicity. Practise those virtues which the apostles so strongly enforced in their sermons, which they so highly exemplified in their lives, and so powerfully pressed in their writings.

Above all, my brethren, let us follow the emotions of that virtue which is the true test, by which the Lord knows his own people, I mean charity: such are the words of Christ, which we cannot too attentively regard; "This is my commandment that ye love one another," John xv. 12. When I speak of charity, I would not only prompt you to share your superfluities with the indigent, and to do good offices for your neighbours. But a man, who, when celebrating the anniversary of a day in which God's love was so abundantly shed upon the church, in which the Christians became united by ties so tender, feels reluctance to afford these slight

marks of the love we describe;—a man who, rapt up in his own sufficiency, and in the ideas he forms of his own grandeur, sees nothing worthy of himself in the religion God has prescribed, would, however, converse with his Maker, and receive his benefits, but who shuts his door against his neighbours, abandons them in their poverty, trouble, and obscurity;—such a man, far from being a Christian, has not even a notion of Christianity. At the moment he congratulates himself with being distinguished from the rest of mankind by the seal of God, he has only the seal of the devil,—inflexibility and pride.

On these days I would, my brethren, require concerning charity, marks more noble, and tests more infallible, than alms and good offices: I would animate you with the laudable ambition of carrying charity as far as it was carried by Jesus Christ. To express myself in the language of Scripture, I would animate you to love your neighbour as Jesus Christ has loved you. In what way has Jesus Christ loved you? What was the grand object of his love to man? It was salvation. So also should the salvation of your neighbours be the object of your love. Be penetrated with the wretchedness of people "without hope, without God in the world," Eph. ii. 12. Avail yourselves of the prosperity of your navigation and commerce, to send the gospel into districts, where creatures made in the image of God, know not him that made them, but live in the grossest darkness of the pagan world.

Be likewise impressed with the wretchedness of those, who, amid the light of the gospel, have their eyes so veiled as to exclude its lustre. Employ for the great work of reformation, not gibbets and tortures, not fire and fagot, but persuasion, instruction, and every means best calculated for causing the truth to be known and esteemed.

Be touched with the miseries of people educated in our own communion, and who believe what we believe; but who through the fear of man, through worldly-mindedness, and astonishing hardness of heart, are obstructed from following the light. Address to them the closest exhortations. Offer them a participation of your abundance. Endeavour to move them towards the interests of their children. Pray for them; pray for the peace of Jerusalem; pray that God would raise the ruins of our temples: that he would gather the many scattered flocks; pray him to reinvigorate the Christian blood in these veins, which seems destitute of heat and circulation. Pray him, my fellow-countrymen, that he would have pity on your country, in which one prejudice succeeds another. Be afflicted with the affliction of Joseph, be mindful of your native land.

3. We have said lastly, that the Holy Spirit confirms the promise of celestial felicity, by a communication of its foretastes here below to highly-favoured souls. On this subject, I seem suspended between the fear of giving countenance to enthusiasm, and of suppressing one of the most consolatory truths of the Christian religion. It is, however, a fact, that there are highly-favoured souls, to whom the Holy Spirit confirms the promises of celestial happiness, by a communication of its foretastes here on earth.

By foretastes of celestial happiness, I mean the impression made on the mind of a Christian, of the sincerest piety, by this consolatory thought; "My soul is immortal: death, which seems to terminate, only changes the mode of my existence: my body also shall participate of eternal life; the dust shall be reanimated, and its scattered particles collected into a glorious form."

By foretastes of celestial happiness, I mean, the unshaken confidence a Christian feels, even when assailed with doubts,—when oppressed with deep affliction, and surrounded with the veil of death, which conceals the objects of his hope: this assurance enables him to say, "I know in whom I have believed, and I am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day," 2 Tim. i. 12. "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God," Job xix. 25, 26. "O God, though thou slay me, yet will I trust in thee. Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil," Ps. xxii. 4. "I have set the Lord always before me; because he is on my right hand, I shall not be moved," Ps. xvi. 8.

By foretastes of celestial happiness, I mean, the delights of glorified saints in heaven, which some find while dwelling on earth; when far from the multitude, secluded from care, and conversing with the blessed God, they can express themselves in these words, "My soul is satisfied with marrow and fatness, when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate upon thee in the night watches," Ps. lxxiii. 5, 6. "Our conversation is in heaven," Phil. iii. 20.

By foretastes of celestial happiness, I mean, the impatience which some of the faithful feel, to terminate a life of calamities and imperfections; and the satisfaction they receive every evening on reflecting that another day of their pilgrimage is passed; that they are one step nearer to eternity. "In this tabernacle we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven," 2 Cor. v. 2. "My desire is to depart, and to be with Christ," Phil. i. 23. Why is his chariot so long in coming? Why do his coursers proceed so slow? "When shall I come and appear before God," Ps. xl. 2.

My brethren, in what language have I been speaking? How few understand it! To how many does it seem an unknown tongue! But we have to blame ourselves alone if we are not anointed in this way, and sealed by the Holy Ghost; and if we do not participate in these foretastes of eternity, which are the genuine earnest of heaven. But ah! our taste is spoiled in the world. We have contracted the low habits of seeking happiness solely in the recreations of the age. Most, even of those who conform to the precepts of piety, do it by constraint. We obey God, merely because he is God. We feel not the unutterable sweetness in these appellations of Father, Friend, and Benefactor, under which he is revealed by religion. We do not conceive that his sole object, with regard to man, is to make him happy. But the world,—the world,—is the object

which attracts the heart, and the heart of the best amongst us.

Let us then love the world, seeing it has pleased God to unite us to it by ties so tender. Let us endeavour to advance our families, to add a little lustre to our name, and some consistency to what is denominated fortune. But O! after all, let us regard these things in their true light. Let us recollect that, upon earth, man can only have transient happiness. My fortune is not essential to my felicity; the lustre of my name is not essential to my felicity; the establishment of my family is not essential to my felicity; and, since none of these things are essential to my happiness, the great God, the Being supremely gracious, has without the least violation of his goodness, left them in the uncertainty and vicissitude of all sublunary bliss. But my salvation, my salvation, is far above the vicissitudes of life. "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be moved; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed," Isa. liv. 10. "Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment; but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished," Isa. li. 6. May God indulge our hope, and crown it with success. Amen.

SERMON LXXXVII.

THE FAMILY OF JESUS CHRIST.

MATTHEW xii. 46—50.

While he yet talked to the people, behold his mother, and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him. Then one said unto him, behold, thy mother, and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee. But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? And who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand towards his disciples, and said, 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.

HE "said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor know his own children," Deut. xxxiii. 9. So Moses said of the tribe of Levi. Was it to reproach, or applaud? Following the first impression of this sentence, it contains undoubtedly a sharp rebuke, and a deep reproach. In what more unfavourable light could we view the Levites? What became of their natural affection, on disowning the persons to whom they were united by ties so tender, on plunging their weapons in the breasts of those who gave them birth?

But raising the mind superior to flesh and blood, if you consider the words as connected with the occasion to which they refer, you will find an illustrious character of those ministers of the living God; and one of the finest panegyrics which mortals ever received.

Nature and religion, it is admitted, require us to love our neighbour, especially the mem-

bers of our families, as ourselves; and if we may so speak, as our own substance. But if it be a duty to love our neighbour, it is not less admissible, that we ought to "love God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind." In fact we ought to love God alone. Farther, our love to him ought to be the centre of every other love: when the latter is at variance with the former, God must have the preference; when we can no longer love father and mother without ceasing to love God, our duty is determined; we must cease to love our parents, that our love may return to its centre. These were the dispositions of the Levites. Obedient children, affectionate brethren, they rendered to the persons to whom God had united them, every duty required by so close a connexion. But when those persons revolted against God, when they paid supreme devotion "to an ox that eateth grass," as the Psalmist says; when the Levites received this commandment from God, their Lawgiver and Supreme; "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," Exod. xxxii. 27. Then the Levites knew neither brother, nor friend, nor kinsman. By this illustrious zeal, they acquired the encomium, "He said to his father and his mother, I have not seen them; and to his brethren, and his children, I have not known them."

My brethren, if we must break the closest ties with those who dissolve the bonds of union with God, we ought to form the most intimate connexion with those who are joined to him by the sincerest piety. The degree of attachment they have for God, should proportion the degree of attachment we have for them. Of this disposition you have, in the words of my text, a model the most worthy of imitation. One apprised Jesus Christ, that his mother and brethren requested to speak with him. "Who is my mother? And who are my brethren?" replied he; "And stretching forth his hand towards his disciples, he said, 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."

The nobility of this world, those men of whom the Holy Spirit somewhere says, "Men of high degree are a lie," have by this consideration been accustomed to enhance the dignity of their descent. Titles and dignities, say they, may be purchased with money, obtained by favour, or acquired by distinguished actions; but real nobility cannot be bought, it is transmitted by an illustrious succession of ancestors, which monarchs are unable to confer. Christian! obscure mortal! offscouring of the world! dust and ashes of the earth, whose father was an Amorite, and whose mother was a Hittite, the source of true nobility is opened to thee; it is thy exclusive prerogative, (and may the thought animate, with holy ambition, every one in this assembly!) it is thy exclusive prerogative to be admitted into the family of the blessed God. Take his moral perfections for thy model; and thou shalt have his glory for thy reward. To thee Jesus Christ will extend

his hand; to thee he will say, here is my brother, and mother, and sister.

The Holy Spirit presents a double object in the words of my text.

I. The family of Jesus Christ according to the flesh.

II. The family of Jesus Christ according to the Spirit. "One said, thy mother, and thy brethren, desire to speak with thee." Here is the family of Jesus Christ according to the flesh. "Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." Here is the family of Jesus Christ according to the Spirit. Both these objects must be kept in view.

I. The idea which our Divine Master has given us of this first family, will supersede our minuter efforts to trace its origin. It is obvious from what he has said, that our chief attention should be to develop the character of those who belong to his family, according to the Spirit, rather than to trace those who belong to him according to the flesh. Whatever, therefore, concerns this Divine Saviour, claims, though not equal, at least some degree of attention. For we find in our researches concerning the family of Jesus Christ, according to the flesh, proofs of his being the true Messiah, and consequently information which contributes to the confirmation of our faith.

There is no difficulty in determining concerning the identity of the person, called in my text, the mother of Jesus. The expression ought to be literally understood; it designates that holy woman, whose happiness all ages must magnify, she, by peculiar privilege, being chosen of God to be "overshadowed by the Highest," to bear in her sacred womb, and bring into the world, the Saviour of men. She is called Mary, she was of the tribe of Judah, and of the family of David. This is nearly all we know of her; and this is nearly all we ought to know, in order to recognise in our Jesus, one characteristic of the true Messiah, who, according to early predictions, was to descend of this tribe, and of this family.

It is true that Celsus, Porphyry, Julian, those execrable men, distinguished by their hatred of Christianity, have disputed even this: at least, they have defied us to prove it. They have insinuated, that there are so many contrarieties in the genealogies of St. Luke, and St. Matthew, concerning the ancestors of our Jesus, as to leave the pretensions of his descent from David, and Judah, uncertain. It is to be regretted, that the manner in which some divines, and divines of distinguished name, have replied to this objection, has, in fact, given it weight, and seemed the last efforts of a desperate cause, rather than a satisfactory solution.

Is it a solution of this difficulty? is it a proof that Jesus descended from the family of David, as had been predicted, to say that the evangelists insert the genealogy of Joseph, and omit that of Mary, Jesus Christ being reputed the son of a carpenter, and having been probably adopted by him, was invested with all his rights, the genealogy of the reputed father, and the adopted son, being accounted the

same, though of different extraction? Would not this have been the way to flatter a lie, not to establish a truth? Did the prophets merely say, that the Messiah was the reputed son of a man descended from David's line? Did they not say in a manner the most clear and explicit in the world, that he was lineally descended from that family? Is it a solution of the difficulty, to say that Mary was heiress of her house, that the heiresses were obliged by the law, to marry in their own tribe; and that giving the genealogy of Joseph, was giving the genealogy of Mary, to whom he was betrothed? Is it not rather a supposition of the point in dispute? And what record have we left of Mary's family sufficiently authentic to prove it?

Is it a solution of the difficulty to say, that St. Matthew gives the genealogy of Christ, considered as a king, and St. Luke the genealogy of Christ, considered as a priest; that the one gives the genealogy of Mary, whom they pretend was of the tribe of Levi, which establishes the right of Christ to the high-priesthood; the other gives the genealogy of Joseph, descended from David's family, which establishes his right to the kingdom? Is not this opposing the words of St. Paul with a bold front? "If perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, what farther need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not to be called after the order of Aaron. For he of whom these things are spoken, pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar; for it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which Moses spake nothing concerning the priesthood after the similitude of Melchisedec there arises another priest, who is made, not after the law of carnal commandments, but after the power of an endless life," Heb. vii. 11—13. These are the words of our apostle.

Without augmenting the catalogue of mistaken solutions of this difficulty, we shall attend to that which seems the only true one. It is this: St. Matthew gives the genealogy of Joseph, the reputed father of Jesus Christ, and he is so called in the second chapter, and forty-eighth verse of St. Luke. And it is very important, that posterity should know the family of the illustrious personage, to whose superintendence Providence had committed the Messiah in early life.

St. Luke gives the genealogy of Mary, to identify that Jesus Christ had the essential characteristic of the Messiah, by his descent from David's family. It was also very important for posterity to know that he descended from David; that he had a right to the throne, not only as being the reputed son of one of his offspring, who could confer it by adoption; but also that being conceived by the Holy Ghost, and having for his mother a woman descended from David, according to the flesh, he himself descended from him, as much as it is possible for a being to descend, introduced so supernaturally into the world.

According to what has been advanced, it may be objected, that there is no mention made of Mary in the latter genealogy, more than in the former, that both concern Joseph alone;

that St. Luke, whom we presume to have given the genealogy of Mary, closes his catalogue with the name of Joseph, as well as St. Matthew, whom we allow to have given the genealogy of Mary's husband.

But this objection can strike those only, who are unacquainted with the method uniformly adopted by the Jews, in giving the genealogy of married women. They substituted the name of the husband for that of the wife, considering a man's son-in-law as his own offspring. According to this usage, which I could support by numerous authorities, these words of St. Luke, "Jesus began to be about thirty years of age, being, as was supposed, the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli," amount to this, "Jesus began to be about thirty years of age, being, as was supposed, the son of Joseph, which was the son-in-law of Heli," having betrothed his daughter Mary. This is sufficient on the genealogy of Mary.

But who are those called by the evangelist, brethren of Christ? "One said unto him," and these are the words of my text, "Behold thy mother, and thy brethren, stand without, desiring to speak with thee."

The opinion which has had the fewest partisans, and fewer still it merits (nor, should we notice it here, were it not to introduce a general remark, that there never was an opinion, how extravagant soever, but it found supporters among the learned,) the opinion, I say, is that of some of the ancients; they have ventured to affirm, that the persons called in my text, the brethren of Christ, were sons of the holy virgin, by a former husband. To name this opinion is sufficient for its refutation.

The conjecture of some critics, though less extravagant, is equally far from truth; they presume, that the brethren of Christ were sons of Joseph: a single remark will supersede this notion. Four persons are called the brethren of Christ, as appears from Matt. xiii. 54; it is there said, that his acquaintance, the people of Nazareth, talked of him in this way; "Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? This James is unquestionably the same who is called the *less*. Now it is indisputable that he was the son of Mary, who was living at our Saviour's death: she was sister to the holy virgin, and stood with her at the foot of the cross during the crucifixion. Hence, if James were the son of Joseph, he must have been betrothed to the holy virgin, while married to her sister, who was living when he contracted his second marriage, which is insupportable.

Let us, therefore, follow here the general course of interpreters. The name of brethren, is not always used in the strictest sense by the sacred authors. It is not peculiarly applied to those who have the same father and the same mother: it frequently refers to the relatives less connected. In this sense we use it here. Mary, the wife of Cleophas, was sister to the holy virgin; and the term *sister* the evangelists apply in the closest sense. She had four sons, above named, and they are called the brethren of Christ, because they were his cousins-german. She had two daughters, who for the

same reasons, are called his sisters. If this hypothesis be attended with some difficulties, this is not the place for their removal.

It was a most glorious consideration to the holy virgin, to James, to Judas, to Joseph, to Simon, and to their sister, to be so nearly related to Jesus Christ in the flesh. How honourable to say, this man, whose sermons are so sublime,—this man, whose voice inverts the laws of nature,—this man, whom winds, seas, and elements obey,—is my brother, is my son! So the woman exclaimed, after hearing him so conclusively refute the artful interrogations of his enemies. "Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked." But how superior are the ties, which unite the family of Jesus Christ according to the Spirit, to those which unite them according to the flesh! So he said to the woman above named, "Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it," Luke xi. 27, 28. In my text, when apprized that his most intimate relations, in the flesh, desired an audience, he acknowledged none to be of his family but the spiritually noble. "Behold thy mother, and thy brethren," said one, "stand without, desiring to speak with thee. Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?" replied he, "and he stretched forth his hand towards his disciples, and said, 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." This we shall proceed to illustrate in the second part of our discourse.

II. Our Saviour did not, in these words, design to exclude from his spiritual family all those who belonged to his family in the flesh. Who can entertain any doubt but that the holy virgin, who belonged to the latter, did not also belong to the former? Whoever carried to greater perfection than this holy woman, piety, humility, obedience to the divine precepts, and every other virtue which has distinguished saints of the highest order?

The Scriptures afford also various examples of the love of Mary, the wife of Cleophas, to Jesus Christ. She followed him to Jerusalem when he went up to consummate the grand sacrifice, for which he came into the world; she stood at the foot of the cross with the holy virgin, when he actually offered up himself; she went to water his tomb with her tears, when apprized of his resurrection.

As to those whom the evangelists call the brethren of Christ, I confess, that to him they were not equally devoted. St. John affirms expressly, "That his brethren did not believe in him," John vii. 5. But whether we may take this assertion in a more extended sense than in the text: or whether St. John spake of the early period of our Saviour's ministry; certain it is, that among the four persons here called the *brethren of Christ*, all of them had received the seeds of piety, and avowed his cause; as I could prove, if the limits of this discourse would permit.

If, therefore, Jesus Christ designated none as the members of his spiritual family, but those who were then recognised as his disciples, it was not intended to exclude his relatives according to the flesh, but to mark that the former then

afforded more distinguished evidences of their faith and devotion to the will of his Father.

Neither was it our Saviour's design,—when he seemed to disown his brethren, and his mother, properly speaking,—to detach us from persons to whom we are united by consanguinity, and to supersede the duties required by those endearing connexions. By no means: those affectionate fathers, who have invariably sought the happiness of their children;—those children, who, animated with gratitude, after sharing the indulgence of a father during his vigour, become, when age has chilled his blood, and enfeebled his reason, the support of his declining years;—those brothers who afford examples of union and concord,—are actuated by the religion of Jesus Christ. The laws of nature ought, in this view, to have a preference to the laws of grace. I would say, that, although religion may unite us more closely to a pious stranger, than to an impious father, I think it the duty of a child to bestow more care in cherishing a wicked father, than a deserving stranger.

What our Saviour would say in the text is, that though he had a family according to the flesh, he had also a preferable family according to the Spirit; and that the members of his spiritual family are more closely united to him than the members of his natural household. Of this spiritual family I proceed to speak. And I have further to say, my dear brethren, that I would associate you in this spiritual family, in the latter period of this discourse. Condescend to follow us in the few remarks we have yet to make. We will show, 1. The nature, and 2. The strength of this family connexion. 3. Its effects; or to speak with more propriety, its wonders. 4. Its superior felicity. 5. The persons it includes.

1. The nature of this relation consists in sincere obedience to the will of God. "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." Here we have two extremes to avoid: the one is the forming of too severe an idea, the other of conceiving notions too relaxed, of this disposition of heart.

Do not, therefore, conceive too severe an idea of obedience. I do not mean, that devotion to the will of God can ever be carried too far. No! though you were ready, like Abraham, to immolate an only son; though you had such exalted views of "the recompense of the reward," that, like Moses, you would prefer the reproach of Christ to Egypt and its treasures; though you had the fervour of Elijah, the piety of David, the zeal of Josiah, the affection of St. John, and the energy of St. Peter; though you were all ready, like the cloud of witnesses mentioned in the epistle to the Hebrews, to be stoned, to be slain, to endure cruel torments, to be killed with the sword, to wander about in sheep-skins, and in goat-skins, in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth, you would not exceed a due devotion to the will of God.

But though it is not possible to carry this disposition too far, it is, nevertheless, possible to exaggerate that degree which constitutes us members of the Saviour's spiritual family. He knows whereof we are made. Religion is not

for angels, but for men; and, however holy men may be, their virtues always participate of the infirmities inseparable from human nature. Those disciples, towards whom Jesus Christ extended his hand, committed, during the early period of their piety, faults, and great faults too. They sometimes misconceived the object of their mission; sometimes distrusted his promises; they were sometimes slow of heart to believe the facts announced by the prophets; they once slept when they ought to have sustained their Master in his agony; they abandoned him to his executioners; and one denied knowing him, even with an oath, and that he was his disciple. Virtue, even the most sincere and perfect, is liable to wide deviations, to total eclipses, and great faults:—hence, on this subject, you should avoid too severe a standard.

But you should equally avoid forming of it notions too relaxed. Do you claim kindred with the spiritual family of Jesus Christ? Do you claim the same intimacy with the Saviour which a man has with his brother, his sister, and his mother? Tremble then, while you hear these words of St. Paul, "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? what communion hath light with darkness; and what concord hath Christ with Belial?" 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15. Tremble while you hear these words of Christ, "No man can serve two masters." Matt. vi. 24. Or, to unfold to you a more detailed field of reflection, do you not exceedingly mistake concerning obedience to the will of God?

The will of God not only requires negative virtues, which consist in abstaining from evil; but positive virtues also, which consist not in a mere refraining from slander, but in reprehending the slanderer;—not in a mere refusal to receive your neighbour's goods, but in a communication of your own;—not only in abstaining from blasphemy against God, but also in blessing him at all times, and in having your mouth full of his praise.

The will of God not only requires of you popular virtues, as sincerity, fidelity, courage, and submission to the laws, are generally accounted; it also requires those very virtues which are degraded by the world, and considered as a weakness; such as forgiveness of injuries, and contempt of worldly pomp.

The will of God not only requires virtues correspondent to your temperature, as retirement, if you are naturally sullen and reserved; abstinence from pleasure, if you are naturally pensive and dull; patience, if you are naturally phlegmatic, heavy and indolent: it likewise requires virtues the most opposite to your temperature; as purity, if you are inclined to concupiscence; moderation, if you are of an angry disposition.

The will of God requires, not mutilated virtues, but a constellation of virtues, approaching to perfection. It requires "whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, that you should think on these," Phil. iv. 8. It requires you to add, "to faith, virtue; 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.

The will of God requires not an immaturity

of virtue, checked in its growth; it requires you to carry, or endeavour to carry, every virtue to the highest degree; to have perfection for your end, and Jesus Christ for your pattern.

2. and 3. After having reviewed the nature, and consequently the excellency of this connexion, let us next consider its strength. What we shall say on this head, naturally turns our thoughts towards its prodigies and effects. The power of this connexion is so strong, that the members of this spiritual family are incomparably more closely united to one another, than the members of a carnal family. This is obvious in the words of my text.—Our Saviour has borrowed figures from whatever was most endearing in civil society, and even from connexions of the most opposite nature, in order to elevate our ideas of the union which subsists between him and the members of his family; and of the union they have one with another: "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother. In this idea there is no exaggeration. Associate whatever is most endearing between a brother and brother; between a brother and a sister; between a child and a parent; associate the whole of these different parts in one body, and imagine, if it be possible to conceive an object still more closely united, than the different parts of this body; and your views will still be imperfect of the ties which subsist between the members of Jesus Christ's spiritual family.

They have in common, first a union of design. In all their actions they individually have in view nothing but the glory of that Sovereign whom they serve with emulation; and to whom they are all unanimously devoted.

They have, secondly, a union of inclination. God is the centre of their love; and being thus united to him, as the *third* (if I may borrow an idea from the schoolmen,) they are united one to another.

Thirdly, they have a union of interest. They are all equally interested to see the government of the universe in the hands of their Sovereign. His happiness constitutes their felicity, and each equally aspires after communion with the blessed God.

They have, fourthly, a union coeval in its existence. Go back to the ages preceding the world, and you will see the members of this spiritual family united in the bosom of divine mercy;—even from the moment they were distinguished as the objects of his tenderest love, and most distinguished grace; even from the moment the victim was appointed to be immolated in sacrifice for their sins. Descend to the present period of the world: let us say more;—look forward to futurity, and you will find them ever united, in the noble design of incessantly glorifying the Author of their existence and felicity.

Hence you see the prodigies produced by this connexion. You see what Jesus Christ has done for those who are united in devotion to his Father's will. His incarnation, his passion, his cross, his Spirit, his grace, his intercession, his kingdom,—nothing is accounted too precious for men, joined to him by those tender and endearing ties.

You see likewise, what the men united to

Jesus Christ are qualified to do one for another: they are all of one heart and one soul, and are ever ready to make the mutual sacrifices of benevolence and love.

4. The ties which connect the members of Jesus Christ's family are not less happy than strong. Connexions merely human, however endearing, however delightful, are invariably accompanied with anguish. What anguish must attend a connexion cemented with vice! What painful sensations, even in the midst of a criminal course! What remorse on reflection and thought! What horror on viewing the consequences of unlawful pleasures! On saying to one's self, the recollection of this intercourse will pierce me in a dying hour; this unhappy person, with whom I am now so closely connected, will be my tormentor for ever!

What anguish is attended even on friendship the most innocent, when extended too far! Delightful connexions, formed on earth by congenial souls, cemented by the intercourse of mutual love, and crowned with prosperity: delightful bonds which connect a father with a son, and a son with a father; a wife with a husband, and a husband with a wife; what regret you produce, when death, the allotted period, or end of man, and of all human comforts,—what regret you cost,—when death compels us to dissolve these ties! Witness so many Josephs attending their fathers to the tomb, who had been the glory of their families. Witness so many Rachels "refusing to be comforted because their children are not," Matt. xi. 18. Witness so many Davids, who exclaim with excess of grief, "O, my son Absalom—my son, my son Absalom—would to God I had died for thee—O Absalom, my son, my son!" 2 Sam. xviii. 33.

But in the ties which connect the family of Jesus Christ, there is no mixture of anguish. This you may infer from what we have advanced; and your own reflections may supply the scanty limits in which we are obliged to comprise this point.

5. We shall lastly consider the persons connected by the bonds of obedience to the will of God.

The family of Jesus Christ consist of a selection of all the excellent in heaven and in earth. So St. Paul has expressed himself, "Of whom the whole parentage," or as the text may be read, "Of whom the whole family in heaven and in earth is named," Eph. iii. 15. On earth, the family of Jesus is not distinguished by the greatness of its number: and to the shame of the human kind, there is a father whose family is far more numerous than the Saviour's: this father is the devil. And who are the children of the devil? To this question Jesus Christ has given us a key. He said, when speaking to the Pharisees, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do; he was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth; he is a liar, and the father of it," John viii. 44. These are the two characteristics of his children; lying and murder.

1. Lying. If you betray the truth, if you employ your genius, your wit, your knowledge, to embarrass the truth, instead of employing them for the acquisition of self-knowledge, and a communication of the truth to others; if we

become your enemy when we tell you the truth, when we combat your prejudices, when we attack your errors, when we endeavour to irradiate your minds, and to take the lamp of revelation from beneath the bushel; if this is your characteristic, recognise in yourselves this trait of your father, which is lying, for he is "the father of a lie;" and take to yourselves this awful declaration, "Ye are of your father the devil."

2. He is a murderer; and to hate our neighbour is, according to the language of Scripture, to kill him; for "he that hateth his brother," as St. John has decided, "is a murderer," John iii. 15. Yes, if you obstruct your neighbour's happiness; if you are envious at his prosperity: if you are irritated by his virtues; if mortified by his reputation; if you take delight in aggravating his real faults, and in the imputation of imaginary defects, recognise another trait of your father; apply to yourselves this awful assertion, which so many may apply with propriety, "Ye are of your father the devil."

It is nevertheless true, that how numerous soever the children of the devil may be on the earth, Jesus Christ has a family among men: and it is composed of those who believe, those whom a sincere faith has invested with the privilege of considering themselves, according to St. John, as members of the family of God: "To as many as received him, to them gave he power," which I would render right, prerogative, privilege, "to become the sons of God."

The branches of God's spiritual family are not always visible to the eyes of the flesh, but they are to the eyes of the spirit; they are not always objects of sense, but they are objects of faith, which assures us of the continued existence of a holy church. Sometimes the fury of persecution, which prevents us from perceiving them, drives them into deserts, and causes them to take refuge in dens and caves of the earth. Sometimes the prevalence of calumny paints their character in shades dark as hell, calls their moderation indolence, their meekness cowardice, their modesty meanness of mind, their firmness obstinacy, their hope a chimera, their zeal illusion and enthusiasm. Sometimes it is the veil of humility by which they conceal their virtues, and which causes them to be confounded with persons who have no virtue, and to be less esteemed than persons whose virtues are affected. "Their kingdom" invariably "is not of this world: Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not appear what we shall be. We are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God," John xviii. 36; 1 John iii. 2; Col. iii. 3.

But though the members of this spiritual family are not always visible, the reality of their existence is not diminished. On their account the world exists. Their prayers stay the avenging arm of an angry God, and save the guilty world from being crushed beneath the stroke: for their sakes he sometimes mitigates the calamities, with which human crimes oblige him to visit the nations. It is their entreaties which cause their God and Redeemer speedily to descend, and which hasten the happy day that is the object of their wishes, and subject of their prayers, "Come, Lord Jesus—come quickly."

And if the family of Jesus Christ is "named on earth," it is more especially named in heaven. There it exists, there it shines in all its lustre. But who are the members of this family of Jesus Christ? They are "the redeemed out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." They are the ambassadors of the gospel, who have "turned many unto righteousness; they shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as stars" of the first magnitude. They are martyrs, come up out of great tribulation, they are "clothed in white robes, which they have washed in the blood of the Lamb." They are all saints, who having fought under his banner, participate the laurels of his victory. They are angels who excel in strength, and obey his voice. They are winged cherubim, who fly at his command. They are seraphim burning with his love. They are the thousand millions which serve him, and ten thousand millions which stand before him. They are the "great multitude, whose voice is in the sound of many waters," and whose obedience to God is crowned with glory; but they cast their crowns before the throne, and cry continually, "Hallelujah—let us be glad and rejoice, and give glory unto him."

Such is the spiritual family of Jesus Christ, and such is the Christian family. Many of its members lie scattered in different parts of the earth, but the part which is most numerous, excellent, and consummate in virtue, is in heaven. What a consolation! But language is too weak! What a consolation to the believer, against whom old age, infirmities, and sickness have pronounced the sentence of death! What a consolation to say "My family is in heaven; a gulf separates me, but it is not like the gulf which separates the damned from the glorified spirits, of which Abraham said to the rich man, "between us and you there is a great gulf fixed." It is a gulf whose darkness is enlightened by faith, whose horrors are assuaged by hope;—it is a gulf through which we are cheered and animated by the voice of Christ;—a gulf from which one final struggle shall instantly make us free.

Death is sometimes represented to me under an idea happily calculated to assuage its anguish. There is not one of you, who has attained maturity of age, but has frequently seen those persons snatched away by death, who constituted the greatest happiness of your life. This is inevitably the lot of those to whom God accords, the precious race I say? or the sad privilege of running the race of life. They live, but they see those daily taken away, whose company attached them to life. I look on death as reuniting me to those persons, whose loss had occasioned me so many tears during my pilgrimage. I represent myself as arriving in heaven and seeing this friend running to meet me, to whom my soul was united as the soul of David to Jonathan. I imagine myself as presented to those ancestors, whose memory is so revered, and whose example is so worthy of imitation. I represent those children as coming before me, whose death affected me with a bitter anguish which continued all my days: with those innocent creatures I see myself surrounded; whom God, to promote their happiness, resumed by an early death.

This idea of death, and of the felicity which follows, is extremely delightful; and I do most sincerely believe it; at least I have never yet met with a thought, which could dissuade me from thinking that the glorified saints shall enjoy, in heaven, the society of those with whom they have been so intimately connected on earth. But how real and pleasing soever this thought may be, it is, my dear brethren, far too contracted. Let us form more exalted notions of the happiness God has prepared for us. Our family is in heaven, but not exclusively composed of the small circle of friends of whom we have been deprived by death. Recollect what we have just said. Our family is composed of the redeemed "out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation:"—of the ambassadors of the gospel, "who have turned many to righteousness, who shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever:"—of martyrs, "who came up out of great tribulation, who have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Our family is composed of those illustrious saints, who have fought under the banner of Christ, and they now sit down on his throne. Farther, our family is composed of those "angels that excel in strength, and obey the voice of God:"—of those cherubim which fly at his command. Our family is composed of those thousand, thousand millions, and ten thousand millions which stand before him, and cast their crowns before the throne of Him who conferred the dignity upon them, crying continually, "Hallelujah, let us be glad and rejoice, and give glory unto him!" Jesus Christ is the first-born of this household; God, who is all and in all, is head of the whole: these are the beings to whom we are about to be united by death.

What a powerful consolation against the fear of death! What an abundant remuneration of delight, for the privation of persons, whose memory is so dear! O my friends, my children, and all of you, who have during my abode on earth, been the objects of my tenderest and most ardent attachment;—you, who after having contributed to my happiness during life, come again and surround my dying bed, receive the final tests of an attachment, which should never be less suspected than in these last moments;—collect the tears, which the pain of parting induces me to shed;—see, in the anguish of my last farewell, all that my heart has felt for you.

But do not detain me any longer upon earth; suffer me at the moment when I feel my loss, to estimate my gain; allow me to fix my regards on those ever-during connexions I am about to form;—on the angels who are going to convey my soul to the bosom of God;—on the innumerable multitudes of the blessed, among whom I am going to reside, and with whose voices I am going to join in everlasting praises to my God and Saviour.

Among the transports excited by objects so elating, if any wish yet remain, it is to see you speedily associated with me, in the same society, and participating the same felicity. May heaven hear my prayer! To God be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON LXXXVIII.

ST. PETER'S DENIAL OF HIS MASTER.

MATT. xxvi. 69, &c. LUKE xxii. 61, &c.

Now Peter sat without in the palace; and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee. But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest. And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth. And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man. And after a while came unto him them that stood by, and said to Peter, surely thou also art one of them, for thy speech betrayeth thee. Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately while he yet spake, the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter; and Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.

It is laudable, my brethren, to form noble designs, to be immovable at the presence of danger, and to cherish dignity of sentiment and thought. This virtue distinguishes the heroes of our age; it equally distinguishes the heroes of religion and piety. They defy the whole universe to shake their faith; amid the greatest dangers, they adopt this language of triumph: "What shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that hath loved us," Rom. viii. 34, 35.

But how laudable soever this disposition may be, it ought to be restricted; it degenerates into presumption when carried to extremes. Many, by not knowing how to proportion their strength to their courage, have fallen in the day of trial, and realized the very maxim, "They that love the danger, shall perish by the danger." This is exemplified in the person of St. Peter. His heart, glowing with attachment to his Master, every thing was promised from his zeal. Seeing Jesus on the waters, he solicited permission to walk like the Saviour; but feeling his feet sink beneath the surface of the unstable element, he distrusted either the power or the fidelity of his Master; and unless he had been supported by his compassionate arms, he had made shipwreck, to express myself with St. Paul, both of his faith and his life together. Seeing Jesus led away to the high-priest's house, he followed without hesitation, and resolved to follow even to the cross. Here, likewise, on seeing the Jews irritated, the soldiers armed, and a thousand terrific appearances of death, he saved his life by a base denial; and, unless his wavering faith had been restored by a look from his Lord, the bonds of union had been totally dissolved.

In the examination of this history, we shall see first, the cowardice of an apostle, who yielded, for the moment, to the force of temp-

tation. We shall see, secondly, Jesus Christ vanquishing the enemy of our salvation, and depriving him of his prey, by a single glance of his eyes. We shall see, *lastly*, a penitent recovering from his fall: and replying, by his tears, to the expressive looks of Jesus Christ:—three inexhaustible sources of reflection.

We shall consider, *first*, the fall of St. Peter; and it will appear deplorable, if we pay attention to the object which excited his fear, and to the circumstances with which it was connected.

The object which excited his fear, was martyrdom. Let us not magnify the standard of moral ideas. The fear of martyrdom is inseparable from human weakness. The most desperate diseases afford some fluctuating hopes of recovery; which diminish the fears of death. It is an awful thing for a man to see the period of his death precisely fixed, and within the distance of a day, an hour, a moment. And if it is awful to approach a death, obvious (so to speak) to our view, how much more awful, when that death is surrounded with tortures, with racks, with pincers, with caldrons of boiling oil, and all those instruments invented by superstitious zeal and ingenious malice. If, however, there ever were occasions to deplore the weakness of man, it is on account of the fears excited by the idea of martyrdom. Follow us then while we illustrate this assertion.

That men must die, is one of the most certain and evident propositions ever advanced. Neither vice nor virtue, neither religion nor infidelity, nor any consideration, can dispense with this common lot of man. Were a system introduced teaching us the art of living for ever on the earth, we should undoubtedly become our own enemies, by immolating the hope of future felicity, for a life of such inquietude as that we should enjoy on the earth. And if there had been such a life, perhaps we should have been base enough to give it the preference of our religious hope. If it had failed in securing the approbation of the mind, it would, at least, have interested the concupiscence of the heart. But whatever is our opinion, die we must; this is an indisputable fact, which no one dares to dispute.

Prudence, unable to avert the execution of the sentence, should be employed in disarming its terrors: destitute of all hope of escaping death, we ought to employ all our prudence in the choice of that kind of death, which is most supportable. And what is there in the severest sufferings of martyrs, which is not preferable to the death we expect from nature? If I consider death as an abdication of all I enjoy, and as an impenetrable veil, which conceals the objects of sense, I see nothing in the death of the martyr, that is not common to every other kind of death. To die on a bed, to die on a scaffold, is equally to leave the world; and the sole difference is, that the martyr finding nothing but troubles, gibbets, and crosses, in this life, detaches himself with less difficulty than the other, who dies surrounded by inviting objects.

If I consider death, with regard to the pains which precede and attend its approach, I confess it requires courage more than human, to be unmoved at the terrific apparatus exposed to the eyes of a martyr. But, if we except

some peculiar cases, in which the tyrants have had the barbarity to prolong the lives of the sufferers, in order to extend their torments, there are few sudden deaths, which are not attended with less pain than natural death. There are few death-beds, which do not exhibit scenes more tragic than the scaffold. Pain is not more supportable, because it has symptoms less striking; nor are afflictions the less severe, because they are interior.

If I consider death, with regard to the just fear of fainting in the conflicts, in which I am about to be vanquished by the king of terrors, there are superabundant aids reserved for those who sacrifice their lives for religion. The greatest miracles have been achieved in favour of confessors and martyrs. St. Peter received some instances of the kind; but I will venture to affirm, that we have had more than he. It was on the verge of martyrdom, that an angel opened the doors of his prison. It was on the eve of martyrdom, that Paul and Silas felt the prison shake, and saw their chains broken asunder. It was in the midst of martyrdom, that Stephen saw the heavens open, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God. It was also in the midst of martyrdom, that *Barlaam* sung this psalm, "Blessed be the Lord, my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight."

If I consider death, with regard to the awful tribunal before which it cites me to appear, and with regard to the eternal books about to be opened, in which are registered so many vain thoughts, so many idle words, so many criminal courses, the weight of which is heavy on my conscience; I see nothing still in the death of a martyr, that is not to be preferred to a natural death. It is allowed that the exercise of repentance, in dying circumstances, the prayers, the repeated vows, the submission to the will of God, who leads us through the valley of the shadow of death, are tests of our reconciliation to him. But these tests are often deceitful. Experience but too frequently realizes what we have often said, that the dying take that for willing obedience, which is but constraint. A martyr has purer tests of his sincerity. A martyr might preserve his life, by the commission of a crime; but rather than sin, he devotes it in sacrifice.

Lastly, if I consider death, with regard to the futurity into which it will cause us to enter, I see nothing but what should excite in the martyr transports of joy. He has not only the promise of celestial happiness, but celestial happiness of the highest degree. It is to the martyr, that Jesus Christ calls from the highest abodes of heaven; "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.

But the fall of St. Peter, though deplorable in itself, becomes still more so, by its concomitant circumstances. Let us review them.

It was first, the simple charge of a servant maid, and of a few spectators standing by, which shook his courage. Had the apostle been cited before the sanhedrim;—had he been legally called upon to give an account of his faith;—had the cross, to which he promised to follow his Master, been prepared before his

eyes;—you would have said, that the magnitude of the danger striking his senses, had confounded his reason. But none of these objects were, in reality, presented. The judges, solely engaged in gratifying their fury against the Master, did not so much as think upon the servant. A maid spake, and her voice recalled the idea of the council, the death, and the cross, and filled his soul with horror at the thought.

Secondly, St. Peter was warned. Jesus Christ had declared to him, in general, that "Satan had desired to sift him as wheat;" and, in particular, that he would three times deny him that very night. A caution so salutary ought to have induced him to redouble his vigilance; to fortify the place, the weakness of which had been pointed out; and to avoid a danger, of the magnitude of which he had been apprised. When a man is surprised by an unforeseen temptation; when he falls from a precipice, of which he was not aware, he is worthy of more compassion than blame. But here is a crime, known, revealed, and predicted.

The third circumstance is derived from the abundant knowledge communicated to our apostle. Against the offence of our Saviour's humiliation, he had been peculiarly fortified; he had heard a voice from the excellent glory on the holy mountain; he had been apprised, more than any other disciple, that the sufferings of Christ were connected with the scheme of redemption.

The fourth circumstance is derived from the high office with which St. Peter was invested; from the commission he had received from his Master, in common with the other members of the apostolic college, "to go and preach the kingdom of heaven;" and from this declaration, "Thou art Peter, upon this rock will I build my church." This man, called to build up the church, gave it one of the greatest shocks it could possibly have received. This man, called to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, declared he knew him not. This man, constituted an established minister of his religion, became an apostate, and risked the drawing with him into the same gulf, the souls with whose salvation he had been entrusted. Some faults affect none but the offenders, but others have a general influence on all the church. And such, ministers of the living God, are our faults! Our example is contagious, it diffuses a baneful poison on all those, over whom Providence has appointed us to watch.

The oaths he used to confirm his denial are a fifth circumstance. Not content with dissimulation, he denied. Not content with a threefold denial, he denied with an oath; a circumstance not in the text, but noted by the other evangelists.

My brethren, do you understand in these provinces, all that is execrable in the crime of perjury! I doubt it. A perjured man is one who takes the God who bears the motto of "Faithful and true Witness," to attest an assertion, of the falsehood of which he cannot be ignorant. A perjured person is one who defies the power of Almighty God: who says, in order to deceive, "Great God! thou holdest thunderbolts in thy hand, launch them this moment at my head, if I do not speak as .

think. Great God! thou decidest the destiny of my immortal soul, plunge it into hell, if the sentiments of my heart are not conformable to the words of my tongue." Hence, when St. Peter disavowed his knowledge of Jesus Christ, it was saying in fact, "Yes, Great God! I know this man, of having connexion with whom I am now questioned, to be my Master; if I have heard celestial voices, saying, "This is my beloved Son;" if I have seen him transfigured on the holy mountain; if I have heard his sermons; if I have attested his miracles; if that indeed be true, may I be the object of thy everlasting abhorrence and revenge."

The sixth circumstance is the period at which St. Peter disowned Jesus Christ. At the instant Jesus Christ displayed the tenderest marks of his love, St. Peter requited him with the most cruel ingratitude. At the moment Jesus Christ was about to redeem St. Peter, this apostle disowned his Master. At the moment Jesus Christ was about to lay down his life for St. Peter, at the moment he was going to endure for him the death of the cross, this apostle refused to confess him.

Ah! human virtue! how feeble thou art, whenever the breath of the Almighty, by which thou art sustained, comes to be resumed! And if the Lots, the Moseses, the Davids, the Josiahs, and so many more;—if these pillars of the church have been shaken, what shall not these frail foundations be!—If these suns, irradiated "to shine in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation," have sustained eclipses, what shall it not be with the smoking flax! If the cedars of Lebanon have been almost rooted up, what shall it not be with the hyssop of the wall!

But let us no longer leave our apostle in the sad situation in which he has been considered. Among the difficulties opposed to the perseverance of the saints, the sins to which they are liable seems to be the strongest. Which side soever we embrace, we apparently fall into error. "Will he for ever precipitate in hell, the man for whom the availing sacrifice of the cross has already been presented? But also will he ever receive into paradise, a man contaminated with so foul a crime? Will he resume his grace after it is once given? But will he continue it with him, who renders himself unworthy?" Here Providence removes the difficulty which theology cannot solve. It extends to the fallen a gracious hand. That St. Peter the friend of Jesus Christ should be excluded from his grace, seems impossible. That St. Peter should ever be readmitted to his favour seems not less inconceivable. Jesus Christ came to his aid, and enabled him to recover from his crime. Here is the solution of the difficulty. Then, adds our evangelist, Jesus Christ turned toward St. Peter, and looked attentively at him. This is the second part of my discourse.

II. My brethren, how expressive was that look! How eloquent were those eyes! Never was discourse so energetic! Never did orator express himself with so much force! Jesus looked on Peter.—It was the Man of griefs complaining of a new burden, added to that, under the pressure of which he already groaned. It was the compassionate Redeemer, pitying a

soul about to destroy itself.—It was the Apostle of our salvation, preaching in bonds.—It was the subduer of the heart, the omnipotent God, repressing the efforts of the devil, and depriving him of his prey.

1. It was the man of griefs, complaining of a new burden, added to that, under the pressure of which he already groaned.—We cannot doubt but the denial of St. Peter, augmented the passion of Jesus Christ. A wound is the more severely felt, in proportion as the inflicting hand is dear to us. We are not astonished to see an enemy turn his rage against us; the case is common. But when we find perfidy, where we expected fidelity, and where we had cause to expect it; and when it is a friend who betrays us, the anguish of the thought is difficult to sustain. So it was with Jesus Christ. That the Jewish populace were armed against him, was not surprising; they knew him not. That the Pharisees should solicit his death is less astonishing; he had exclaimed against their sins. That the Roman soldiers should join the Jews, is not surprising; they considered him as the enemy of Cesar. That the priests should accelerate his condemnation, is no marvel; they thought they were avenging Moses and the prophets. But that St. Peter, who ought to have supported him in his anguish, should aggravate it;—that he, who ought to have attested his innocence, should deny him;—that he, who ought to have extended his hand to wipe away his tears, should, in some sort, lend his arm to assassins;—it was this which pierced the Saviour's soul, and caused this reproachful glance of his eyes on St. Peter.

2. It was the compassionate Redeemer, pitying a soul on the verge of destruction. One trait we cannot sufficiently admire, that during our Saviour's passion; that amid the severest sufferings, he was less concerned for himself, than for the salvation of those for whom he suffered. Some days before his death, he was employed in supporting the disciples against the scandal of the cross. In the admirable prayer, addressed to the Father, he in some sort, forgot himself, and prayed solely for them. In the garden of Gethsemane, amid the most tremulous conflicts, which he sustained against the Father's justice, he interrupted the supplications for divine assistance, to go and exhort the disciples to watchfulness and prayer, and to arm them against the devil. On the cross, he prayed for his murderers; and would have shed his blood with pleasure, if he might have rejoiced over those who shed it, and obtained for them forgiveness and salvation.

More affected with the wound received by his disciple, than with what concerned himself, his soul dissolved in compassion: he seemed to say, "Simon, son of Jonas, I devote myself in sacrifice without reluctance, if it may obtain thy salvation. I submit with pleasure, to the justice of my Father, if thy restoration may be obtained. But when I see thee, at the moment of my death, withdrawing thyself from that mercy, the whole of whose treasures I have opened; when I see thee 'accounting the blood of the covenant,' I am going to shed, 'an holy thing;' when I see that I die, and die in vain with regard to thee, if thou shouldst not recover from thy fall, my passion becomes the

more severe, and the anguish of my death is redoubled."

This leads us to a third reflection. The look of Jesus Christ discovered an upbraiding aspect, by which the Saviour would reclaim the sinner. Hence, on casting his eyes upon him, he selected the circumstance of the crowing of the cock. The crowing of the cock, was as much the signal to realize the prediction of Jesus Christ, as to remind St. Peter of his promise; and Jesus looked in that moment, that Peter might recollect his vows, his oaths, his protestations; he looked to claim his promise, or at least to confound him for his defect of fidelity.

But, however just these explanations may appear, they do not fully unfold the sense of the text. There is something miraculous in the history: and the interpretations already given, offer nothing to the mind, but what might occur in a natural way. This look of Jesus Christ was, like the words of his mouth, "sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow," Heb. iv. 12. When the disciples were going to Emmaus, they found an unction in the discourse of Jesus Christ, which induced them to say, "Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?" Luke xxiv. 32. As if they had said, It is not necessary that our eyes should identify the person of Jesus Christ, to be assured he has appeared to us; it is not necessary that we should associate the testimony of the women, with the predictions of the prophets; it is not necessary to investigate the removal of the stone, the emptiness of the sepulchre, and the folding of the linen, to ascertain his resurrection. We have arguments superior to these: the ascendancy he obtained over our minds, by the power of his word, and the fire which kindled our hearts, are proof sufficient, that we have conversed with Jesus. Such indeed was this look. It was a flash of fire, which irradiated the eyes of the apostle, which forcibly revealed the knowledge of himself, which constrained him to give glory to God; which dissipated all his terrors; which raised his drooping courage; which calmed all his fears; which confirmed his feeble knees; which reanimated his expiring zeal.

Hence you perceive the eloquence of the speaker, the intelligence of the hearer, the energy of the Saviour's looks, and the sensibility of St. Peter's heart. By this single glance of the Saviour's eyes, inexpressible anguish was excited in his soul; his recollection was restored, he came to himself, his heart expired, his countenance was appalled, a vapour arose in his eyes, which descended in a torrent of tears. Jesus Christ spake by his looks, St. Peter replied by contrition. This is the third part of my discourse.

III. My brethren, the recollection of sin causes grief of different kinds: three sorts of tears it particularly causes to be shed. Tears of despair, tears of torment, and tears of repentance. Tears of despair are shed on earth, tears of torment in hell, and tears of repentance in the church.

The anguish of despair, is felt in this life.

Such, on some occasions, is the imbecility of the human mind, as neither to resist a temptation to sin, nor to endure the recollection of a former crime; and the same base principle which induces a man to sin, frequently excites despair, on the recollection of its turpitude. Judas wept with despair; he could not support the recollection of his crime; he saw, he felt, he confessed its atrocity; and having returned to the priests the thirty pieces of silver, the awful reward of his treason, he went out, and hanged himself.

The damned, on seeing the period of their repentance past, and the hour of vengeance come, shed tears of despair in hell. This is the "outer darkness, in which there is weeping and gnashing of teeth."

But the faithful while spared in the church, shed tears of repentance: of this sort were those of St. Peter.

You may first observe his anguish. He not only wept, but he wept bitterly. Forming imperfect notions of vice, as we mostly do, it is not surprising that we should think a repentance, superficial as ours, adequate to its expiation. But regarding it in a just light, considering the majesty of Him it insults, the awful cloud it interposes between God and us, the alarming influence it has in the soul of our neighbour, and the painful uncertainty in which it places the conscience; we cannot shed tears too bitter for the calamity of wilful transgression.

You may, *secondly*, remark the promptitude of the apostle's tears. "Then," says the evangelist, that is, "as soon as Jesus Christ had looked on him." The most laudable resolutions are doubtful, when they look solely at the future, and neglect to promote a present reform. In general, they are less the effects of piety, cherishing a desire to abandon vice, than the laxity of the flesh; which, by hope of repentance after indulgence, would prevent remorse from interrupting the pleasures we expect from a vicious course. I fear every thing for a man, who, when exhorted to repent, replies, *to-morrow, at a future period*. I fear every thing for such a man; I fear the winds; I fear the waves; I fear affliction; I fear the fever; I fear distraction; I fear the habit; I fear exhausting the treasures of patience and long-suffering. St. Peter deferred not to a precarious futurity, the care of his salvation. As soon as Jesus Christ had looked on him, he perceived it; as soon as he called, he answered; as soon as the hand was extended, he arose.

Observe, *thirdly*, the precaution attendant on his tears; "he went out." Not that he was ashamed to acknowledge his Master, in the place where he had denied him, but distrusting himself; presumption having cost him too much, he made a wise use of his past temerity.

My brethren, would you know the true source of barrenness in your devotion; would you find the cause of so many obliterated vows, so many sacred purposes vanished away, so many projects dispersed as smoke, so many oaths violated, you will find them in the defects of precaution. The sincere Christian fortifies that place in his heart, whose weakness sad experience has discovered; he profits

by his loss, and derives advantage from his relapse. He says, that object was fatal to my innocence; I must no more look upon it; that company drew me into this sin; I must instantly withdraw; it was in the court of Caiaphas I disowned my Saviour, I must shun that place.

In *fine*, adequately to comprehend the nature of St. Peter's repentance, we must discover all the effects a sight of his sin produced in his soul. Here I would have my hearers suspend the effects of fatigue; they are incapable of attention, too far prolonged, though we discuss the most interesting truths of religion. I would, authorized by custom, add another text to that I have read. It occurs in the Gospel according to St. John. Jesus said to Peter, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord, thou knowest I love thee: He saith unto him, feed my lambs." What has been said of lawful love,—that those whose hearts are united, never differ with the object of their affection, but it tends to augment the flame,—may be said of divine love. This is obvious from the text we have cited; Jesus Christ and St. Peter alternately retaliated, for the eclipses their love had sustained.

It is true, the apostle replied only to part of the question of Jesus Christ. He was asked, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" On all other occasions, he would frankly have replied, "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee more than these." Ah, Lord! I well know the allusion of thy words; I fully perceive that thou wouldst humble me, by the recollection of the promise I have made, and which I have basely violated; "Though all men should be offended with thee, yet will I never be offended." I am fully impressed with the mortifying history thou wouldst retrace. I am the least of all my brethren: there is not one to whom I can dare to give myself the preference.

If St. Peter replied with humility, he replied also with sincerity and zeal. If we wish a believer to be humble, we never wish him to be vain. If we do not require him to say, "I am conscious of being so established in grace, as never to be shaken;" we wish at least, that he should feel the cheering and reviving flame of divine love, when its embers are most concealed in the ashes. We wish him not to make an ostentatious display of piety, but to evidence the tender attachment he has for God, even when, through weakness, he has happened to offend him. This was the disposition of St. Peter, and his humility implied no defect of love. "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" "Lord! I can presume nothing of myself, the past makes me tremble for the future; the example of distinguished saints, and mine still more, humbles and abases my soul. Perhaps, like Job, I shall curse the day of my birth; perhaps, like David, I shall become guilty of murder and treason; perhaps, I shall deny thee again; perhaps, I shall be so vile, as to repeat these awful words, which will, to me, be a subject of everlasting regret, "I know not the man, I am not one of his disciples;" and if thou wilt condemn me, thou hast only to crush a worm, on whom no dependance can be placed. After all, Lord! amid

so many defects, so many offences, I feel that I love thee still; I feel that strong temptations can never eradicate a love, which is graven on my heart; I feel, when thy perfections are discussed, that they affect, penetrate, and fill my soul; I feel delighted that my Redeemer is invested with such abundant glory and strength; when thy gospel is preached, I feel my heart burn within me; and I admire and adore the God, who has revealed a scheme of salvation so grand, so noble, so sublime. I feel, notwithstanding this awful deviation, inconceivable sorrow, and inconceivable shame, which, to me, is an evident test, that the God I offend, is in reality, the God I love."

Can it be imagined, that St. Peter's avowal of his weakness, rendered his love less estimable to his Master? Can it be conceived, that Jesus Christ is less delicate in his attachment than man? Knowing the fidelity of a friend, having a thousand satisfactory tests of his attachment, do you cease to love him, when he has committed a fault, for which he is wounded the first? "The Lord knoweth whereof we are made." Our faults, howsoever glaring (if followed by repentance,) though they may suspend, for a period, the influence of his love, can neither change its nature, nor restrict its duration. St. Peter had no sooner said to his Master, "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee," than he was re-established in his ministry by his prompt reply, "Feed my sheep."

O how worthily did this apostle repair the offence he had given the church, by his devotion to its interests. Methinks I see him gathering, on the day of Pentecost, the souls which, perhaps, he had caused to stray! Methinks I seem to hear those pathetic addresses proceed from his mouth, which, like streams of lightning, enkindle every thing in their course; softening those very souls, which the cross of Christ was unable to move; extorting from them this language, highly expressive of compunction, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Methinks I see him flying from Pontus to Galatia, from Galatia to Bithynia, from Bithynia to Cappadocia, from Cappadocia to every province of Asia, from Asia to Rome, leaving all his course strewn with the wreck of Satan's power; with trophies of temples demolished, of idols dethroned, of pagans converted, correspondent consequences of a ministry, which, at its first commencement, had converted eight thousand men. Methinks I see him led from tribunal to tribunal, sometimes before the Jews, and sometimes before the Romans, every where loaded with the reproach of Christ, every where confessing his name; finally fixed on a cross, and saying, as he died for the Redeemer, who had died for him, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee."

Such was the repentance of St. Peter, and such may ours now be! May those eyes which still seek us, as they sought him, pierce our heart, as they pierced his; striking the conscience with sanctifying terror, and causing those tears of repentance to flow, which are so availing for the sinner.

They ought to produce those particular effects on you, my brethren, whose sin has had a sad conformity to St. Peter's; who having

seen (while in France) Jesus Christ delivered again into the hands of thieves, and hearing the interrogation, "You, also, are not you his disciples?" have answered as our apostle, "I know not the man, I am not one of his disciples." O! seek the eyes of Jesus Christ: see the looks he gives, hear what they say: Cowardly souls, are these the fine promises you made in time of peace? Is this the example you have set before the church? Was it not enough . . . ? But why do I open wounds, which the mercy of God has closed? Why do I recall the recollection of a crime, which so many tears, so many torrents of blood, so many sacrifices, have effaced? It is, indeed, less with a view that I name it now, to reproach the fault, than to remind you of the vows you made, when, all bathed in tears, you implored forgiveness; less to overwhelm you with a sight of your sin, than to comfort you with that divine mercy, which has done it all away.

Who can ascertain the extent of mercy? Who can find language sufficiently strong, and figures sufficiently pure, noble, and sublime, for its adequate illustration? To what sinner did it ever prohibit access? What wounded and contrite conscience was ever repulsed at its bar? This immensity of mercy has forgiven Nebuchadnezzar and Manasseh, the one a monster in nature, the other a monster in religion. It has forgiven St. Paul for persecution, and St. Peter for apostacy. It has forgiven you, who have imitated this weak disciple; it has readmitted you into the fellowship of the church, who had so basely abandoned it. Happy those apostate protestants, if Jesus Christ should deign to cast his eyes upon them, as he has on you. Happy if, on quitting the court of Caiaphas, in which they have, like our apostle, denied their Master, they should weep like you.

O God! if we are permitted to address thee, though but "dust and ashes," is it for the confirmation, or the confusion of our faith, that, on this subject, thou seemest inexorable; and a subject on which we will never cease to pray. On this head, has the mighty God "forgotten to have compassion?" No! I cannot persuade myself that God has for ever abandoned so large a portion of his church. No! I cannot persuade myself that God has ceased to watch over the consciences of those our unhappy brethren, whom Satan has so long detained in security and slumber. No! I cannot persuade myself, that God should permit so many children to perish for the sins of their fathers; and to be for ever separated from the church, to which they materially belong. Let our part be done, and God's shall surely be accomplished. Let us be afflicted for the affliction of Joseph. Let us pray for the peace of Jerusalem. Let the calamities of the church be ever on our mind. They are ever before the eyes of God; they excite him to jealousy; they cause him to emerge from that cloud, in which he has so long been concealed for the exclusion of our prayers.

APPLICATION.

I address myself to you, my brethren, whose characters have never been defiled with so foul a blot: offer not incense to your drag, nor sacri-

fice to your net. Ascribe not to your courage a felicity which, perhaps, is solely due to the favourable circumstances in which you may have been providentially placed. Remember St. Peter. He reposed the utmost confidence in his zeal; and, the first trial he made of his strength, he was convinced of his weakness. Had God smitten the shepherd in the midst of you, perhaps the sheep would have been scattered. Had you, as so many others, seen galleys equipped, dungeons opened, gibbets erected, fagots kindled, executioners armed, racks prepared, perhaps you would likewise have denied the Saviour.

Do I impose on my hearers? Do you judge by what we do in the time of peace, of what we should do in the time of tribulation? Let each here sound the depth of his own heart, and let him support, if possible, the dignity of Jesus Christ. How frequently, amid a slanderous multitude, who have said to us, "Are not you his disciples? Are not you attached to those, who make it a point of conscience not to mention the faults of your neighbours?" How often have we replied, by a guilty silence, "I know him not, I am not one of his disciples." How often in licentious company, when asked, "Are not you of that class? Are not you one of those, who restrict their appetites, moderate their passions, and mortify the flesh?" How often have we answered, "I know him not, I am not one of his disciples." How often when led away with the enemies of righteousness, who have said, "Are not you one of that company? Are not you one of those who pique themselves on primitive virtue?" How often have we answered by a cowardly conduct, "I know him not, I am not one of his disciples."

In defiance of all the composure and apathy with which we daily commit this sort of sins, conscience sometimes awakes and enforces reformation. One of those happy occasions is just at hand. A crowded audience is expected here on Wednesday next. A trumpet is blown in Zion; a solemn assembly is convoked; a fast is proclaimed. But shall I tell you, my brethren? After excepting the small number who will then afflict their righteous soul, and no doubt, redouble their devotion; after excepting the small number, and after examining the nature of our solemn humiliations, that I am less afraid of your sins, than of your fasts for national reform?

Before the great God;—before the Holy One of Israel, whose love of holiness is infinite as himself, we shall appear on Wednesday next, with minds still immersed in the cares, and agitated with the pleasures of the preceding day; we shall appear with dissipation, with a heart neither touched, nor broken, nor contrite: we shall each appear, and say, "I have sinned;" or in other words, "I have made my house a scene of voluptuousness, a seat of slander, a haunt of infamy: I have trampled my brethren under my feet, and this opulence, with which God has invested me to support, I have employed to oppress the wretched: I have amassed exorbitant gains on the right hand, and the left; I have sacrificed friend, pupil, widow, orphan; I have sacrificed every thing to my private interest, the only god I worship and adore." On this great God, who discovers the most latent

foldings of the heart, whose "sword divides asunder the soul and spirit, the joints and marrow;" in whose presence "all things," the mind and heart, the secret thoughts, the concealed crimes, the dark designs, "all things are naked and manifest;"—on this great God we presume to impose by the exterior, by the tinsel of devotion, by covering ourselves with sackcloth and ashes, by bowing the neck to the yoke, and afflicting the soul for a single day; even, if we should put on sackcloth and ashes; if we should bow the neck to the yoke, and afflict the soul for a single day. But this very exterior, of which God says, "Is this the fast I have chosen? Callest thou this a fast, a day agreeable to the Lord?" Isaiah lviii. 5. This mere exterior is not even found among us: we have only to open our eyes to admit the propriety of the charge.

Before this great God, whose power is infinite, and who seems to have displayed it of late years, solely to punish the crimes of men, and to strike all Europe with terror and death, with horror and despair;—before this God we shall presume to ask, not to be involved in the general destruction: we shall presume to offer up this prayer, while each is resolved to insult him, to devour one another, to adhere to our criminal connexions, to persevere in our unlawful gains. Am I then extravagant in saying, that, when I reflect on the nature of our solemn humiliations, I am less afraid of our sins, than of fasts we celebrate for national reform?

Not that this sort of fasts are always unavailing; the mercy of God sometimes gives them effect, and endeavours in some sort to overlook our hypocrisy. "When he slew them, then they sought him, and remembered that God was their rock. Nevertheless, they did flatter with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues, for their heart was not right with him. But he being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and many a time turned away his anger," Ps. lxxviii. 34—38. God has not only acted on these principles with regard to his ancient people, but even with regard to us. On the approach of death, when we have sought the Lord by solemn prayer, "When we have remembered our rock, when we have flattered with our mouth, and lied with our tongues," promising reformation, he has had compassion upon us, and has retarded our destruction. On that account we still live. On that account these hearers are still present in this temple, and the wicked among them have been precipitated into the gulf of Gehenna. But how long, think you, can this sort of fasts produce the effects for which they have hitherto availed? Weigh the words which follow the above quotation. "When God heard this, he was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel: so that he forsook the tabernacle in Shiloh, the tent he had planted among men. And he delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemy's hand," verse 59—62.

Holland! Holland! here is the sentence of thy destiny. God, after regarding our humiliations for a certain time, after "remembering that we are but flesh," after enduring the prayers of deceitful tongues, and the promises of feigned lips, he will finally hear the cry of our sins, he will abhor Israel, he will abandon his pavilion in

Shiloh, and this sacred temple in which he deigns to dwell with men.

My brethren, are we yet spared to sound the alarm, to thunder? And shall we not adopt a new mode of celebrating this fast, and endeavour to execute it?

And you, our senators and governors! who have appointed this solemnity, let us apprise you also of its appropriate duties. Come on Wednesday next: like modern Jehoshaphats, prostrate, at the footstool of God's throne, the dignities with which you are invested; and for which you must give so solemn an account. Come, and let all your glory consist in humiliation and repentance. Come, and surrender into his Omnipotent hands, the reins of this republic, and swear that you will henceforth govern it by no maxims but his laws. And may God grant, may God indeed grant you, to set so laudable an example before his church; and, having inspired you with the noble resolution, may he crown it with effect!

Ministers of Jesus Christ, whom Providence calls on Wednesday next to administer the word, your task is obviously great. With what a charge are you intrusted! On you principally devolves the duty of alarming and abasing the wicked. On you principally devolves the duty of stopping the torrent of iniquity, which is followed by these awful calamities. On you principally devolves the duty of quenching the flames of celestial vengeance, enkindled against our sins. "Who is sufficient for these things?" But use your efforts, and expect the rest from the blessing of God. Speak as ministers ought to speak on like occasions. "Cry aloud, lift up your voice like a trumpet, show Jacob his transgressions, and Israel his sins." If you testify the truth, what matter if they murmur against your discourses. And may God, on this solemn occasion, "teach your hands to war, and your fingers to fight." May God inspire you with magnanimity of mind correspondent to the mission with which you are invested.

And you, Christian people, what will you do on Wednesday next? It is not only your presence in this temple,—it is not only hymns and prayers, supplications, and tears, which we solicit,—a fast should be signalized by more distinguished marks of conversion and repentance: these are restitution, these are mutual reconciliation, these are a profusion of charities, these are a diligent search for the indigent, who are expiring as much through shame as want. Here, here, my dear brethren, is what we require. And let me obtain this request! Let me even expire in this pulpit, in endeavouring to add some degree of energy to your devotion, and effect to your fast! Our prayers shall supply our weakness. O Almighty God! O God! who makest "judgment thy strange work," let our prayers appease thy indignation! Resist not a concourse of people, assembled to besiege the throne of thy grace, and to move thy bowels of paternal compassion! When our nobles, our pastors, our heads of houses, our children, when all our people, when all shall be assembled on Wednesday next in this house, with eyes bathed in tears, with hearts rent, for having offended so good and gracious a God,—when each shall

cry from the ashes of our repentance, "Have mercy upon me, according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, and blot out my transgressions." Deign thou also to be present, O great God, and "Holy one of Israel." Deign thou also to be present with the goodness, the love, the bowels of compassion, which thou hast for poor penitent sinners! Hear, O Lord, hear, O Lord, and pardon! Amen.

SERMON LXXXIX.

ON THE NATURE OF THE UNPARDONABLE SIN.

HEBREWS VI. 4—6.

It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come: if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance.

"How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." On a different occasion, there would have been nothing surprising in the fears of Jacob. Had God revealed himself to this patriarch in the awful glory of avenging wrath, and surrounded with devouring fire, "with darkness and with tempest;" it would have been surprising that a man, that a sinner, and a believer of the earlier ages of the church, should have been vanquished at the sight. But, at a period when God approached him with the tenderest marks of love; when he erected a miraculous ladder between heaven and earth, causing the angels to ascend and descend for the protection of his servant; when he addressed him in these consolatory words, "Behold I am with thee, I will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and I will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee;" that Jacob should tremble in such a moment, is what we cannot conceive without astonishment. What! is the gate of heaven dreadful; and is the house of God an object calculated to strike terror into the mind?

My brethren, Jacob's fear unquestionably proceeded from the presence of God, from the singularity of the vision, and the peculiar scenery of the discovery, which had struck his imagination. But let us farther extend our thoughts. Yes, the gate of heaven is terrible, and the house of God is dreadful! and his favours should impress solemnity on the heart. Distinguished favours give occasion to distinguished crimes; and from places the most exalted have occurred the greatest falls. St. Paul, in the words of my text, places each of the Hebrews, whom he addressed, in the situation of Jacob. He exhibits a portrait of the prodigies achieved in their favour, since their conversion to Christianity; the miracles which had struck their senses; the knowledge which had irradiated their minds; and the impressions which had been made on their hearts. He opens to them the gate of heaven; but, at the same time, requires that they should exclaim, "How dreadful is this place!" From this profusion of grace, he draws motives for salutary fear. "It is impossible,"

says he, "for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come; if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance."

St. Paul, after having pronounced these terrific words, adds; "Behold we are persuaded better things of you." Happy apostle, who, while pronouncing the sentence of celestial vengeance, could flatter himself that it would not fall on any of his audience. But we, my brethren, how shall we say to you? "Beloved, we are persuaded better things of you." The disposition is worthy of our wishes. May it be the effect of this discourse, and the fruit of our ministry!

To have been enlightened,—to have tasted the heavenly gift,—to have been partakers of the Holy Ghost,—to have tasted the good word of God, and felt the powers of the world to come,—and to fall away in defiance of so much grace,—such are the odious traits employed by the apostle to degrade a crime, the nature of which we proceed to define. The awful characteristics in the portrait, and the superadded conclusion, that it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance, fully apprise us, that he here speaks of the foulest of all offences; and, at the same time, gives us a limited notion of its nature.

Some have thought, that the surest way to obtain a just idea of the sin, was to represent it by every atrocious circumstance. They have collected all the characteristics, which could add aggravation to the crime: they have said, that a man who has known the truth, who has despised, hated, and opposed it, neither through fear of punishment, nor hope of reward, offered by tyrants to apostacy, but from a principle of malice, is the identical person of whom the apostle speaks; and that in this monstrous association of light, conviction, opposition, and unconquerable abhorrence of the truth, this awful crime consists.

Others, proceeding farther, have searched ancient and modern history, for persons, in whom those characteristics associate; that, superadding example to description, they might exhibit a complete portrait of the sin, into whose nature we shall now inquire. They have selected two striking examples. The first is that of the emperor Julian, the unworthy nephew of Constantine the Great, designated in history under the odious appellation of *apostate*, who, after having been bred in the bosom of the church, and after having officiated with his brother, as reader (do not be surprised, my brethren, that the nephew of an emperor should wish to be a reader in the church, the first Christians had higher ideas than we of the sacred functions,) after, I say, having sustained this office, abandoned the faith, persecuted the church, endeavoured to refute Christianity, assumed the character of chief pontiff, carried himself to that excess as to wish to efface the impression of baptism by the blood of victims, and if we may credit a tradition reported by Theodoret, died blaspheming against Jesus Christ.*

* Hist. Eccles. lib. iii. cap. 3.

The second example is that of the most singular Venetian, whose memory seems handed down to posterity solely to excite horror, and for ever to intimidate those who renounce the truth. His name is Francis Spiera. He had tasted the doctrine of the Reformation, and published his sentiments; but on being cited before the pope's nuncio, and menaced with the loss of his head, if he did not instantly recant, his fears occasioned his baseness, and he had the weakness to make a public renunciation of our communion. But scarcely had he made the abjuration ere he was abandoned to the horrors of melancholy. The anguish of his mind was fatal to the body; and as one endeavoured to convince him of the boundless mercy of God, "I know it," he exclaimed, "I know that God is merciful; but this mercy belongs not to me, to me who have denied the truth. I have sinned against the Holy Ghost; I already feel the horrors of the damned. My terrors are insupportable. Who will deliver my soul from this body? Who will open for her the caverns of the abyss? Who will chase her into the darkest abodes of hell? I am damned without resource. I consider God no longer as my Father, but as my enemy. I detest him; (is it possible that a Christian mouth should open with the like blasphemies!) I detest him as such. I am impatient to join the curses of the demons in hell, whose pains and horrors I already feel."*

In the course of this sermon, we shall endeavour to draw, from their method, whatever may most contribute to your instruction. But, first of all, we deem it our duty to make some previous observations, and to derive the light from its source. In the discussion of a sin, solitary in its nature, the Scriptures having excluded none from salvation, but those who are guilty of this offence, it is of the last importance to review all those passages, which, it is presumed, have reference to the crime: we must inquire in what they differ, and in what they agree, drawing, from this association of light, that instruction, which cannot be derived from any other source.

The task will not exceed our limits, there being at most but four texts, in which, it is presumed, the Scriptures speak of this sin. The first is in the gospels where mention is made of speaking or blaspheming against the Holy Ghost: "I say unto you, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in that which is to come." This text, which Augustine deems the most difficult in the Scriptures, will become intelligible, if we examine the occasion and weigh the words.

The occasion is obvious to understand. Jesus had just cured a demoniac. The Pharisees had attested the fact, and could not deny its divine authority: their eyes decided in favour of Jesus Christ. But they had recourse to an extraordi-

nary method of defaming his character. Unable to destroy the force of the miracle, they maintained that it proceeded from an impure source, and that it was by the power of the devil Jesus Christ healed this afflicted class of men. This was the occasion on which he pronounced the words we have recited.

The import of the expressions is no way difficult to comprehend. Who is the *Son of Man*? And who is the *Holy Ghost*? And what is it to speak against the one and the other? The Son of man is Jesus Christ revealed in human form. Without staying here to refute a mistake of the learned Grotius, who pretends because the article does not precede the word, it is not to be understood of our Saviour, but of men in general. To confirm the sense here attached to the term, we shall only observe, that St. Luke, chap. xii. 8, after calling our Saviour "the Son of man," immediately adds, "Whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him:" where it evidently follows, that by "the Son of man," Jesus Christ must be understood. And though the expression may elsewhere have other significations, they have no connexion with our subject.

By the Holy Ghost, must be understood the third person in the adorable Trinity; considered not only as God, but as Author of the miracles achieved for the confirmation of the gospel. Hence, to "speak against the Son of man," was to outrage the Lord Jesus; to render his doctrine suspected; to call his mission in question; and particularly to be offended at the humiliations which surrounded it on earth. Such was their conduct who said, "Is not this the carpenter's son? Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? A gluttonous man, a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners."

To speak against the Holy Ghost, was maliciously to reject a doctrine, when he who delivered it, confirmed the truth of it by so distinguished and evident a miracle as healing a demoniac; and to ascribe those miracles to the devil, which, they were assured, had God alone for their author. Here, I conceive, is all the light we can derive from the text. And as many persons determine the sense of the text, not so much by the letter as the reputation of the interpreter, we must apprise them, that we have derived this explanation not only from the writings of our most celebrated commentators who have espoused it, but also from the works of the most celebrated of the fathers—I mean Chrysostom. The following is the substance of his paraphrase on the text in St. Matthew:—"You have called me a deceiver, and an enemy of God; I forgive this reproach. Having some cause to stumble at the flesh with which I am clothed, you might not know who I am. But can you be ignorant that the casting out of demons, is the work of the Holy Ghost? For this cause, he who says, that I do these miracles by Beelzebub, shall not obtain remission."

Such is the comment of Chrysostom, to whom we add the remark of an author, worthy of superior confidence; it is St. Mark, who subjoins these words: "Because the Pharisees said he hath an unclean spirit." Hence it is inferred that the Pharisees, by ascribing the

* Our author thought himself justified in reciting this sad case, there being thousands in France who had renounced the reformed religion.

miracles of the Holy Ghost, to an unclean spirit, were guilty of the identical sin against the Holy Ghost, of which Jesus Christ had spoken: as is apparently proved.

The second text we shall explain, occurs in the fifth chapter of the first epistle of St. John. "If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death: there is a sin unto death; I do not say ye shall pray for it." On this question there are, as we usually say, as many opinions as parties.

Consult the doctors of the Romish church, and they will establish, on these words, the frivolous distinction between venial and mortal sins; a conjecture both false, and directly opposed to the design of those from whom it proceeds. Because, if this sense be true, the moment a man commits a mortal sin, prayer must cease with regard to him; and he who commits a venial sin, will still need the prayers of saints to avoid a death he has not deserved; this is not only indefensible, but what the Catholics themselves would not presume to maintain.

Waving the various glosses of the Novatians, and other commentators, do you ask what is the idea we should attach to these words of the apostle, and what is the sin of which he here speaks? We repeat what we have already intimated, that it is difficult to explain. However, on investigating the views of the apostle throughout the chapter, we discover the sense of this text. His design was, to embolden the young converts in the profession of the religion they had so happily embraced. With this view, he here recapitulates the proofs which established its truth: "There are three that bear witness on earth, the water, and the spirit, and the blood. It is the innocence of the primitive Christians, which is called *the water*; the miracles which are called *the spirit*; and martyrdom, by which the faithful have sealed their testimony, and which is called *the blood*: attesting that those three classes of witnesses, demonstrate the truth of the Christian religion, and render its opposers utterly inexcusable.

After these and similar observations, the apostle says expressly, that he wrote for the confirmation of their faith, and closes with this exhortation: "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." Between these two texts, occur the words we wish to explain: "There is a sin unto death: I do not say that ye shall pray for it." Must not "the sin unto death," be that, against which he wished to fortify the saints; I mean apostacy?

What! you will say, is a man lost without remedy who has denied the truth; and is every one in the sad situation of those for whom the apostle prohibits prayer? God forbid, my brethren, that we should preach so strange a doctrine; and once more renew the Novatian severity! There are two kinds of apostates, and two kinds of apostacies: there is one kind of apostacy into which we fall by the fear of punishment, or on the blush of the moment, by the promises Satan makes to his proselytes. There is another, into which we fall by the enmity we have against the truth, by the detestable pleasure we take in opposing its force. It were cruel to account the first of these of-

fences, "a sin unto death;" but the Spirit of God prompts us to attach this idea to the second. There are likewise two kinds of apostates. There is one class, who have made only small attainments in the knowledge of the truth; weak and imperfect Christians, unacquainted as yet with the joys and transports excited in the soul by a religion, which promises remission of sin, and everlasting felicity. There is another, on the contrary, to whom God has given superior knowledge, to whom he has communicated the gifts of miracles, and whom he has caused to experience the sweetness of his promise. It would be hard to reject the first; but the apostle had regard to the second. Those, according to St. John, who have committed the "sin unto death," are the persons who abjure Christianity, after the reception of all those gifts. In the primitive church, where some were honoured with the endowment of discerning spirits, there probably were brethren who could discern the latter apostates from the former.

These observations lead to the illustration of the two passages yet to be explained: the one is in the tenth chapter to the Hebrews; the other is our text. In both these passages, it is obvious the apostle had the second class of apostates in view. This is very apparent from our text. Throughout the whole of this epistle, it is easy to prove, that the apostle's wish was the prevention of apostacy. He especially designed to demonstrate, that to renounce Christianity, after attesting its confirmation by miracles, here denominated "distributions of the Holy Ghost," was a crime of the grossest enormity. He has the same design in the text. Let us examine the terms.

1. "They were once enlightened;" that is, they had known the truth. They had compared the prophets with the apostles, the prophecies with the accomplishment; and by the collective force of truth, they were fully persuaded that Jesus was the Messiah. Or, if you please, "they were once enlightened;" that is, "they were baptized;" baptism, in the primitive church, succeeding instruction, according to that precept of Christ, "Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them," &c. St. Paul, at the beginning of this chapter, speaking of baptism, expresses the same sentiment. So also we are to understand St. Peter, when he says, that "the baptism which now saves us, is not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience." The answer of a good conscience, is the rectitude of conduct, resulting from the catechumen's knowledge and faith. Hence they commonly gave the appellation of illuminated to a man after baptism. "The washing of baptism," says Justin Martyr, "is called illumination; because he who is instructed in these mysteries, is enlightened." Hence also the Syriac version, instead of *enlightened*, as our reading which follows the Greek, has rendered it *baptized*.

2. "They had tasted of the heavenly gift;" that is, they had experienced the serenity of that *peace*, which we feel when we no longer fear the punishment of sin: having passed, if I may so speak, the rigorous road of repentance, into favour with God.

3. "They were made partakers of the Holy

Ghost, they had relished the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come." All these various expressions may be understood of miracles performed in their presence, or achieved by themselves. The Holy Ghost himself has assumed this acceptation, in various parts of the Scriptures, as in that remarkable passage in the nineteenth chapter of the Acts, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost?"—We have not so much as heard, whether there be any Holy Ghost. *The good word*, says Grotius, is the promise of God, as in the twenty-ninth of Jeremiah, "I will—perform my good word towards you;" that is, my promise; and one of the greatest promises made to the primitive Christians, was the gift of miracles. "These signs," says Jesus, "shall follow them that believe; in my name they shall cast out devils, they shall speak with tongues, they shall take up serpents." In fine, "the powers of the world to come," were, likewise, the prodigies to be achieved during the gospel economy; which the Jews call the age, or world to come; prodigies elsewhere called, the "exceeding greatness of his power, and the mighty working of his power."

These are the endowments, with which the persons in question were favoured; their crime was apostasy. "It is impossible, if they fall away, to renew them again unto repentance."

To *fall away*, does not characterize the state of a man, who relapses, after having obtained remission. How deplorable soever his situation may be, it is not without resource. The falling away in our text signifies a total defection; and entire rejection of Jesus Christ, and of his religion. The falling away, according to St. Paul, in the ninth chapter of his epistle to the Romans, marks the first stage of obduracy in the Jewish nation. But the falling away in our text, is not only a rejection of Christ, but a rejection after having known him: it is not only to reject, but to outrage and persecute him with malice and enmity of heart. Here is all the information we can derive from the text. The unpardonable sin, in these words, is that of apostates; and such as we have characterized in the preceding remarks.

This also is the genuine import of the tenth chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, "If we sin wilfully, after having received the knowledge of the truth," as would be easy to prove.

Now, if you have been attentive to all the considerations we have just advanced: if you have understood the explanations we have given of the several texts, you may form a correct idea of the unpardonable sin. You may know what this crime was, at least, in the time of the primitive church. It was denying, hating, and maliciously opposing the truth, at the moment they were persuaded it proceeded from God. Two classes of men might commit this crime in the apostolic age.

First, those who had never embraced Christianity; but opposed its progress in defiance of rational conviction, and the dictates of conscience. This was the sin of the Pharisees, who maliciously ascribed to the devil miracles, which they knew could have God alone for their author.

Secondly, those who had embraced the gospel, who had been baptized, who had received

the gift of miracles, and experienced all the graces enumerated in the text. This was the sin of those, who, after conversion, abjured the truth, and pronounced against Jesus Christ the anathemas which his enemies, and particularly the Jews, required of apostates. These St. Paul had in view, in the words of our text, and in the tenth chapter of this epistle. Of this St. John also spake, when he said, "there is a sin unto death." Hence the sin described in these three passages, and the sin against the Holy Ghost, is the same in quality, if I may so speak, though diversified in circumstances: we have, consequently, comprised the whole under the vague appellation of *unpardonable sin*.

After these considerations, perhaps, you already rejoice. This sermon, designed to inspire the soul with sanctifying fear, has, perhaps, already contributed to flatter your security: you no longer see any thing in the text, which affects your case; nor any thing in the most disorderly life, connected with a crime, peculiar to the primitive Christians. Let us dissipate, if possible, so dangerous an illusion. We have done little, by tracing the manner in which the first witnesses of the gospel became guilty of the unpardonable sin; we must also inquire, what relation it may have to us.

In general, it is not possible to hear subjects of this nature discussed, without a variety of questions revolving in the mind, and asking one's self, have I not already committed this sin? Does not such and such a vice, by which I am captivated, constitute its essence? Or, if I have never committed it yet, may I not fall into it at a future period? It is but just, brethren, to afford you satisfaction on points so important. Never did we discuss more serious questions; and we frankly acknowledge, that all we have hitherto advanced, was merely introductory to what we have yet to say; and for which we require the whole of the attention, with which you have favoured us.

Though truth is always the same, and never accommodates itself to the humours of an audience, it is an invariable duty to resolve these questions according to the characters of the inquirers. The questions amount in substance to this: Can a man in this age commit the unpardonable sin? And, I assure you, they may be proposed from three principles, widely different from each other: from a melancholy, from a timorous, and a cautious disposition. We shall diversify our solutions, conformably to this diversity of character.

1. One may make this inquiry through a melancholy disposition; and mental derangement is an awful complaint. It is a disease which corrupts the blood, stagnates the spirits, and flags the mind. From the body, it quickly communicates to the soul; it induces the sufferers to regard every object on the dark side; to indulge phantoms, and cherish anguish, which, excluding all consolation, wholly devotes the mind to objects, by which it is alarmed and tormented. A man of this disposition, on examining his conscience, and reviewing his life, will draw his own character in the deepest colours. He will construe his weakness into wickedness, and his infirmities into crimes; he will magnify the number, and aggravate the atrocity of his sins; he will class himself, in

short, with the worst of human characters. And, our reasons for self-condemnation and abasement before God, being always too well founded, the person in question, proceeding on these principles, and mistaking the causes of humiliation and repentance, for just subjects of horror and despair, readily believes himself lost without resource, and guilty of the unpardonable sin.

Without doubt, it is highly proper to reason with people of this description. We should endeavour to compose them, and enter into their sentiments, in order to attack their arguments with more effect; but, after all, a man so afflicted has more need of a physician than a minister, and of medicine than sermons. If it is not a hopeless case, we must endeavour to remove the complaint, by means which nature and art afford; by air, exercise, and innocent recreations. Above all, we must pray that God would "cause the bones he has broken to rejoice;" and that he would not abandon, to the remorse and torments of the damned, souls redeemed by the blood of his beloved Son, and reconciled by his sacrifice.

2. This inquiry may also be made through a timorous disposition. We distinguish timidity from melancholy; the first being a disposition of the mind, occasioned by the mistaken notions we entertain of God and his word; the second, of the body. The timorous man fixes his eye on what the Scriptures say of the justice of God, without paying adequate attention to what is said of his mercy. He looks solely at the perfection to which a Christian is called, without ever regarding the leniency of the gospel. Such a man, like the melancholy person, is readily induced to think himself guilty of the unpardonable sin. Should he flatter himself with not having yet perpetrated the deed, he lives in a continual fear. This fear may, indeed, proceed from a good principle, and be productive of happy effects, in exciting vigilance and care; but, if not incompatible with the liberty of the children of God, it is at least repugnant to the peace they may obtain; which constitutes one of the sweetest comforts of religion, and one of the most effectual motives to conciliate the heart.

If a man of this description should ask me, whether one may now commit the unpardonable sin? I would repeat what I have just said, that this sin, in all its circumstances, has peculiar reference to the miracles by which God formerly confirmed the evangelical doctrine; and consequently, to account himself at this period guilty of the crime, is to follow the emotions of fear, rather than the conviction of argument. I would compare the sin which alarms his conscience, with that of the unhappy man of whom we spake. I would prove by this comparison, that the disposition of a man, who utters blasphemy against Jesus Christ, who makes open war with the professors of his doctrine, has no resemblance to the style of another, who sins with remorse and contrition; who wrestles with the old man; who sometimes conquers, and sometimes is conquered: though he has sufficient cause from his sin to perceive, that the love of God by no means properly burns in his heart; he has, however, encouragement from his victories, to

admit that it is not totally extinguished. I would assist this man to enter more minutely into his state; to consider the holy fears which fill, the terrors which agitate, and the remorse which troubles his heart; and in such a way as to derive from the cause of his grief, motives of consolation. We should never stretch our subjects, nor divide what Jesus Christ has joined by a happy temperature. If you look solely at the mercy of God, you will unavoidably form excuses to flatter your security; if you confine your regards to his justice, you will fall into despair. It is this happy temperature of severity and indulgence, of mercy and justice, of hope and fear, which brings the soul of a saint to permanent repose; it is this happy temperature which constitutes the beauty of religion, and renders it efficacious in the conversion of mankind. This should be our method with persons of a doubtful disposition.

But wo unto us, if under the pretext of giving the literal import of a text of Scripture, we should conceal its general design; a design equally interesting to Christians of every age and nation, and which concerns you, my brethren, in a peculiar manner; wo unto us, if under a pretence of composing the conscience of the timorous, we should afford the slightest encouragement to the hardened, to flatter their security, and confirm them in their obduracy of heart.

3. This inquiry,—Whether we can now commit the unpardonable sin?—may likewise be made on the ground of caution, and that we may know the danger, only in order to avoid it. Follow us in our reply.

We cannot commit this sin with regard to the peculiar circumstances of those who lived in the first ages of the church. This has been proved, I think, by the preceding arguments; no person having seen Jesus Christ work miracles, and, like the Pharisees, having called him Beelzebub; nor has any one received the gift of miracles, and afterwards denied the truth, as those apostates, of whom we spake. But a man may commit the crime, with regard to what constitutes its essence, and its atrocity. This also we hope to prove. For, I ask, what constituted the enormity of the crime? Was it the miracles, simply considered? Or was it the conviction and sentiments which ensued, and which proceeded from the hearts of the witnesses? Without a doubt it was the conviction and the sentiments, and not the miracles and prodigies, separately considered, and without the least regard to their seeing them performed, or themselves being the workers. If we shall, therefore, prove, that the efforts which Providence now employs for the conversion of mankind, may convey to the mind the same conviction, and excite the same sentiments afforded to the witnesses of these miracles, shall we not consequently prove, that if men now resist the gracious efforts of Providence, they are equally guilty as the ancients; and, of course, that which constitutes the essence and atrocity of the unpardonable sin, subsists at this period, as in the apostolic age.

1. A man, at this period, may sin against the clearest light. Do not say that he cannot sin against the same degree of light, which irradiated the primitive church. I allow that

none of you have seen the miracles performed for the confirmation of our faith; but I will venture to affirm, that there are truths as palpable, as if they had been confirmed by miracles; I will venture to affirm, that if they collect all the proofs we have of our Saviour's mission, there will result a conviction to the mind as clear, as that which resulted to the Pharisees, on seeing the demoniac healed.

2. What constituted the atrocity of the crime in the first ages, was attacking this religion, whose evidence they had attested. This may also be found among men of our own time. A man, who is convinced that the Christian religion was revealed from heaven;—a man who doubts not, among all the religious connexions in the Christian world, that to which he adheres is among the purest;—a man who abandons this religion;—a man who argues, who disputes, who writes volume upon volume, to vindicate his apostacy, and attacks those very truths, whose evidence he cannot but perceive; such a man has not committed the unpardonable sin in its whole extent; but he has so far proceeded to attack the truths, of whose veracity he was convinced.

3. What farther constituted the atrocity of the crime, was *falling away*; not by the fear of punishment, not by the first charms Satan presents to his proselytes, but by a principle of hatred against truths, so restrictive of human passions. This may also be found among men of our own age. For example, a man who mixes in our congregations, who reads our books, who adheres to our worship; but who, in his ordinary conversation, endeavours to discredit those truths, to establish deism or impiety, and abandons himself to this excess, because he hates a religion which gives him inquietude and pain, and wishes to expunge it from every heart; this man has not committed the unpardonable sin in all its extent, but he has so far proceeded as to hate the truth.

4. What, lastly, rendered the crime atrocious with regard to apostates, was their running to this excess, after having tasted the happiness, which the hope of salvation produces in the soul. This may, likewise, be found among Christians of our own age. For example a temporary professor;—a man (to avail myself of an expression of Jesus Christ) who "receives the word with joy;"—a man, who has long prayed with fervour, who has communicated with transports of delight;—a man of this description, who forgets all these delights, who resists all these attractive charms, and sacrifices them to the advantages offered by a false religion; he has not yet committed the unpardonable sin, but he surely has the characteristic "of falling away, after having been once enlightened, and tasted of the heavenly gift."

You now perceive, my brethren, that all these characteristics may be found separately among men of our own age. But should there be a man in whom they all unite; a man who has known and abjured the truth; who has not only abjured, but opposed and persecuted it, not in a moment of surprise, and at the sight of racks and tortures, but from a principle of enmity and hatred; do you not think he would have just cause to fear, that he had committed the "unpardonable sin."

To collect the whole in two words, and in a yet shorter way to resolve the question, "Is it possible now to commit the unpardonable sin?" I answer: We cannot commit it with regard to every circumstance; but, in regard to what constitutes its essence and atrocity, it may be committed; and though men seldom fall so deeply, yet it is not impossible. Few complete the crime; but many commit it in part, and in degree. Some imagine themselves to be guilty by an ill-founded fear; but a much greater number are daily going the awful road, and, through an obstinate security, unperceived. They ought, of course, to reject the thought of having proceeded to that excess; but, at the same time, to take precaution, that, in the issue, the dreadful period may never come, which is nearer, perhaps, than they imagine.

APPLICATION.

What effects shall the truths we have delivered, produce on your minds? Shall they augment your pride, excite vain notions of your virtue, and suggest an apology for vice, because you cannot, in the portrait we have given, recognise your own character? Is your glory derived from the consideration, that your depravity has not attained the highest pitch, and that there yet remains one point of horror, at which you have not arrived? Will you suffer the wounds to corrode your heart, under the notions that they are not desperate, and there is still a remedy? And do you expect to repent, and to ask forgiveness, when repentance is impracticable; and when all access to mercy is cut off?

But who among our hearers can be actuated by so great a frenzy? What deluded conscience can enjoy repose under a pretext, that it has not yet committed the unpardonable sin?—Whence is it, after all, that this crime is so dreadful? All the reasons which may be assigned, terminate here, as in their centre, that it precipitates the soul into hell. But is not hell the end of every sin? There is this difference, it must be observed, between the unpardonable sin, and other sins, that he who commits it is lost without resource; whereas, after other sins, we have a sure remedy in conversion. But, in all cases, a man must repent, reform and become a new creature; for we find in religion, what we find in the human body, some diseases quite incurable, and others which may be removed with application and care: but they have both the similarity of becoming incurable by neglect; and what, at first, was but a slight indisposition, becomes mortal by presumption and delay.

Besides, there are few persons among us,—there are few monsters in nature,—capable of carrying wickedness, all at once, to the point we have described. But how many are there who walk the awful road, and who attain to it by degrees? They do not arrive, in a moment, at the summit of impiety. The first essays of the sinner, are not those horrid traits which cause nature to recoil. A man educated in the Christian religion, does not descend, all at once, from the full lustre of truth, to the profoundest darkness. His fault, at first, was mere detraction; thence he proceeded to negli-

gence; thence to vice; next he stifles remorse; and, lastly, proceeds to the commission of enormous crimes: so he who, in the beginning, trembled at the thought of a weakness, becomes insensible of the foulest deeds, and of a conduct the most atrocious.

There is one reflection with which you cannot be too much impressed, in an age in which Jesus Christ approaches us with his light, with his Spirit, and with all the advantages of the evangelical economy; that is, concerning the awful consequences of not improving these privileges, according to their original design. You rejoice to live in the happy age, which "so many kings and prophets have desired to see." You have reason so to do. But you rejoice in these privileges, while each of you persist in a favourite vice, and a predominant habit; and because you are neither Jews nor heathens, you expect to find, in religion, means to compose a conscience, abandoned to every kind of vice: this is a most extraordinary, and almost general prejudice among Christians. But this light, in which you rejoice,—this Christianity, by which you are distinguished,—this faith, which constitutes your glory, will aggravate your condemnation, if your lives continue unreformed. The Pharisees were highly favoured by seeing Jesus Christ in the flesh, by attesting his miracles, and hearing the wisdom which descended from his lips; but these were the privileges which caused their sin to be irremissible. The Hebrews were happy by being enlightened, by tasting of the heavenly gift, and the powers of the evangelical economy; but this happiness, on their falling away, rendered their loss irreparable.

Apply this thought to the various means, which Providence affords for your conversion; and think what effect it must produce on your preachers. It suspends our judgment, and ties our hands, if I may so speak, in the exercise of our ministry. We are animated at the sight of the blessing which the gospel brings; but, when we contemplate the awful consequences on those who resist, we are astonished and appalled.

Must we wilfully exclude the light? What effects have the efforts of Providence produced upon you? What account can you give of the numerous privileges with which Heaven has favoured you? Think not that we take pleasure in declamations, and in drawing frightful portraits of your conduct. Would to God that our preaching were so received, and so improved, as to change our censures into applause, and all our strictures into approbation. But charity is never opposed to experience. So many exhortations, so many entreaties, so many affectionate warnings, so many pathetic sermons, so many instructions, so many conflicts to save you from vice, leave the proud in his pride, the implacable in his hatred, the fashionable woman in full conformity to the world, and every other in his predominating sin. What line of conduct shall we consequently adopt? Shall we continue to enforce the truth, to press the duties of morality; and to trace the road of salvation, in which you refuse to walk? We have already said, that these privileges will augment your loss, and redouble the weight of your chains. Must we shut up these churches? Must we

overturn these pulpits? Must we exile these pastors? And making that the object of our prayer, which ought to be our justest cause of fear, must we say, Lord, take away thy word; take away thy Spirit; and remove thy candlestick; lest, receiving too large a portion of grace, we should augment the account we have to give, and render our punishment more intolerable.

But why abandon the soul to so tragical a thought? Lord, continue with us these precious pledges "of thy loving-kindness, which is better than life," and give us a new heart. It is true, my brethren, a thousand objects indicate, that you will persist in impiety. But I know not what sentiment flatters us, that you are about to renounce it. These were St. Paul's sentiments concerning the Hebrews: he saw the efforts of the world to draw them from the faith, and the almost certain fall of some; in the mean time he hoped, and by an argument of charity, that the equity of God would be interested to prevent their fall. He hoped farther; he hoped to see an event of consolation. Hence he opened to the Hebrews the paths of tribulation in which they walked with courage. He called to their remembrance so many temptations refused, so many enemies confounded, so many conflicts sustained, so many victories obtained, so many trophies of glory already prepared; and proposing himself for a model, he animated them by the idea of what they had already achieved, and by what they had yet to do. "Call to remembrance," says he, "the former days, in which ye endured so great a fight of afflictions, partly whilst you were made a gazing-stock, both by reproaches and afflictions, and partly whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. Cast not away, therefore, your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward," Heb. x. 32, 33, 35. We address the like exhortation to each of our hearers. We remind you of whatever is most to be admired in your life, though weak and imperfect, the communions you have celebrated, the prayers you have offered to Heaven, the tears of repentance already shed.

And you, my brethren, my dear brethren, and honoured countrymen, I call to your recollection, as St. Paul to the Hebrews, the earth strewed with the bodies of your martyrs, and stained with your blood;—the desert populated with your fugitives;—the places of your nativity desolated;—your tenderest ties dissolved;—your prisoners in chains, and confessors in irons;—your houses rased to the foundation; and the precious remains of your shipwreck scattered on all the shores of Christendom. Oh! "Let us not cast away our confidence, which hath great recompense of reward." Let not so many conflicts be lost; let us never forsake this Jesus to whom we are devoted; but let us daily augment the ties which attach us to his communion.

If these are your sentiments, fear neither the terrors nor anathemas of the Scriptures. As texts the most consolatory have an awful aspect to them who abuse their privileges, so passages the most terrific, have a pleasing aspect to those who obey the calls of grace. The words we have explained are of this kind; for the apostle speaking of a certain class of sinners, who cannot be "renewed again unto repentance," im-

plies thereby, that all other sinners, of whatsoever kind, may be renewed. Let us therefore repent. Let us break these hearts. Let us soften these stones. Let us cause floods of tears to issue from the dry and barren rocks. And after we have passed through the horrors of repentance, let our hearts rejoice in our salvation. Let us banish all discouraging fears. Let us pay the homage of confidence to a merciful God, never confounding repentance with despair. Repentance honours the Deity; despair degrades him. Repentance adores his goodness; despair suppresses one of his brightest beams of glory. Repentance follows the example of saints; despair confounds the human kind with demons. Repentance ascribes to the blood of the Redeemer of the world its real worth; despair accounts it "an unholy thing." Let us enter into these reflections; let this day be equally the triumph of repentance over the horrors of sin, and the triumph of grace over the anguish of repentance. God grant us this grace; to him, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON XC.

ON THE SORROW FOR THE DEATH OF RELATIVES AND FRIENDS.

I THESS. iv. 13—18.

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore, comfort one another with these words.

THE text we have now read, may, perhaps, be contemplated under two very different points of view. The interpreter must here discover his acumen, and the preacher display his powers. It is a difficult text; it is one of the most difficult in all the epistles of St. Paul. I have strong reasons for believing, that it is one of those St. Peter had in view, when he says, "that there are some things in the writings of St. Paul, hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned wrest—to their own destruction," 2 Pet. iii. 16. In this respect it requires the erudition of the interpreter: It is a text fertile in instructions for our conduct: it illustrates the sentiments with which we should be inspired in all the afflictive circumstances through which Providence may call us to pass in this valley of misery, I would say, when called to part with those who constitute the joy of our life. In this respect it requires the eloquence of the preacher. In attending to both those points, bring the dispositions without which you cannot derive the

advantages we design. Have patience with the interpreter, though he may not be able fully to elucidate every inquiry you may make on a subject obscure, singular, and in some respects impenetrable. Open also the avenues of your heart to the preacher. Learn to support separations; for which you should congratulate yourselves, when they break the ties which united you to persons unworthy of your love; and which shall not be eternal, if those called away by death were the true children of God. May the anguish of the tears shed for their loss, be assuaged by the hope of meeting them in the same glory.

We have said that this text is difficult; and it is really so in four respects. The *first* arises from the doubtful import of some of the terms in which it is couched. The *second* arises from its reference to certain notions peculiar to Christians in the apostolic age, and which to us are imperfectly known. The *third* is, that it revolves on certain mysteries, in regard of which the Scriptures are not very explicit, and of which inspired men had but an imperfect knowledge. The *fourth* is the dangerous consequences it seems to involve; because by restricting the knowledge of the sacred authors, it seems to level a blow at their inspiration. Here is an epitome of all the difficulties which can contribute to encumber a text with difficulties.

I. The first is the least important, and cannot arrest the attention of any, but those who are less conversant than you, with the Scriptures. You have comprehended, I am confident, that by those who sleep, we understand those who are dead; and by those who sleep in the Lord, we understand those in general who have died in the faith, or in particular those who have sealed it by martyrdom. The sacred authors in adopting, have sanctified the style of paganism. The most ordinary shield the pagans opposed to the fear of death, was to banish the thought, and to avoid pronouncing its name. But as it is not possible to live on earth without being obliged to talk of dying, they accommodated their necessity to their delicacy, and paraphrased what they had so great a reluctance to name by the softer terms of a *departure, a submission, destiny, and a sleep*.—Fools! as though to change the name of a revolting object would diminish its horror. The sacred authors, as I have said, in adopting this style, have sanctified it. They have called death a *sleep*, by which they understand a repose: "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord; for they rest from their labours," Rev. xiv. 13. In adopting the term, they had a special regard to the resurrection which shall follow. If the terms require farther illustration, they shall be incorporated in what we shall say when discussing the subjects.

II. We have said, that this text is difficult, because it refers to certain notions peculiar to Christians in the apostolic age, which to us are imperfectly known. The allusion of ancient authors to the peculiar notions of their time, is a principal cause of the obscurity of their writings; it embarrasses the critics, and often obliges them to confess their inadequacy to the task. It is astonishing that the public should refuse to interpreters of the sacred books, the liberty they so freely grant to those of profane

authors. Why should a species of obscurity, which has never degraded Plato, or Seneca, induce us to degrade St. Paul, and other inspired men? But how extraordinary soever, in this respect, the conduct of the enemies of our sacred books may be, it is not at all astonishing; but there is cause to be astonished at those divines who would be frequently relieved by the solution of which we speak, that they should lose sight of it in their systems, and so often seek for theological mysteries in expressions which simply require the illustration of judicious criticism. On how many allusions of the class in question, have not doctrines of faith been established? "Let him who readeth understand." We will not disturb the controversy.

We have said that there is in the words of the text, probably some allusion to notions peculiar to the apostolic age. St. Paul not only designed to assuage the anguish excited in the breast of persons of fine feelings by the death of their friends; he seems to have had a *peculiar* reference to the Thessalonians. The proof we have of this is, that the apostle not merely enforces the general arguments that Christianity affords to all good men in those afflictive situations, such as the happiness which instantly follows the death of saints, and the certainty of a glorious resurrection: he superadds a motive wholly of another kind; this motive, which we shall now explain, is thus expressed: "We which are alive and remain at the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep," &c.

What might there be in the opinion, peculiar to the Christians of that age, which could thereby assuage their anguish? Among the conjectures it has excited, this appears to me the most rational;—it was a sentiment generally received in the apostolic age, and from which we cannot say that the apostles themselves were wholly free, that the last day was just at hand. Two considerations might have contributed to establish this opinion.

The ancient Rabbins had affirmed, that the second temple would not long subsist after the advent of the Messiah; and believing that the Levitical worship should be coeval with the world, they believed likewise that the resurrection of the dead, and the consummation of the ages, would speedily follow the coming of Christ. Do not ask how they reconciled those notions with the expectation of the Messiah's temporal kingdom; we know that the Rabbinical systems are but little connected; and inconsistency is not peculiar to them.

But secondly; the manner in which Jesus Christ had foretold the destruction of Jerusalem, might have contributed to persuade the first Christians, that the last day was near. He had represented it in the prophetic style, as a universal dissolution of nature, and of the elements. In that day "the sun shall be darkened; the moon shall be turned to blood; the stars shall fall from heaven; the powers of heaven shall be shaken; and the Son of man himself as coming on the clouds, and sending his angels with the sound of a trumpet to gather together his elect from the four winds," Matt. xxiv. 29. 31. These oriental figures, whereby he painted the extirpation of the Jewish nation, and the preaching of the apostles, con-

cerning which St. Paul has the words of the Psalmist, "That their sound went forth to the ends of the earth:" these ideas had persuaded many of the primitive Christians, that the coming of the Messiah, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the end of the world, must follow one another in speedy succession; and, the more so, as the Lord had subjoined to those predictions, that "this generation should not pass away until all these things be fulfilled;" that is, the men then alive. This text is of the same import with that in the xvth of St. Matthew: "Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom," ver. 28.

These are the considerations which induced many of the first Christians to believe that the last day would soon come. And as the Lord, the more strikingly to represent the surprise that the last day would excite in men, had compared it to the approach of a thief at midnight, the primitive Christians really thought that Jesus Christ would come at midnight; hence some of them rose at that hour to await his coming, and St. Jerome relates a custom, founded on apostolic tradition, of never dismissing the people before midnight during the vigils of Easter.

But what should especially be remarked for illustration of the difficulty proposed, is, that the idea of the near approach of Christ's advent, was so very far from exciting terror in the minds of the primitive Christians, that it constituted the object of their hope. They regarded it as the highest privilege of a Christian to behold his advent. The hope of this happiness had inflamed some with an ardour for martyrdom; and induced to deplore the lot of those who had died before that happy period.

This is the anguish the apostle would assuage when he says, "I would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that are asleep, that ye sorrow not as others;" that is, as the heathens, who have no hope.

III. But the consolation he gives, to comfort the afflicted, constitutes one of the difficulties in my text, because it is founded on a doctrine concerning which the Scriptures are not very explicit, and of which inspired men had but imperfect knowledge. This is the third point to be illustrated.

The consolation St. Paul gave the Thessalonians, must be explained in a way assailable to their affliction, and drawn from the reasons that induced them to regret the death of the martyrs, as being deprived of the happiness those would have who shall be alive, when Christ should descend from heaven to judge the world. St. Paul replies, that those who should then survive, would not have any prerogative over those that slept, and that both should enjoy the same glory: this, in substance, is the sense of the words which constitute the third difficulty we would wish to remove. "This we say unto you, by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord." Concerning these words various questions arise, which require illustration.

1. What did St. Paul mean when he affirmed, that what he said was by the word of the Lord? You will understand it by comparing the expression with those of the first epistle to the Corinthians, chap. xv. 51, where, discussing the same subject, he speaks thus: "Behold I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed." These words, "Behold I show you a mystery," and those of my text, are of the same import. Properly to understand them, let it be observed, that besides the gift of inspiration, by which the sacred authors knew and taught the things essential to salvation, there was one peculiar to some privileged Christians; it was a power to penetrate certain secrets, without which they might be saved, but which, nevertheless, was a glorious endowment wherever conferred. Probably St. Paul spake of this privilege, when enumerating the gifts communicated to the primitive church, in the xiiith chapter of the above epistle. "To one," he says, "is given by the same Spirit, the word of knowledge." This word of knowledge, he distinguishes from another, called just before, "The word of wisdom." The like distinctions occur chap. xiiiith and xivth, in the same epistle. Learned men, who think that by the word of wisdom, we must understand inspiration, think also, that by "the word of knowledge," we must understand an acquaintance with the mysteries of which I have spoken. Many mysteries are mentioned in the sacred writings. The mystery of the restoration of the Jews; the mystery of iniquity; and the mystery of the beast. The passages to which I allude are known to you, and time does not allow me to enlarge, nor even a full recital.

2. Why does St. Paul, when speaking of those who shall be found on earth when Christ shall descend from heaven, add, "We which are alive, and remain at the coming of the Lord?" Did he flatter himself to be of that number? Some critics have thought so: and when pressed by those words in the second Epistle to Timothy, "The time of my departure is at hand; I am ready to be offered up;" they have replied, that St. Paul had changed his ideas, and divested himself of the illusive hope that he should never die!

But how many arguments might I not adduce to refute this error, if it required refutation, and did not refute itself? How should St. Paul, who had not only the gift of inspiration, but who declared that what he said was by the word of the Lord, or according to his miraculous gift, fall into so great a mistake in speaking on this subject? How do they reconcile this presumption with what he says of the resurrection in his epistles, written prior to this, from which we have taken our text? Not to multiply arguments, there are some texts in which St. Paul seems to class himself with those who shall rise, seeing he says "we." Let us next attend to that in the second Epistle to the Corinthians: God, "who raised up the

Lord Jesus, shall raise up us also," chap. iv. 14. But in my text he seems to associate himself in the class of those who shall not be raised, being alive when Christ shall descend from heaven; "we that are alive, and remain at the coming of the Lord." Emphasis, then, should not be laid on the pronoun *we*, it signifies, in general, *those who*; and it ought to be explained, not by its general import, but by the nature of the things to which it is applied, which do not suffer us to believe, that the apostle here meant to designate himself, as I think is proved.

3. In what respects does St. Paul prove, that those who die before the advent of the Son of God, shall not thereby retard their happiness; and that those who shall then survive, shall not enjoy earlier than they the happiness with which the Saviour shall invest them?

The apostle proves it from the supremacy of Christ at the consummation of the age. The instant he shall descend from heaven, he shall awake the dead by his mighty voice. The bodies of the saints shall rise, and the bodies of those that are alive shall be purified from their natural encumbrance, according to the assertion of St. Paul, already adduced; "we shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed." And it must also be remarked, that this change, he adds, shall be made "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye;" that is, immediately on the coming of Jesus Christ: and after this change, the saints who shall rise, and those who shall be yet alive, shall be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air, and shall be for ever with the Lord. The survivors, therefore, shall have no prerogative over others; so is the sense of the text: "We which are alive and remain at the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord shall descend from heaven with a shout," like that of sailors to excite to unity of labour, as is implied by the Greek term, "with the voice of the archangel, and the trumpet of God;" I would say, with the most vehement shout; for in the sacred style, a thing angelic, angelical, or divine, is a thing which excels in its kind: "The Lord shall descend, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds."

But this is a very extraordinary kind of consolation: St. Paul still left the Thessalonians in their old mistake, that some of them should still live to see the last day; why did he not undeceive them? Why did he not say, to console them in their trouble, that the consummation of the ages was, as yet, a very distant period; and that the living and the dead should rise on the same day! This is the *fourth*, and most considerable difficulty in the words of my text.

IV. The apostles seem to have been ignorant whether the end of the world should happen in their time, or whether it should be at the distance of many ages; and it seems that by so closely circumscribing the knowledge of inspired men, we derogate from their claims of inspiration.—A whole dissertation would scarcely suffice to remove this difficulty; I shall content myself with opening the sources of its solution.

1. Ignorance of one truth is unconnected

with the revelation of another truth; I would say, it does not follow that the Holy Spirit has not revealed certain things to sacred authors, because he has not revealed them to others. We are assured he did not acquaint them with the epoch of the consummation of the ages. This epoch was not only concealed from the apostles, but also from Jesus Christ considered as a man; hence when speaking of the last day, he said, that neither the angels in heaven, nor even the Son of man, knew when it should occur; the secret being reserved with God alone, Mark xiii. 32.

2. Though the apostles might be ignorant of the final period of the world, though they might have left the Christians of their own age in the presumption that they might survive to the end of the world, the point however they have left undetermined. The texts which seem repugnant to what I say, regard the destruction of Jerusalem, and not the day of judgment; but it is not possible to examine them here in support of what I assert.

3. But though the apostles were ignorant of the final period of the world, they were confident, however, that it should not come till the prophecies, respecting the destiny of the church, were accomplished. This is suggested by St. Paul in his second Epistle to the Thesalonians: "Now, we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in your mind," or troubled, "neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter, as from us, as though the day of Christ was at hand. Let no man deceive you in any way whatever; for the day of the Lord shall not come until the revolt shall have previously happened, and till that man of sin, the son of perdition, shall be revealed," chap. ii.

4. In fine, the apostles leaving the question undecided respecting the final period of the world; a question not essential to salvation, have determined the points of which we cannot be ignorant in order to be saved; I would say, the manner in which men should live to whom this period was unknown. They have drawn conclusions the most just and certain from the uncertainty in which those Christians were placed. They have inferred, that the church being ignorant of the day in which Christ shall come to judge the world, should be always ready for that event. But brevity obliges me to suppress the texts whence the inferences are deduced.

II. Having sufficiently discharged the duties of the critic, I proceed to those of the preacher. Taking the words of St. Paul in all their extent, we see the sentiments with which we should be animated when called to survive our dearest friends, which we shall now discuss.

St. Paul does not condemn all sorts of sorrow occasioned by the loss of those we love; he requires only that Christians should not be inconsolable in these circumstances, as those who have no hope. Hence, there is both a criminal and an innocent sorrow. The criminal sorrow is that which confounds us with those who are destitute of hope; but the innocent sorrow is compatible with the Christian hope. On these points we shall enter into some detail.

First, The sorrow occasioned to us by the

death of those we love, confounds us with those that have no hope, when it proceeds from a principle of distrust. Such is sometimes our situation on earth, that all our good devolves on a single point. A house rises to affluence; it acquires a rank in life; it is distinguished by equipage; and all its elevation proceeds from a single head: this head is the mover of all its springs: he is the protector, the father, and friend of all: this head is cut down: this father, protector, and friend, expires; and by that single stroke, all our honours, rank, pleasures, affluence, and enjoyments of life, seem to descend with him to the tomb. At this stroke nature groans, the flesh murmurs, and faith also is obscured; the soul is wholly absolved in its calamities, and contemplating its own loss in that of others, concentrates itself in anguish. Hence those impetuous passions; hence these mournful and piercing cries; hence those Rachels, who will not be comforted because their children are no more. Hence those extravagant portraits of past happiness, those exaggerations of present evils, and those gloomy augurs of the future. Hence those furious howlings, and frightful distortions, in the midst of which it would seem that we were called rather as exorcists to the possessed, than to administer balm to afflicted minds.

It is not difficult to vindicate the judgment we have formed of the grief proceeding from this principle. When the privation of a temporal good casts into despair, it was obviously the object of our love; a capital crime in the eye of religion. The most innocent connexions of life cease to be innocent when they become too strongly cemented. To fix one's heart upon an object, to make it our happiness and the object of our hope, is to constitute it a god; is to place it on the throne of the Supreme, and to form it into an idol. Whether it be a father, or a husband, or a child, which renders us idolaters, idolatry is not the less odious in the eyes of God, to whom supreme devotion is due. Religion requires that our strongest passion, our warmest attachment, and our firmest support, should ever have God for their object; and being only in the life to come that we shall be perfectly joined to God, religion prohibits the making of our happiness to consist in the good things of this life. And though religion should not dictate a duty so just, common prudence should supply its place; it should induce us to place but a submissive attachment on objects of transient good. It should say, "Let those that have wives be as though they have none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that use this world, as though they used it not, for the fashion of this world passeth away.—Put not your trust in princes, nor in great men, in whom there is no help: his soul goeth forth, he returneth to the earth, and in that very day his purposes perish," 1 Cor. vii. 29; Ps. cxlvi. 3, 4.

Hence, when driven to despair by the occurrence of awful events, we have cause to form a humiliating opinion of our faith. These strokes of God's hand are the tests whereby he tries our faith in the crucible of tribulation, according to the apostle's idea, 1 Pet. i. 7. When in affluence and prosperity, it is difficult

to determine whether it be love for the gift, or the giver, which excites our devotion. It is in the midst of tribulation that we can recognise a genuine zeal, and a conscious piety. When our faith abandons us in the trying hour, it is an evident proof that we had taken a chimaera for a reality, and the shadow for the substance. Submission and hope are the characteristics of a Christian.

The example of the father of the faithful here occurs to our view. If ever a mortal had cause to fix his hopes on any object, it was undoubtedly this patriarch. Isaac was the son of the promise; Isaac was a miracle of grace; Isaac was a striking figure of the blessed Seed, in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed. God commanded him to sacrifice this son; who then had ever stronger reasons to believe that his hopes were lost? But what did Abraham do? He submitted, he hoped. He submitted; he left his house; he took his son; he prepared the altar; he bound the innocent victim; he raised his arm; he was ready to dip his paternal hands in blood, and to plunge the knife into the bosom of this dear son. But in submitting, he hoped, he believed. How did he hope? He hoped against hope. How did he believe? He believed what was incredible, rather than persuade himself that his fidelity would be fatal, and that God would be deficient in his promise; he believed that God would restore his son by a miracle, having given him by a miracle; and that this son, the unparalleled fruit of a dead body, should be raised in a manner unheard of. Believers, here is your father. If you are the children of Abraham, do the works of Abraham. I say again, that submission and hope are the marks of a Christian. "In the mountains of the Lord he will there provide. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; yet my kindness shall not depart from thee; neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed. But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me; and my Lord hath forgotten me. 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 not I forsake thee. When my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will take me up. Though thou slay me, yet will I trust in thee." Isa. xlix. 14; liv. 10; Ps. xxvii. 10; Job xiii. 15.

II. We have reprobated the affliction of which despondency is the principle. A man judges of the happiness of others, by the notion of his own happiness; and estimating life as the supreme good, he regards the person deprived of it, as worthy of the tenderest compassion. Death presents itself to us under the image of a total privation. The deceased seems to us to be stripped of every comfort. Had he, by some awful catastrophe, lost his fortune; had he lost his sight, or one of his limbs, we should have sympathized in his affliction; with how much more propriety ought we to weep, when he has been deprived of all those comforts at a stroke, and fatally sentenced to live no more? This sorrow is appropriate to those who are destitute of hope. This is indisputable, when it has for its object those who have finished a Christian course; and it is on these occasions more than any other, we are obliged to confess

that most Christians draw improper consequences, and act in a manner wholly opposed to the faith they profess. We believe the soul to be immortal; we are confident at the moment of a happy death that the soul takes its flight to heaven; and that the angels who are encamped around it for protection and defence, carry it to the bosom of God. We have seen the living languish and sigh, and reach forth to the moment of their deliverance; and when they attain to this moment, we class them among the unhappy! Was I not right in saying, that there are no occasions on which Christians reason worse than on these, and act more directly opposite to the faith they profess? While the deceased were with us in this valley of tears, they were subject to many complaints. While running a race so arduous, they complained of being liable to stumble. They complained of the calamities of the church in which they were entangled. They complained when meditating on revelation that they found impenetrable mysteries; and when aspiring at perfection, they saw it placed in so exalted a view, as to be but imperfectly attained. But now they are afflicted no more; now they see God face to face; now they "are come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, to the heavenly Jerusalem, to the myriads of angels, to the assembly of the first-born." Now, as the Holy Spirit has said, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord; for they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them," Heb. xii. 22; Ps. xvi. 11; Rev. xiv. 13.

These remarks concern those only who die the death of the righteous: but should not piety indulge her tears, when we see those die impenitent to whom we are joined by the ties of nature; and shall we call that a criminal sorrow when it is the death of reprobates which excite our grief? Is there any kind of comfort against this painful thought, that my son is dead in an unregenerate state? And can any sorrow be immoderate which is excited by the loss of a soul? This is the question we were wishful to illustrate, when we marked, in the *third* place, as a criminal sorrow, that which proceeds from a mistaken piety.

III. We answer first, that nothing is more presumptive than to decide on the eternal loss of men; and that we must not limit the extent of the divine mercy, and the ways of Providence. A contrite heart may, perhaps, be concealed under the exterior of reprobation; and the religion which enjoins us to live in holy fear of our own salvation, ever requires that we should presume charitably concerning the salvation of others.

But people are urgent, and being unable to find any mitigation in a doubtful case, against which a thousand circumstances seem to militate, they ask whether one ought to moderate the anguish excited by the eternal loss of one they love? The question is but too necessary in this unhappy age, where we see so great a number of our brethren die in apostasy, and in which the lives of those who surround us afford so just a ground of awful apprehensions, concerning their salvation.

I confess it would be unreasonable to censure tears in a situation so afflictive; I confess that

one has need of an extraordinary confidence to repress excess, and that an ordinary piety is inadequate to the task. I contend, however, that religion forbids, even in this case, to sorrow above measure. Two remarks shall make it manifest; and we entreat those whom God has struck in this sensible manner, to impress them deeply on their mind.

I. Our grief really proceeds from a carnal principle, and our heart disguises itself from its own judgment, when it apparently suggests that religion is the cause. If it were simply the idea of the loss of the soul; if it were a principle of love to God, and if it were not the relations of father and son; in a word, if the motives were altogether spiritual, and the charity wholly pure, which excites our grief, whence is it that this one object should excite it, while so great a multitude of unhappy men are precisely in a similar case? Whence is it that we see daily, without anxiety, whole nations running headlong to perdition? Is it less dishonourable to God, that those multitudes are excluded from his covenant, than because it is precisely your friend, your son, or your father?

Our second remark is, that the love we have for the creature should always conform itself with the Creator. We ought to love our neighbours, because like us they bear the image of God, and they are called with us to the same glory. On this principle, when we see a sinner wantonly rush on the precipice, and risking salvation by his crimes, our charity ought to be alarmed. Thus Jesus Christ, placing himself in the period in which grace was still offered to Jerusalem, and in which she might accept it, groaned beneath her hardness, and deplored the abuse she made of his entreaties; "O that thou hadst known, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace," Luke xix. 42. But when a man becomes the avowed enemy of God, when a protracted course of vice, and a final perseverance in crimes, convinces that he has no part in his covenant, then our love should return to its centre, and associate itself with the love of our Creator. "Henceforth know we no man after the flesh. I hate them with a perfect hatred. If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema. If any man love father, mother, son, or daughter, more than me, he is not worthy of me," 2 Cor. v. 16; Ps. cxxxix. 22; Matt. x. 37.

This duty is, perhaps, too exalted for the earth. The sentiments of nature are, perhaps, too much entwined with those of religion to be so perfectly distinguished. It is certain, however, that they shall exist in heaven. If you should suppose the contrary, the happiness of heaven would be imbibed with a thousand pains: you can never conceive how a father can be satisfied with a felicity in which his son has no share; nor how a friend can be composed while his associate is loaded with "chains of darkness." Whereas, if you establish the principle that perfect charity must be an emanation of divine love, you will develop the inquiry; and you will also conclude, that excessive sorrow, excited by a criminal death, is a criminal sorrow, and that if piety be its principle, it is a misguided piety.

But if there be one kind of sorrow incompatible with the hope of a Christian, there is another which is altogether congenial to it, and inseparable in its ties, and such is the sorrow which proceeds from one of the following principles:—from sympathy;—from the dictates of nature;—and from repentance. To be explicit:

I. We have said first, from sympathy. Though we have censured the sorrow excited by the loss of our dearest friends, we did not wish to impose a rigorous apathy. The sorrow we have censured is that excessive grief, in which despondency prevailing over religion induces us to deplore the dead, as though there was no hope after this life, and no life after death. But the submissive sorrow by which we feel our loss, without shutting our eyes against the resources afforded by Providence; the sorrow which weeps at the sufferings of our friends in the road to glory, but confident of their having attained it; this sorrow, so far from being culpable, is an inseparable sentiment of nature, and an indispensable duty of religion.

Yes, it is allowed on seeing this body, this corpse, the precious remains of a part of ourselves, carried away by a funeral procession, it is allowed to recall the tender but painful recollections of the intimacy we had with him whom death has snatched away. It is allowed to recall the counsel he gave us in our embarrassments; the care he took of our education; the solicitude he took for our welfare; the unaffected marks of love which appeared during the whole of his life, and which were redoubled at the period of his death. It is allowed to recall the endearments that so precious an intimacy shed on life, the conversations in his last sickness, those tender adieus, those assurances of esteem, that frankness of his soul, those fervent prayers, those torrents of tears, and those last efforts of an expiring tenderness. It is allowed in weeping to show the robes that Dorcas had made. It is allowed to the tender Joseph, on coming to the threshing floor of Atad, the tomb of his father; it is allowed to pour out his heart in lamentations, to make Canaan resound with the cries of his grief, and to call the place Abel-mizraim, the mourning of the Egyptians. It is allowed to David to go weeping, and saying, "O my son Absalom; my son, my son Absalom! would to God I had died for thee, O Absalom my son, my son!" 2 Sam. xviii. 33. It is allowed to St. Augustine to weep for the pious Monica, his mother, who had shed so many tears to obtain the grace for him, that he might for ever live with God, to use the expression of his father. Confess. lib. ix. c. 8, &c.

II. A due regard to ourselves should affect us with sorrow on seeing the dying and the dead. The first reflection that a sight of a corpse should suggest is, that we also must die, and that the road he has just taken, is "the way of all the earth." This is a reflection that every one seems to make, while no one makes it in reality. We cast on the dying and the dead but slight and transient regards; and if we say, in general, that this must be our final lot, we evade the particular application to our heart. While we subscribe to the sentence, "It is appointed unto men once to die," we uniformly make some sort of exception with

regard to ourselves: because we never have died, it seems as though we never should die. If we are not so far infatuated, as to flatter ourselves concerning the fatal necessity imposed on us to leave the world, we flatter ourselves with regard to the circumstances; we consider them as remote; and the distance of the object prevents our knowing its nature, and regarding it in a just light. We attend the dying, we lay them in the tomb, we preach their funeral discourse; we follow them in the funeral train; and as though they were of a nature different from us, and as though we had some prerogative over the dead, we return home, and become candidates for their offices. We divide their riches, and enter on their lands, just as the presumptive mariner, who, seeing a ship on the shore, driven by the tempest and about to be bilged by the waves, takes his bark, braves the billows, and defies the danger, to share in the spoils of the wreck.

A prudent man contemplates the death of his friends with other eyes. He follows them with a mind attached to the tomb; he clothes himself in their shrouds; he extends himself in their coffin; he regards his living body as about to become like their corpse; and the duty he owes to himself inspires him with a gracious sorrow on seeing in the destiny of his lamented friends an image of his own.

But why should the thought of dying excite sorrow in a saint, in regard of whom the divine justice is disarmed, and to whom nothing is presented beyond the tomb but inviting objects? The solution of this difficulty associates with what we said in the *third* place, that the death of persons worthy of our esteem, should excite in our hearts the sentiments of repentance.

III. It is a question often agitated among Christians, that seeing Jesus Christ has satisfied the justice of the Father for their sins, why should they still die? And one of the most pressing difficulties opposed to the evangelical system results from it, that death equally reigns over those who embrace, and those who reject it. To this it is commonly replied, that death is now no longer a punishment for our sins, but a tempest that rolls us to the port, and a passage to a better life. This is a solid reply: but does it perfectly remove the difficulty? Have we not still a right to ask, Why God should lead us in so strait a way? Why he pleases to make this route so difficult? Why do not his chariots of fire carry us up to heaven, as they once took Elijah? For after all the handsome things one can say, the period of death is a terrible period, and death is still a formidable foe. What labours, what conflicts, what throes, prior to the moment! what doubts, what uncertainties, what labouring of thought before we acquire the degree of confidence to die with fortitude! How disgusting the remedies! How irksome the aids! How severe the separations! How piercing the final farewell! This constitutes the difficulty, and the ordinary solution leaves it in all its force.

The following remark to me seems to meet the difficulty in a manner more direct. The death of the righteous is an evil, but it is an instructive evil. It is a violent, but a necessary remedy. It is a portrait of the divine justice which God requires we should constantly have

in view, that we may so live as to avoid becoming the victims of that justice. It is an awful monument of the horror God has of sin, which should teach us to avoid it. The more submissive the good man was to the divine pleasure, the more distinguished is the monument. The more eminent he was for piety, the more should we be awed by this stroke of justice. Come, and look at this good man in the tomb, and in a putrid state; trace his exit in a bed of affliction to this dark and obscure abode; see how, after having been emaciated by a severe disease, he is now reserved as a feast for worms. Who was this man? Was he habitually wicked? Was he avowedly an enemy of God? No: he was a believer; he was a model of virtue and probity. Meanwhile, this saint, this friend of Christ, died: descended from a sinful father, he submitted to the sentence, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return," Gen. iii. 19. And if those remains of corruption were subjugated to a lot so severe, what shall be the situation of those in whom sin reigns? "If the righteous be saved with difficulty, where shall the wicked appear? If the judgment of God begin at his house, what shall the end be of those that obey not the gospel?" 1 Pet. iv. 17, 18.

The law imposed on us to die is, therefore, a requisite, but indeed a violent remedy; and to correspond with the design, we must drink the cup. The death of those who are worthy of our regret, ought to recall to our mind the punishment of sin, and to excite in us that sorrow which is a necessary fruit of true repentance.

These are the three sorts of sorrow that the death of our friends should excite in our breast. And so far are we from repressing this kind of grief, that we would wish you to feel it in all its force. Go to the tombs of the dead; open their coffins; look on their remains; let each there recognise a husband, or a parent, or children, or brethren; but instead of regarding them as surrounding him alive, let him suppose himself as lodged in the subterraneous abode with the persons to whom he has been closely united. Look at them deliberately, hear what they say: death seems to have condemned him to an eternal silence; meanwhile they speak; they preach with a voice far more eloquent than ours.

We have taught you to shed upon their tombs tears of tenderness: hear the dead, they preach with a voice more eloquent than ours. "Have you forgotten the relations we formed, and the ties that united us? Is it with games and diversions that you lament our loss? Is it in the circles of gayety, and in public places, that you commemorate our exit?"

We have exhorted you to shed upon their tomb tears of duty to yourselves. "Hear the dead;" they preach with a voice more eloquent than ours. They cry, "Vanity of vanities. All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field. The world passeth away, and the lusts thereof. Surely man walketh in a vain shadow," Eccles. i. 2; Isa. xl. 6; 1 John ii. 17; Ps. xxxix. 7. They recall to your mind the afflictions they have endured, the troubles which assailed their mind, and the deliriums that affected their brain. They recall

those objects that you may contemplate in their situation an image of your own; that you may be apprised how imperfectly qualified a man is in his last moments for recollection, and the work of his salvation. They tell you, that they once had the same health, the same strength, the same fortune, and the same honours as you; notwithstanding, the torrent which bore us away, is doing the same with you.

We have exhorted you to shed upon their tombs the tears of repentance. Hear the dead; they preach with an eloquence greater than ours; they say, "that sin has brought death into the world; death which separates the father from the son, and the son from the father; which disunites hearts the most closely attached, and dissolves the most intimate and tender ties." They say more: Hear the dead—hear some of them, who, from the abyss of eternal flames, into which they are plunged for impenitency, exhort you to repentance.

O! terrific preachers, preachers of despair, may your voice break the hearts of those hearers on which our ministry is destitute of energy and effect.—Hear those dead, they speak with a voice more eloquent than ours from the depths of the abyss, from the deep caverns of hell; they cry, "Who among us shall dwell with devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? Ye mountains fall on us; ye hills cover us. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, when he is angry," Isa. xxxiii. 14; Luke xxiii. 30; Heb. x. 31. Hear the father, who suffering in hell for the bad education given to the family he left on earth. Hear him by the despair of his condition; by the chains which oppress him; by the fire which devours him; and by the remorse, the torments, and the anguish which gnaw him, entreat you not to follow him to that abyss. Hear the impure, the accomplice of your pleasure, who says, that if God had called you the first, you would have been substituted in his place, and who entreats to let your eyes become as fountains of repentant tears.

This is the sort of sorrow with which we should be affected for the death of those with whom it has pleased God to connect us by the bonds of society and of nature. May it penetrate our hearts; and for ever banish the sorrow which confounds us with those who have no hope. Let us be compassionate citizens, faithful friends, tender fathers, loving all those with whom it has pleased God to unite us, and not regarding this love as a defect; but let us love our Maker with supreme affection. Let us be always ready to sacrifice to him whatever we have most dear on earth. May a glorious resurrection be the ultimatum of our requests. May the hope of obtaining it assuage all our sufferings. And may God Almighty, who has educated us in a religion so admirably adapted to support in temptation, give success to our efforts, and be the crown of our hopes; *Amen*. To whom be honour and glory, henceforth and for ever.

SERMON XCI.

ON THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON *

1 KINGS iii. 5—14.

In Gibeon, the Lord appeared to Solomon, in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give. And Solomon said, Thou hast showed unto thy servant David, my father, great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day. And now, O Lord, my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David, my father; and I am but a little child; I know not how to go out and come in. And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, which cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. Give, therefore, thy servant an understanding heart, to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people? And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast thou asked riches for thyself; nor hast asked the life of thine enemies, but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment: Behold I have done according to thy words. Lo, I have given thee a wise and understanding heart, so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee. And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honour; so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days. And if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father David did walk, then will I lengthen thy days.

"Wo to thee, O land, when thy king is a child!" In this way has the sage expressed the calamities of states conducted by men destitute of experience. But this general maxim is not without exceptions. As we sometimes see the gayeties of youth in mature age, so we sometimes perceive in youth the gravity of sober years. There are some geniuses premature, with whom reason anticipates on years; and who, if I may so speak, on leaving the cradle, discover talents worthy of the throne. A profusion of supernatural endowments, coming to the aid of nature, exemplifies in their character the happy experience of the prophet; "I have more understanding than all my teachers. I

* *Saurin*, placed at the Hague as first minister of the persecuted Protestants, and often attended by illustrious characters, saw it his duty to apprise them of the moral sentiments essential for an entrance on high office and extensive authority. The Abbe *Maury*, in his treatise on Eloquence, though hostile to *Saurin*, allows this Sermon on the *Wisdom of Solomon*, to be one of the best specimens of his eloquence.

understand more than the ancients," Ps. cxix. 99, 100.

Here we have an illustrious proof. Solomon, in the early periods of life, formed the correctest idea of government which had ever entered the mind of the profoundest philosophers, or the most consummate statesmen. Awed by the sceptre, he acknowledged the impotency of his arm to sway it. Of the high privilege granted of God, to ask whatever he would, he availed himself solely to ask wisdom. What an admirable choice! How many aged men have we seen less enlightened than this youth? On the other hand, God honoured a petition so wise, by superadding to the petitioner every other endowment: he gave to Solomon wisdom, and with wisdom, glory and riches; he elevated him to a scale of grandeur, which no prince ever did, or ever shall be allowed to equal. It is to this petition so judicious, and to this reply so magnificent, that we shall call your attention, after having bestowed a moment on occasion of both.

It occurs in the leading words of our text. It was a divine communication, in which the *place*, the *manner*, and the *subject*, claim particular attention.

1. The *place*: it was in Gibeon; not the city from which those Gibeonites derived their name, who, by having recourse to singular artifice, saved their lives, which they thought themselves unable to defend by force, or to preserve by compassion. That, I would say, the city of those Gibeonites, was a considerable place, and called in the Book of Joshua, a royal city. The other was situate on the highest mountains of Judea, distant, according to Eusebius and St. Jerome, about eight miles from Jerusalem.

We shall not enter into geographical discussions. What claims attention is, a circumstance of the place where Solomon was, which naturally recalls to view one of the weaknesses of this prince. It is remarked at the commencement of the chapter, from which we have taken our text, that "the people sacrificed in high places." The choice was, probably, not exempt from superstition: it is certain, at least, that idolaters usually selected the highest mountains for the exercise of their religious ceremonies. Tacitus assigns as a reason, that in those places, being nearer the gods, they were the more likely to be heard. Lucian reasons much in the same way, and, without a doubt, less to vindicate the custom than to expose it to contempt. God himself has forbidden it in law.

We have, however, classed this circumstance in Solomon's life among his frailties, rather than his faults. Prevention for high places was much less culpable in the reign of this prince, than in the ages which followed. In those ages, the Israelites violated, by sacrificing on high places, the law which forbade any sacrifice to be offered, except in the temple of Jerusalem; whereas, in the age of which we now speak, the temple did not exist. The people sacrificed on the brazen altar, constructed by the divine command. This altar was then in Gibeon, where it had been escorted with the tabernacle, as we read in the book of Chronicles.

2. The *manner* in which the revelation to Solomon was made, supplies a second source of reflections. It was, says the historian, in a

dream. We have elsewhere* remarked, that there are three sorts of dreams. Some are in the order of nature; others are in the order of providence; and a third class are of an order superior to both.

I call dreams in the order of nature, those which ought merely to be regarded as the irregular flights of imagination, over which the will has lost, or partially lost, its command.

I call dreams in the order of providence, those which without deviation from the course of nature, excite certain instructive ideas, and suggest to the mind truths, to which we were not sufficiently attentive while awake. Providence sometimes directing our attention to peculiar circumstances in a way purely natural, and destitute of all claims to the supernatural, and much less to the marvellous.

Some dreams, however, are of an order superior to those of nature, and of providence. It was by this sort of dreams that God revealed his pleasure to the prophets: but this dispensation being altogether divine, and of which the Scriptures say little, and being impossible for the researches of the greatest philosopher to supply the silence of the Holy Ghost, we shall make no fruitless efforts farther to illustrate the manner of the revelation with which Solomon was honoured.

3. A reason very dissimilar supersedes our stopping to illustrate the *subject*; I would say, it has no need of illustration. God was wishful to put Solomon to the proof, by prompting him to ask whatsoever he would, and by engaging to fulfil it. Solomon's reply was worthy of the test. His sole request was for wisdom. God honoured this enlightened request; and in granting profound wisdom to his servant, he superadded riches, and glory, and long life.—It is this enlightened request, and this munificent reply, we are now to examine. We shall examine them jointly, placing, at the same time, the harmony of the one with the other, in a just and proper view. *Four* remarks demand attention in Solomon's request to God, and *four* in God's reply.

I. Consider, in Solomon's request, the recollection of past mercies: "Thou hast showed unto thy servant David, my father, great mercy:" and mark, in the reply, how pleasing this recollection was to God.

II. Consider, in Solomon's request, the aspect under which he regarded the regal power. He considered it solely with a view to the high duties on which it obliged him to enter. "Thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, which cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. Who is able to judge this thy so great a people?" And in God's reply, mark the opposite seal, with regard to this idea of the supreme authority.

III. Consider, in Solomon's request, the sentiments of his own weakness and the consciousness of his insufficiency: "I am but as a little child, and know not how to go out, and to come in:" and in God's reply, mark how highly he is delighted with humility.

IV. In Solomon's request, consider the wisdom of his choice; "Give, therefore, unto thy

* Discours Hist. tom. v. p. 184.

servant an understanding heart to judge thy people;" and in God's reply, mark how Solomon's prayer was heard, and his wisdom crowned. Four objects, all worthy of our regard.

I. Consider, in Solomon's request, the recollection of mercies. It was the mercies of David, his father. Solomon made this reference as a motive to obtain the divine mercies and aids his situation required. He aspired at the blessings which God confers on the children of faithful fathers. He wished to become the object of that promise in which God stands engaged to "show mercy to thousands of generations of those that love him," Exod. xx. 6.

This is the first object of our discourse. The privilege of an illustrious birth, I confess, is sometimes extravagantly amplified. This kind of folly is not novel in the present age: it was the folly of the Hebrew nation. To most of the rebukes of their prophets, they opposed this extraordinary defence: "We are Abraham's seed; we have Abraham to our father," Matt. iii. 9. What an apology! Does an illustrious birth sanction low and grovelling sentiments. Do the virtues of our ancestors excuse us from being virtuous? And has God for ever engaged to excuse impious children, because their parents were pious? You are the children of Abraham; you have an illustrious descent; your ancestors were the models and glory of their age. Then you are the more inexcusable for being the reproach of your age; then you are the faithless depositories of the nobility with which you have been intrusted; then you have degenerated from your former grandeur: then you shall be condemned to surrender to nature a corrupted blood, which you received pure from those to whom you owe your birth.

It is true, however, all things being weighed, that, in tracing a descent, it is a singular favour of Heaven to be able to cast one's eyes on a long line of illustrious ancestors. I am not about to offer incense to the idol of distinguished families; the Lord's church has more correct ideas of nobility. To be accounted noble in the sanctuary, we must give proof of virtue, and not of empty titles, which often owe their origin to the vanity, the seditious, and fawning baseness of those who display them with so much pride. To be noble in the language of our Scriptures; and to be impure, avaricious, haughty, and implacable, are different ideas. But charity, but patience, but moderation, but dignity of soul, and a certain elevation of mind, place the possessor above the world and its maxims. These are characteristics of the nobility of God's children.

In this view, it is a high favour of Heaven, in tracing one's descent, to be able to cast the eye on a long line of illustrious ancestors. How often have holy men availed themselves of these motives to induce the Deity, if not to bear with the Israelites in their course of crimes, at least to pardon them after the crimes have been committed? How often have they said, in the supplications they opposed to the wrath of Heaven, "O God, remember Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, thy servants!" How often has God yielded to the strength of these

arguments? How often has he, for the sake of the patriarchs, for the sake of David, heard prayer in behalf of their children?

Let these maxims be deeply imprinted on the heart. Our own interest should be motive sufficient to prompt us to piety. But we should also be excited to it by the interest of our children. The recollection of our virtues is the best inheritance we can leave them after death. These virtues afford them claims to the divine favours. The good will of Heaven, is, in some sort, entailed on families who fear the Lord. Happy the fathers, when extended on the bed of death, who can say, "My children, I am about to appear before the awful tribunal, where there is no resource for poor mortals, but humility and repentance. Meanwhile, I bless God, that notwithstanding my defects, which I acknowledge with confusion of face, you will not have cause to blush on pronouncing the name of your father. I have been faithful to the truth, and have constantly walked before God, "in the uprightness of my heart." Happy the children who have such a descent; I would prefer it to titles the most distinguished, to riches the most dazzling, and to offices the most lucrative. "O God, thou hast showed unto thy servant David, my father, great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart!" Here is the recollection of past mercies, the recollection of which God approves, and the first object of our discourse.

II. Consider, secondly, in the prayer of Solomon, the aspect under which he contemplated the regal power. He viewed it principally with regard to the high duties it imposed. "Thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen; who is able to judge this thy so great a people, which cannot be numbered?" The answer of God is a correspondent seal to this idea of supreme authority. And what we here say of the regal power, we apply to every other office of trust and dignity. A man of integrity must not view them with regard to the emoluments they produce, but with regard to the duties they impose.

What is the end proposed by society on elevating certain men to high stations? Is it to augment their pride? Is it to usher them into a style of life the most extravagant? Is it to aggrandize their families by the ruin of the widow and the orphan? Is it to adore them as idols? Is it to become their slaves? Potentates and magistrates of the earth, ask those subjects to whom you are indebted for the high scale of elevation you enjoy. Ask, Why those dignities were conferred? They will say, it was to intrust you with their safety and repose; it was to procure fathers and protectors; it was to find peace and prosperity under the shadow of your tribunals. To induce you to enter on those arduous duties, they have accompanied them with those inviting appendages which soothe the cares, and alleviate the weights of office. They have conferred titles; they have sworn obedience, and ensured revenue. Entrance then on a high duty is to make a contract with the people, over whom you proceed to exercise it; it is to make a compact, by

which certain duties are required on certain conditions. To require the emoluments, when the conditions of the engagements are violated, is an abominable usurpation; it is a usurpation of honour, of homage, and of revenue. I speak literally, and without even a shadow of exaggeration: a magistrate who deviates from the duties of his office, after having received the emolument, ought to come under the penal statutes, as those who take away their neighbours' goods. These statutes require restitution. Before restitution, he is liable to this anathema, "Wo to him that increaseth that which is not his own, and to him that ladeth himself with thick clay; for the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it," Hab. ii. 6. 11. Before restitution, he is unworthy of the Lord's table, and included in the curse we denounce against thieves, whom we repel from the holy Eucharist. Before restitution, he is unable to die in peace, and he is included in the list of those "who shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

But into what strange reflections do these considerations involve us? What awful ideas do they excite in our minds? And what alarming consequences do they draw on certain kings?—Ye Moseses; ye Elijahs; ye John Baptists; faithful servants of the living God, and celebrated in every age of the church for your fortitude, your courage, and your zeal; you, who know not how to temporize, nor to tremble; no, neither before Pharaoh, nor before Ahab, nor before Herod, nor before Herodias, why are you not in this pulpit? Why do you not to-day supply our place, to communicate to the subject all the energy of which it is susceptible? "Be wise, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth," Ps. ii. 10.

III. We have remarked, thirdly, in the prayer of Solomon, the sentiments of his own weakness; and in God's reply, the high regard testified towards humility. The character of the king whom Solomon succeeded, the arduous nature of the duties to which he was called, and the insufficiency of his age, were to him three considerations of humility.

1. The character of the king to whom he succeeded. "Thou hast showed unto thy servant David, my father, great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in the uprightness of his heart; and thou hast given him a son to sit upon his throne. How dangerous to succeed an illustrious prince! The brilliant actions of a predecessor, are so many sentences against the faults of his successor. The people never fail to make certain oblique contrasts between the past and the present. They recollect the virtues they have attested, the happiness they have enjoyed, the prosperity with which they have been loaded, and the distinguished qualifications of the prince, whom death has recently snatched away. And if the idea of having had an illustrious predecessor is, on all occasions, a subject of serious consideration for him who has to follow, never had a prince a juster cause to be awed than Solomon. He succeeded a man who was the model of kings, in whose person was united the wisdom of a statesman, the valour of a soldier, the experience of a marshal, the illumination of a pro-

phet, the piety of a good man, and even the virtues of a saint of the first rank.

2. The extent of the duties imposed on Solomon, was the second object of his diffidence. "Who is able to judge this thy so great a people?" Adequately to judge a great nation, a man must regard himself as no more his own, but wholly devoted to the people. Adequately to judge a great nation, a man must have a consummate knowledge of human nature, of civil society, of the laws of nature, and of the peculiar laws of the provinces over which he presides. Adequately to judge a nation, he must have his house and his heart ever open to the solicitations of those over whom he is exalted. Adequately to judge a people, he must recollect, that a small sum of money, that a foot of land, is as much to a poor man as a city, a province, and a kingdom, are to a prince. Adequately to judge a people, he must habituate himself to the disgust excited by listening to a man who is quite full of his subject, and who imagines that the person addressed, ought to be equally impressed with its importance. Adequately to judge a people, a man must be exempt from vice: nothing is more calculated to prejudice the mind against the purity of his decisions, than to see him captivated by some predominant passion. Adequately to judge a people, he must be destitute of personal respect; he must neither yield to the entreaties of those who know the way to his heart, nor be intimidated by the high tone of others, who threaten to hold up as martyrs, the persons they obstinately defend. Adequately to judge a people, a man must expand, if I may so speak, all the powers of his soul, that he may be equal to the dignity of his duty, and avoid all distraction, which, on engrossing the capacity of the mind, obstruct its perception of the main object. And "who is sufficient for these things?" who is able to judge this thy so great a people? 2 Cor. ii. 16.

3. The snares of youth form a third object of Solomon's fear, and a third cause of his diffidence. "I am but a little child; I know not how to go out and come in." Some chronologists are of opinion, that Solomon, when he uttered these words, "I am but a little child," was only twelve years of age, which to us seems insupportable; for besides its not being proved by the event, as we shall explain, it ought to be placed in the first year of this prince's reign: and the style in which David addressed him on his investiture with the reins of government, sufficiently proves, that he spake not to a child. He calls him *wise*, and to this wisdom he confides the punishment of Joab and of Shimei.

Neither do we think that we can attach to these words, "I am but a little child," with better grace, a sense purely metaphorical, as implying nothing more than Solomon's acknowledgment of the infancy of his understanding. The opinion most probable, in our apprehension, (and we omit the detail of the reasons by which we are convinced of it) is, that of those who think that Solomon calls himself a little child, much in the same sense as the term is applied to Benjamin, to Joshua, and to the sons of Eli.

It was, therefore, I would suppose, at the

age of twenty or of twenty-six years, that Solomon saw himself called to fill the throne of the greatest kings, and to enter on those exalted duties, of which we have given but an imperfect sketch. How disproportioned did the vocation seem to the age! It is then that we give scope to presumption, which has a plausible appearance, being as yet unmortified by the recollection of past errors. It is then, that a jealousy of not being yet classed by others among great men, prompts a youth to place himself in that high rank. It is then that we regard counsels as so many attacks on the authority we assume to ourselves. It is then that we oppose an untractable disposition as a barrier to the advice of a faithful friend, who would lead us to propriety of conduct. It is then, that our passions hurry us to excess, and become the arbitrators of truth and falsehood, of equity and injustice.

Presumptuous youths, who make the assurance with which you aspire at the first offices of state, the principal ground of success, how can I better impress you with this head of my discourse, than by affirming, that the higher notions you entertain of your own sufficiency, the lower you sink at the bar of equity and reason. The more you account yourselves qualified to govern, the less you are capable of doing it. The sentiment Solomon entertained of his own weakness, was the most distinguished of his royal virtues. The profound humility with which he asked God to supply his inability, was the best disposition for obtaining the divine support.

IV. We are come at length to the last, and to the great object of the history before us. Here we must show you, on the one hand, our hero preferring the requisite talents, to pomp, splendour, riches, and all that is grateful to kings; and from the vast source opened by Heaven, deriving but wisdom and understanding. We must show, on the other hand, that God, honouring a prayer so enlightened, accorded to Solomon the wisdom and understanding he had asked, and with these, riches, glory, and long life.

Who can forbear being delighted with the first object, and who can sufficiently applaud the magnanimity of Solomon? Place yourselves in the situation of this prince. Imagine, for a moment, that you are the arbitrators of your own destiny, and that you hear a voice from the blessed God, saying, "Ask what I shall give thee." How awful would this test prove to most of our hearers! If we may judge of our wishes by our pursuits, what strange replies should we make to God! What a choice would it be! Our privilege would become our ruin, and we should have the awful ingenuity to find misery in the very bosom of happiness. Who would say, Lord, give me wisdom and understanding; Lord, help me worthily to discharge the duties of the station with which I am intrusted? This is the utmost of all my requests; and to this alone I would wish thy munificence to be confined. On the contrary, biassed by the circumstance of situation, and swayed by some predominant passion, one would say, Lord, augment my heaps of gold and silver, and in proportion as my riches shall increase, diminish the desire of expenditure: ano-

ther, Lord, raise me to the highest scale of grandeur, and give me to trample under foot, men who shall have the assurance to become my equals, and whom I regard as the worms of earth. How little, for the most part, do we know ourselves in prosperity! How incorrect are our ideas! Great God, do thou determine our lot, and save us from the reproach of making an unhappy choice, by removing the occasion. Solomon was incomparably wiser. Filled with the duties of his august station, and awed by its difficulties, he said, "Lord, give thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad."

But if we applaud the wisdom of Solomon's prayer, how much more should we applaud the goodness and munificence of God's reply? "Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life, neither hast thou asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies. But hast asked understanding to discern judgment. Behold, I have done according to thy word. Lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; and I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honour, so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days."

How amply was this promise fulfilled, and how did its accomplishment correspond with the munificence of him by whom it was made! By virtue of this promise, I "have given thee an understanding heart," we see Solomon carrying the art of civil government to the highest perfection it can ever attain. Witness the profound prudence by which he discerned the real from the pretended mother, when he said with divine promptitude, "Bring me a sword. Divide the living child into two parts, and give half to the one, and half to the other," 1 Kings iii. 24, 25. Witness the profound peace he procured for his subjects, and which made the sacred historian say, that "Judah and Israel dwell safely, every man under his vine, and under his fig-tree," iv. 25. Witness the eulogium of the sacred writings on this subject, "that it excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east, and all the wisdom of Egypt; that he was wiser than Ethan, than Herman, than Chalcol, and Darda;" that is to say, he was wiser than every man of his own age. Witness the embassies from all the kings of the earth to hear his wisdom. Witness the acclamation of the queen, who came from the remotest kingdom of the earth to hear this prodigy of wisdom. "It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy wisdom, and behold, the half was not told me. Thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard. Happy are these thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom," 1 Kings x. 6—8.

And in virtue of this other promise, "I have given thee glory and riches;" we see Solomon raise superb edifices, form powerful alliances, and sway the sceptre over every prince, from the river even unto the land of the Philistines, that is, from the Euphrates to the eastern branch of the Nile, which separates Palestine from Egypt, and making gold as plentiful in

Jerusalem as stones, 2 Chron. ix. 26; 1 Chron. i. 15.

It would be easy to extend these reflections, but were I to confine myself to this alone, I should fear being charged with having evaded the most difficult part of the subject to dwell on that which is sufficiently plain. The extraordinary condescension which God evinced towards Solomon; the divine gifts with which he was endowed, the answer to his prayer, "I have given thee an understanding heart," collectively involve a difficulty of the most serious kind. How shall we reconcile the favours with the events? How could a man so wise commit those faults, and perpetrate those crimes, which stained his lustre at the close of life? How could he follow the haughty license of oriental princes, who displayed a haram crowded with concubines? How, in abandoning his heart to sensual pleasure, could he abandon his faith and his religion? And after having the baseness to offer incense to their beauty, could he also offer incense to their idols? I meet this question with the greater pleasure, as the solution we shall give will demonstrate, *first*, the difficulties of superior endowments; *secondly*, the danger of bad company; *thirdly*, the peril of human grandeur; and *fourthly*, the poison of voluptuousness; four important lessons by which this discourse shall close.

First, the responsibility attendant on superior talents. Can we suppose that God, on the investiture of Solomon with superior endowments, exempted him from the law which requires men of the humblest talents to improve them? What is implied in these words, "I have given thee understanding?" Do they mean, I take solely on myself the work of thy salvation, that thou mayest live without restraint in negligence and pleasure? Brave the strongest temptations; I will obstruct thy falling? Open thy heart to the most seductive objects; I will interpose my buckler for thy preservation and defence?

On this subject, my brethren, some ministers have need of a total reform in their creed; and to abjure a system of theology, if I may so dare to speak, inconceivably absurd. Some men have formed notions of I know not what grace, which takes wholly on itself the work of our salvation, which suffers us to sleep as much as we choose in the arms of concupiscence and pleasure, and which redoubles its aids in proportion as the sinner redoubles resistance. Undeceive yourselves. God never yet bestowed a talent without requiring its cultivation. The higher are our endowments, the greater are our responsibilities. The greater efforts grace makes to save us, the more should we labour at our salvation. The more it watches for our good, the more we are called to the exercise of vigilance. You—you who surpass your neighbour, in knowledge, tremble; an account will be required of that superior light. You,—you who have more of genius than the most of men, tremble; an account will be required of that genius. You,—you who have most advanced in the grace of sanctification, tremble; an account will be required of that grace. Do you call this truth in question? Go,—go see it exemplified in the person of Solomon. Go, and see the abyss into which

he fell by burying his talents. Go, and see this man endowed with talents superior to all the world. Go, and see him enslaved by seven hundred wives, and prostituted to three hundred concubines. Go, see him prostrated before the idol of the Sidonians, and before the abomination of the Ammonites; and by the awful abyss into which he was plunged by the neglect of his talents, learn to improve yours with sanctifying fear.

Our *second* solution of the difficulty proposed, and the second caution we would derive from the fall of Solomon, is the danger of bad company; and a caution rendered the more essential by the inattention of the age. A contagious disease which extends its ravages at a thousand miles, excites in our mind terror and alarm. We use the greatest precaution against the danger. We guard the avenues of the state, and lay vessels on their arrival in port under the strictest quarantine: we do not suffer ourselves to be approached by any suspected person. But the contagion of bad company gives us not the smallest alarm. We respire without fear an air the most impure and fatal to the soul. We form connexions, enter into engagements, and contract marriages with profane, sceptical, and worldly people, and regard all those as declaimers and enthusiasts who declare, that "evil communications corrupt good manners." But see,—see indeed, by the sad experience of Solomon, whether we are declaimers and enthusiasts when we talk in this way. See into what a wretched situation we are plunged by contracting marriages with persons whose religion is idolatrous, and whose morals are corrupt. Nothing is more contagious than bad example. The sight, the presence, the voice, the breath of the wicked is infected and fatal.

The danger of human grandeur is a new solution of the difficulty proposed, and a *third* caution we derive from the fall of Solomon. Mankind, for the most part, have a brain too weak to bear a high scale of elevation. Dazzled at once with the rays of surrounding lustre, they can no longer support the sight. You are astonished that Solomon, this prince, who reigned from the river even to the land of the Philistines; this prince, who made gold in his kingdom as plentiful as stones; this prince, who was surrounded with flatterers and courtizans; this prince, who heard nothing but eulogy, acclamation and applause, you are astonished that he should be thus intoxicated with the high endowments God had granted him for the discharge of duty, and that he should so far forget himself as to fall into the enormities just described. Seek in your own heart, and in your life, the true solution of this difficulty. We are blinded by the smallest prosperity, and our head is turned by the least elevation of rank. A name, a title, added to our dignity; an acre of land added to our estate, an augmentation of equipage, a little information added to our knowledge, a wing to our mansion, or an inch to our stature, and here is more than enough to give us high notions of our own consequence, to make us assume a decisive tone, and wish to be considered as oracles: here is more than enough to make us forget our ignorance, our weakness, our cor-

ruption, the disease which consumes us, the tomb which awaits us, the death which pursues us, treading on our heels, the sentence already preparing, and the account which God is about to require. Let us distrust ourselves in prosperity: let us never forget what we are; let us have people about us to recall its recollection: let us request our friends constantly to cry in our ears, remember that you are loaded with crimes; that you are but dust and ashes; and in the midst of your grandeur, and your rank, remember that you are poor, frail, wretched, and abject.

4. In short, the beguiling charms of pleasure are the first solution of the difficulty proposed, and the last instruction we derive from the fall of Solomon. The sacred historian has not overlooked this cause of the faults of this prince. "Solomon loved many strange women, and they turned away his heart from the Lord," 1 Kings xi. 1. 3. I am here reminded of the wretched mission of Balaam. Commanded by powerful princes, allured by magnificent rewards, his eyes and heart already devoured the presents which awaited his services. He ascended a mountain, he surveyed the camp of the Israelites, he invoked by turns the power of God's Spirit, and the power of the devil. Finding that prophecy afforded him no resource, he had recourse to divinations and enchantments. Just on the point of giving full effect to his detestable art, he felt himself fettered by the force of truth, and exclaimed, "there is no enchantment against Jacob, there is no divination against Israel," Numb. xxxiii. 23. He temporized; yes, he found a way to supersede all the prodigies which God had done and accomplished for his people.—This way was the way of pleasure. It was, that they should no more attack the Israelites with open force, but with voluptuous delights; that they should no more send among them wizards and enchanters, but the women of Midian, to allure them to their sacrifices; then this people, before invincible, I will deliver into your hands!!

Of the success of this advice, my brethren, you cannot be ignorant. But why fell not every Balaam by the sword of Israelites! Numb. xxxi. 8. Why were the awful consequences of this counsel restricted to the unhappy culprits, whom the holy hands of Phineas and Eleazar, sacrificed to the wrath of Heaven! David, Solomon, Samson, and you, my brethren; you who may yet preserve, at least, a part of your innocence. Let us arm them against voluptuousness. Let us distrust enchanting pleasure. Let us fear it, not only when it presents its horrors; not only when it discovers the frightful objects which follow in its train, adultery, incest, treason, apostacy, with murder and assassination; but let us fear it, when clothed in the garb of innocence, when authorized by decent freedoms, and assuming the pretext of religious sacrifices. Let us exclude it from every avenue of the heart. Let us restrict our senses. Let us mortify our members which are on the earth. Let us crucify the flesh with the concupiscence. And by the way prescribed in the gospel; the way of retirement, of silence, of austerity, of the cross, and of mortification, let us attain happiness, and immortal bliss. May God grant

us the grace. To him be honour, and glory, for ever. Amen.

SERMON XCII.

THE VOICE OF THE ROD.

Preached Nov. 20, 1720.

MICAH vi. 9.

Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.

AWFUL indeed was the complaint which Jeremiah once made to God against Israel: "O Lord, thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock," Jer. v. 3. Here is a view of the last period of corruption; for however insuperable the corruption of men may appear, they sin less by enmity than dissipation. Few are so consummately wicked as to sin solely through the wantonness of crime. The mind is so constantly attached to exterior objects, as to be wholly absorbed by their impression; and here is the ordinary source of all our vice. Have we some real, or some imaginary advantage? The idea of our superiority engrosses our whole attention: and here is the source of our pride. Are we in the presence of an object congenial to our cupidity? The sentiment of pleasure immediately fills the whole capacity of the soul; and here is the source of our intemperance: it is the same with every vice. Have you the art of fixing the attention of men, of recalling their wandering thoughts: and thereby of reclaiming them to duty; you will acknowledge, that the beings you had taken for monsters, are really men, who, as I said, sin less by malice than dissipation.

But of all the means calculated to produce the recollection so essential to make us wise, adversity is the most effectual. How should a man delight his heart with a foolish grandeur; how should he abandon himself to pride, when all around him speaks his meanness and impotency; when appalled by the sight of a sovereign judge, and burdened by his heavy hand: he has no resource but humility and submission? How should he give up himself to intemperance when afflicted with excruciating pains, and oppressed with the approaches of death? When, therefore, adversity is unavailing; when a people equally resist the terrific warnings of the prophet, and the strokes of God's hand, for whom he speaks; when their corruption is proof against mortality, against the plague, against famine; what resource remains for their conversion? This was, however, the degree of hardness to which the Jews, in Jeremiah's time, had attained. "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."

"O Lord, thou hast stricken them." My brethren, the first part of our prophet's words is now accomplished in our country, and in a very terrific manner. Some difference the mercy of God does make between us, and those neighbouring nations, among whom the plague

is making so dreadful a progress; but though our horizon is not yet infected, though the breath of our hearers is not yet corrupt, and though our streets present not yet to our view heaps of dead, whose mortal exhalations, threaten the living, and to whose burial, those who survive are scarcely sufficient, we are nevertheless under the hand of God; I would say, under his avenging hand; his hand already uplifted to plunge us into the abyss of national ruin. What else are those plagues which walk in our streets? What is this mortality of our cattle which has now continued so many years? what else is this suspension of credit, this loss of trade, this ruin of so many families, and so many more on the brink of ruin? "O Lord, thou hast stricken them." The first part then is but too awfully accomplished in our country.

I should deem it an abuse of the liberty allowed me in this pulpit, were I to say, without restriction, that the second is likewise accomplished; "but they have not grieved." The solemnity of the day; the proclamation of our fast; the whole of these provinces prostrated today at the feet of the Most High; so many voices crying to Heaven, "O thou sword of the Lord, intoxicated with blood, return into thy scabbard;" all would convict me of declamation, if I should say, "O Lord thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved."

But, my brethren, have we then no part in this reproach? Do we feel as we ought, the calamities that God hath sent? Come to-day, Christians; come and learn of our prophet to hearken to the voice of God. What voice? the voice strong and mighty; the voice which lighteneth with flames of fire; the loud voice of his judgments. "Hear ye the rod, and him who hath appointed it."

My brethren, on the hearing of this voice, what sort of requests shall we make? Shall we not say, as the ancient people, "Let not the Lord speak to us lest we die?" No, let us not adopt this language.—O great God, the contempt we have made of thy staff, when thy clemency caused us to repose in green pastures, renders essential the rod of thy correction. Now is the crisis to suffer, or to perish. Strike, strike, Lord, provided we may be converted and saved. Speak with thy lightning; speak with thy thunder; speak with thy flaming bolts; but teach us to hear thy voice. "Speak, Lord, for thy servants hear." And you, my brethren, "Hear ye the rod, and him who hath appointed it." Amen.

This, in substance, is,

I. To feel the strokes of God's hand:

II. To trace their consequences and connexions:

III. To examine their origin and causes.

IV. To discover their resources and remedies.

This is to comply with the exhortation of Micah; this is to shelter ourselves from the charge of Jeremiah; this is especially to comply with the design of this solemnity. If we feel the strokes of God's hand, we shall shake off a certain state of indolence in which many of us are found, and be clothed with the sentiments of humiliation: this is the *first* duty of the day. If we trace the consequences and connexion of our calamities, we shall be inspired with the

sentiments of terror and awe: this is the *second* disposition of a fast. If we examine their origin and cause, we shall be softened with sentiments of sorrow and repentance: this is the *third* disposition of a fast. If we, lastly, discover the remedies and resources, we shall be animated with the sentiments of genuine conversion: this is the *fourth* disposition of a fast. It is by reflections of this kind that I would close these solemn duties, and make, if I may so speak, the applications of those energetic words addressed to us by the servants of God on this day.

I. "Hear ye the rod:" feel the strokes with which you are already struck. There is one disposition of the mind which may be confounded with that we would wish to inspire. The sensation of these calamities may be so strong as to unnerve the understanding, and overspread the mind with a total gloom and dejection. The soul of which we speak, feasts on its grief, and is wholly absorbed in the causes of its anguish. The privation of a good once enjoyed, renders it perfectly indifferent as to the blessings which still remain. The strokes which God has inflicted, appear to it the greatest of all calamities. Neither the beauties of nature, nor the pleasures of conversation, nor the motives of piety, have charms adequate to extinguish, nor even assuage anguish which corrodes and consumes the soul. Hence those torrents of tears; hence those deep and frequent sighs; hence those loud and bitter complaints; hence those unqualified augurs of disaster and ruin. To feel afflictions in this way, is a weakness of mind which disqualifies us for supporting the slightest reverses of life. It is an ingratitude which obstructs our acknowledging the favours of that God, who, "in the midst of wrath, remembers mercy," and who never so far afflicts his creature, as to deprive him of reviving hope.

The insensibility we wish to prevent, is a vice directly opposed to that we have just decried. It is the insensibility of the man of pleasure. He must enjoy life; but nothing is more strikingly calculated to correct his notions, and derange the system of present pleasure, than this idea: the sovereign of the universe is irritated against us: his sword is suspended over our heads: his avenging arm is making awful havoc around us: thousands have already fallen beneath his strokes on our right, and ten thousand on our left, Ps. xci. 7. We banish these ideas: but this being difficult to do, we repose behind intrenchments which they cannot penetrate; and by augmenting the confusion of the passions, we endeavour to divert our attention from the calamities of the public.

The insensibility we wish to prevent, is a philosophical apathy. We brave adversity. We fortify ourselves with a stoical firmness. We account it wise, superior wisdom to be unmoved by the greatest catastrophes. We enshroud the mind in an ill-named virtue; and we pique ourselves on the vain glory of being unmoved, though the universe were dissolved.

The insensibility we wish to prevent is that which arises from a stupid ignorance. Some men are naturally more difficult to be moved than the brutes destitute of reason. They are resolved to remain where they are, until extricated by an exterior cause; and these are the very men who resist that cause. They shut

their eyes against the avenues of alarm; they harden their hearts against calamities by the mere dint of reason, or rather by the mere instinct of nature; because if seriously regarded, some efforts would be required to avert the visitation.

But whether God afflict us in love, or strike in wrath; whether he afflict us for instruction, or chasten us for correction, our first duty under the rod is to acknowledge the equity of his hand.

Does he afflict us for the exercise of our resignation and our patience? To correspond with his design, we must acknowledge the equity of his hand. We must each say, It is true, my fortune fluctuates, my credit is injured, and my prospects are frustrated; but it is the great Disposer of all events who has assorted my lot; it is my Lord and Ruler. O God, "thy will be done, and not mine. I was dumb, and opened not my mouth, because it was thy doing," Matt. xxvi. 39; Ps. xxxix. 9.

Does he afflict us in order to put our love to the proof? To correspond with his design, we must acknowledge the equity of his hand. We must learn to say, "I think that God has made us a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." O God! "though thou slay me, yet will I trust in thee," 1 Cor. iv. 9; xv. 19; Job xiii. 15.

Does he afflict us in order to detach us from the world? To correspond with his design, we must acknowledge the equity of his hand. It is requisite that this son should die, who constitutes the sole enjoyment of our life; it is requisite that we should feel the anguish of the disease to which we are exposed; it is requisite this health should fail, without which the association of every pleasure is insipid and obtrusive, that we may learn to place our happiness in the world to come, and not establish our hopes in this valley of tears.

Does he afflict us to make manifest the enormity of vice? To correspond with his design, we must acknowledge the equity of his hand. We must acknowledge the horrors of the objects our passions had painted with such beguiling tints. Amid the anguish consequent on crimes, we must put the question to ourselves which St. Paul put to the Romans; "What fruits had you then in those things, whereof you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death." Sensibility of the strokes God has already inflicted by his rod, was the first disposition of mind which Micah in his day, required of the Jews.

If you ask what those strokes were with which God afflicted the Israelites, it is not easy to give you satisfaction. The correctest researches of chronology do not mark the exact period in which Micah delivered the words of my text. We know only that he exercised his ministry under three kings, under Jotham, under Ahaz, under Hezekiah; and that under each of these kings, God afflicted the kingdom of Judah, and of Israel with severe strokes.—And the solemnities of the present day excuse me from the laws, binding to a commentator, of illustrating a text in all the original views of the author. We must neither divert our feelings nor divide our attention, between the calamities God sent

on Judah and Israel, and those he has sent on us. We exhort you to sensibility concerning the visitations of Providence: four ministers of the God of vengeance address you with a voice more loud and pathetic than mine. These ministers are, the tempests; the murrain; the plague; and the spirit of indifference.

The first minister of the God of vengeance is the tempest. Estimate, if you are able, the devastations made by the tempest during the last ten years; the districts they have ravaged; the vessels they have wrecked; the inundations they have occasioned; and the towns they have laid under water. Would you not have thought that the earth was about to return to its original chaos; that the sea had broke the bounds prescribed by the Creator; and that the earth had ceased to be "balanced on its poles?" Job xxxviii. 6.

The second minister of the God of vengeance, exciting alarm, is the mortality of our cattle. The mere approaches of this calamity filled us with terror, and became the sole subjects of conversation. Your sovereign appointed public prayers and solemn humiliations, to avert the scourge. Your preachers made extraordinary efforts, entreating you to enter into the design of God, who had sent it upon us. But to what may not men become accustomed? We sometimes wonder how they can enjoy the least repose in places where the earth often quakes; where its dreadful jaws open; where a black volume of smoke obscures the light of heaven; where mountains of flame, from subterranean caverns, rise to the highest clouds, and descend in liquid rivers on houses, and on whole towns. Let us seek in ourselves the solution of a difficulty suggested by the insensibility of others. We are capable of accustoming ourselves to any thing. Were we to judge of the impressions future judgments would produce by the effects produced by those God has already sent, we should harden our hearts against both pestilence and famine; we should attend concerts, though the streets were thronged with the groans of dying men, and join the public games in presence of the destroying angel sent to exterminate the nation.

The third minister of God's vengeance, exciting us to sensibility, is the plague, which ravages a neighbouring kingdom. Your provinces do not subsist of themselves; they have an intimate relation with all the states of Europe. And such is the nature of their constitution, that they not only suffer from the prosperity, but even from the adversity, of their enemies. But what do I say? from their enemies! The people whom God has now visited with this awful scourge, are not our enemies; they are our allies; they are our brethren; they are our fellow-countrymen. The people on whom God has laid his hand in so terrible a manner, is the kingdom which gave some of us birth, and which still contains persons to whom we are united by the tenderest ties. Every stroke this kingdom receives, recoils on ourselves, and it cannot fall without involving us in its ruins.

The fourth minister of the God of vengeance, which calls for consideration, is the spirit of slumber. It would seem that God had designated our own hands to be our own ruin. It would seem that he had given a demon from

the depths of hell a commission like that granted to the spirit mentioned in the first Book of Kings. "The Lord said, who shall persuade Ahab that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-Gilead? And there came forth a spirit, and said, I will persuade him. And the Lord said, Yea, thou shalt persuade him, and prevail," xxii. 20. 22. Yea, a spirit who has sworn the overthrow of our families, the ruin of our arts and manufactures, the destruction of our commerce, and the loss of our credit, this spirit has fascinated us all. He seizes the great and the small, the court and the city. But I abridge my intentions on this subject; I yield to the reasons which forbid my extending to farther detail. To feel the strokes of God's hand, is most assuredly the first duty he requires. "Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it."

II. This rod requires us, *secondly*, to trace the causes and the origin of our calamities. Micah wished the Jews to comprehend that the miseries under which they groaned were a consequence of their crimes. We would wish you to form the same judgment of yours. But here the subject has its difficulties. Under a pretence of entering into the spirit of humiliation, there is danger of our falling into the puerilities of superstition. Few subjects are more fertile in erroneous conclusions than this subject. Temporal prosperity and adversity are very equivocal marks of the favour and displeasure of God. If some men are so wilfully blind as not to see that a particular dispensation of Providence is productive of certain punishments, there are others who fancy that they every where see a particular providence. The commonest occurrences, however closely connected with secondary causes, seem to them the result of an extraordinary counsel in him who holds the helm of the world. The slightest adversity they regard as a stroke of his angry arm. Generally speaking, we should always recollect that the conduct of Providence is involved in clouds and darkness. We should form the criterion of our guilt or innocence not by the exterior prosperity or adversity sent of God, but by our obedience or disobedience to his word; and we should habituate ourselves to see, without surprise in this world, the wicked prosperous, and the righteous afflicted.

But notwithstanding the obscurity in which it has pleased God to involve his ways, there are cases, in which we cannot without impiety refuse assent, that adversity is increased by crimes. It is peculiarly apparent in two cases: *first*, when there is a natural connexion between the crimes you have committed, and the calamities we suffer: the *second* is, when the great calamities immediately follow the perpetration of enormous crimes. Let us explain:

First, we cannot doubt that punishment is a consequence of crime, when there is an essential tie between the crime we have committed, and the calamity we suffer. One of the finest proofs of the holiness of the God, to whom all creatures owe their preservation and being, is derived from the harmony he has placed between happiness and virtue. Trace this harmony in the circles of society, and in private life. 1. In private life. An enlightened mind can find no solid happiness but in the exercise of virtue. The passions may indeed excite a

transient satisfaction; but a state of violence cannot be permanent. Each passion offers violence to some faculty of the soul, to which that faculty is abandoned. The happiness procured by the passions is founded on mistake: the moment the soul recovers recollection, the happiness occasioned by error is dissipated. The happiness ascribed to avarice is grounded on the same mistake: it is couched in this principle, that gold and silver are the true riches: and the moment that the soul which established its happiness on a false principle becomes enlightened; the moment it investigates the numerous cases in which riches are not only useless, but destructive, it loses the happiness founded on mistake. We may reason in the same manner concerning the other passions. There is then in the soul of every man a harmony between happiness and virtue, misery and crime.

2. This harmony is equally found in the great circles of national society. I am not wholly unacquainted with the maxims which a false polity would advance on the subject. I am not ignorant of what Hobbes, Machiavel, and their disciples, ancient and modern, have said. And I frankly confess, that I feel the force of the difficulties opposed to this general thesis, of the happiness of nations being inseparable from their innocence. But notwithstanding all the difficulties of which the thesis is susceptible, I think myself able to maintain, and prove, that all public happiness founded on crime, is like the happiness of the individual just described. It is a state of violence, which cannot be permanent. From the sources of those same vices on which a criminal polity would found the happiness of the state, proceeds a long train of calamities which are evidently productive of total ruin.

Without encumbering ourselves with these discussions, without reviving this controversy, the better to keep in view the grand objects of the day, I affirm, that the calamities under which we groan are the necessary consequence of our crimes; and in such sort, that though there were no God of vengeance who holds the helm of the universe, no judge ready to execute justice, our degeneracy into every vice would suffice to involve our country in misery.

Under what evils do we now groan? Is it because our name is less respected? Is it because our credit is less established? Is it because our armies are less formidable? Is it because our union is less compact? But whence do these calamities proceed? Are they the mysteries of "a God, who hideth himself?" Are they strokes inflicted by an invisible hand? Or are they the natural effects and consequences of our crimes? Does it require miracles to produce them? If so, miracles would be requisite to prevent them. Men of genius, profound statesmen, you who send us to our books, and to the dust of our closets, when we talk of Providence, and of plagues inflicted by an avenging God, I summon your speculation and superior information to this one point; "our destruction is of ourselves:" and the Judge of the universe has no need to punish our crimes but by our crimes.

I have said, in the *second* place, that great calamities following great crimes, ought to be

regarded as their punishment. And shall we refuse, in this day of humiliation, ascribing to this awful cause the strokes with which we are afflicted? Cast your eyes for a moment on the nature of the crimes which reproach these provinces. All nations have their vices, and vices in which they resemble one another; all nations afford the justest cause for reprehension. Read the various books of morality; consult the sermons delivered among the most enlightened nations, and you will every where see that the great are proud, the poor impatient, the aged covetous, the young voluptuous, and so of every class. Meanwhile all sorts of vice have not a resemblance. Weigh a passage in Deuteronomy in which you will find a distinction between sin and sin, and a distinction worthy of peculiar regard. "Their spot," says Moses, "is not the spot of the children of God," xxxii. 5. There is then a spot of the children of God, and a spot which is not of his children. There are infirmities found among a people dear to God, and there are defects incompatible with his people. To receive the sacrament of the Eucharist, but not with all the veneration required by so august a mystery; to celebrate days of humiliation, but not with all the deep repentance we should bring to these solemnities; these are great spots; but they are spots common to the children of God. To fall, however, as the ancient Israelites, whose eyes were still struck with the miracles wrought on their leaving Egypt; "to change the glory of God into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass; and to raise a profane shout. These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt," is a spot, but not "the spot of the children of God," Exod. xxxii. 8.

Now, my brethren, can you cast your eyes on these provinces, without recognising a number of sins of the latter class? In some families, the education of youth is so astonishingly neglected, that we see parents training up their children for the first offices of the republic, for offices which decide the honour, the fortune, and the lives of men, without so much as initiating them into the sciences, essentially requisite for the adequate discharge of professional duties. Profaneness is so prevalent, and indifference for the homage we pay to God is so awful, that we see people passing whole years without ever entering our sanctuaries; mechanics publicly follow their labour on the sabbath; women in the polished circles of society choose the hour of our worship to pay their visits, and expose card-tables, if I may so speak, in the sight of our altars. Infidelity is so rife, that the presses groan with works to immortalize blasphemies against the being of God, and to sap the foundation of public morals. How easy would it be to swell this catalogue! My brethren, on a subject so awful, let us not deceive ourselves; these are not the spots of the children of God; they are the very crimes which bring upon nations, the malediction of God, and which soon or late occasion their total overthrow.

III. To feel the calamities under which we now groan, and to trace their origin is not enough: we must anticipate the future: the third sort of regard required for the strokes

with which we are struck, is to develop their consequences and connexions. Some calamities are less formidable in themselves than in the awful consequences they produce. There are "deeps which call unto deeps at the noise of God's water-spouts," Ps. xlii. 8; and to sum up all in one word, there are calamities whose distinguished characteristic is to be the forerunners of calamities still more terrible. Such was the character of those inflicted on the kingdom of Judah and of Israel in Micah's time, as is awfully proved by the ruin of both.

Is this the idea we should form of the plagues with which we are struck? Never was question more serious and interesting, my brethren; and, at the same time, never was question more delicate and difficult. Do not fear, that forgetting the limits with which it has pleased God to circumscribe our knowledge, we are about with a profane hand to raise the veil which conceals futurity, and pronounce with temerity awful predictions on the destiny of these provinces. We shall merely mark the signs by which the prophet would have the ancient people to understand, that the plagues God had already inflicted were but harbingers of those about to follow. Supply by your own reflections, the cautious silence we shall observe on this subject: examine attentively what connexion may exist between calamities we now suffer, and those which made the ancient Jews expect a total overthrow. And those signs of an impending calamity are less alarming in themselves, than the dispositions of the people on whom they are inflicted.

1. One calamity is the forerunner of a greater, when the people whom God afflicts have recourse to second causes instead of the first cause; and when they seek the redress of their calamities in political resources, and not in religion. This is the portrait which Isaiah gives of Sennacherib's first expedition against Judea. The prophet recites it in the twenty-second chapter of his book. "He discovered the covering of Judah, and thou didst look in that day to the armour of the house of the forest. Ye have seen also the breaches of the city of David, that they are many: and ye gathered together the waters of the lower pool. And ye have numbered the house of Jerusalem, and the houses have ye broken down to fortify the wall. Ye made also a ditch between the two walls, for the water of the old pool; but ye have not looked unto the Maker thereof, neither have ye had respect unto him that fashioned it long ago. And in that day did the Lord God of Hosts call to weeping and to mourning, and to plucking of the hair, 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."

It belongs to you to make the application of this passage; it belongs to you to inquire what resemblance our present conduct may have to that of the Jews in a similar situation. Whether it is to the first cause you have had recourse for the removal of your calamities, or whether you have solely adhered to second causes? whether it is the maxims of religion

you have consulted, or the maxims of policy? whether it is a barrier you have pretended to put to the war, to the pestilence, and famine; or whether you have put one to injustice, to hatred, to fornication, and to fraud, the causes of those calamities!

2. One calamity is the forerunner of greater calamities, when instead of humiliation on the reception of the warnings God sends by his servants, we turn those warnings into contempt. By this sign, the author of the second Book of Chronicles wished the Jews to understand that their impiety had attained its height. "The Lord God of their fathers sent unto them by his messengers, rising up betimes and sending; because he had compassion on his people: but they mocked the messengers of God; they despised his word, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, so that there was no remedy," xxxvii. 15, 16.

My brethren, it is your duty to inquire how far you are affected by this doctrine. It is your duty to examine whether your present cesolating calamities are characterized as harbingers of greater evils. Do you discover a teachable disposition towards the messengers of God who would open your eyes to see the effects of his indignation; or, do you revolt against their word? Do you love to be reproved and corrected, or do you resemble the incorrigible man of whom the prophet says, "thou hatest instruction," Ps. 1. 17. What a humiliating subject, my brethren, what an awful touchstone of our misery!

3. One calamity is the forerunner of greater calamities, when the anguish it excites proceeds more from the loss of our perishable riches than from sentiments of the insults offered to God. This sign, the prophet Hosea gave to the inhabitants of Samaria, "Though I have redeemed them," says he, speaking for God, "they have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds." It was for corn and wine, that they cut themselves when they assembled together; or as might be better rendered, when they assembled for devotion.* Examine again, or rather censure a subject which presents the mind with a question less for inquiry than for the admission of a fact already decided. We would interrupt our business; we would suspend our pleasures; we would shed our tears; we would celebrate fasts on the recollection of our crimes, provided we could be assured that God would remit the punishment? We "cut ourselves; we assemble to-day for wine and wheat;" because commerce is obstructed; because our repose is interrupted in defiance of precaution; because the thunderbolts fallen on the heads of our neighbours threaten us, and our friends, our brethren, and our children; or is it because that those paternal regards of God are obscured, which should constitute our highest felicity, and all our joys? I say again,

this is a subject already decided rather than a question of investigation.

4. Not wishful to multiply remarks, but to comprise the whole in a single thought, one plague is the forerunner of greater plagues when it fails in producing the reformation of those manners it was sent to chastise. Weigh those awful words in the twenty-sixth chapter of Leviticus. "If ye will not hearken unto me, but walk contrary unto me; then I will walk contrary also unto you in fury; and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins." The force of these words depends on those which proceed. We there find a gradation of calamities whose highest period extends to the total destruction of the people against whom they were denounced. "If you will not hearken," Moses had said in behalf of God, verse 14, "I will even appoint over you terror, the consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart. And I will set my face against you, and ye shall be slain before your enemies: they that hate you shall reign over you, and ye shall flee when none pursueth you." Immediately he adds, "If ye will not for all this hearken," and these words occur at the eighteenth verse, "If ye will not yet for all this hearken unto me, then will I punish you seven times more for your sins. And I will break the pride of your power; and I will make your heaven as iron, and your earth as brass. And if ye walk contrary to me, I will bring seven times more plagues upon you according to your sins. And I will send the wild beast against you, and they shall rob you of your children, and make you few in number, and your highways shall be desolate." Then he denounces a new train of calamities, after which the words I have cited immediately follow. "If ye will not be reformed by all these things, but will walk contrary unto me, then will I also walk contrary unto you in fury, and will punish you yet seven times for your sins. And ye shall eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your daughters. And I will destroy your high places, and cut down your images, and cast your carcase upon the carcases of your idols. And I will make your cities waste, and bring your sanctuary unto desolation."

Make, my brethren, the most serious reflections on these words of God to his ancient people. If in the strictest sense, they are inapplicable to you, it is because your present calamities require less than sevenfold more to effectuate your total extermination. Do I exaggerate the subject? Are your sea-banks able to sustain sevenfold greater shocks than they have already received? Are your cattle able to sustain sevenfold heavier strokes? Is your commerce able to sustain a sevenfold greater depression? Is there then so wide a distance between your present calamities, and your total ruin?

IV. Let us proceed to other subjects. Hitherto, my dear brethren, we have endeavoured to open your eyes, and fix them steadfastly on dark and afflictive objects; we have solicited your attention but for bitter reproaches, and terrific menaces. -We have sought the way

* The original word is so translated in the French bible, Pa. lvi. 7; lix. 4. The French version, in regard to the former phrase, *They cut themselves*, seems to harmonize better with the scope of the passage than the English, *They rebel*, because it follows, *Though I had bound and strengthened their arms*, meaning their wounded arms.

to your hearts, but to excite terror and alarm. The close of this day's devotion shall be more conformable to prayers we offer for you, to the goodness of the God we worship, and to the character of our ministry. We will no longer open your eyes but to fix them on objects of consolation; we will no longer solicit your attention to hear predictions of misery: we will seek access to your hearts solely to augment your peace and consolation. "Hear the rod, and who hath appointed it;" and amid the whole of your calamities, know what are your resources, and what are your hopes. This is our fourth part.

One of the most notorious crimes of which a nation can be guilty when Heaven calls them to repentance, is that charged on the Jews in Jeremiah's time. The circumstance is remarkable. It occurs in the sixteenth chapter of this prophet's revelations. His mission was on the eve of their approaching ruin: its object was to save by fear the men whom a long course of prosperity could not instruct. He discharged those high duties with the firmness and magnanimity which the grandeur of God was calculated to inspire, whose minister he had the glory to be. "Because your fathers have forsaken me," he said in the name of the Lord, "and have walked after other gods, and have served them, and have worshipped before them; and because ye have done worse than your fathers, therefore will I cast you out of this land, into a land which neither ye, nor your fathers know," ver. 11—13.

Let the apprehension of ruin without resource should drive them to despair, God made to Jeremiah a farther communication; he honoured him with a vision saying, "Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words." The prophet obeyed; he went to the potter's house; the workman was busy at the wheel. He formed a vase, which was marred in his hand; he made it anew, and gave it a form according to his pleasure. This emblem God explained to the prophet, saying, Go, and speak these words to the house of Israel. "O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in my hand, O house of Israel. At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it: if that nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. Return ye now every one from his evil way, and amend your ways." What effects might not this mission have produced? But the incorrigible depravity of the people was proof against this additional overture of grace; those abominable men, deriving arguments of obduracy even from the desperate situation of their nation, replied to the prophet, "There is no hope, we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart," xviii. 1—12.

Revolted at those awful dispositions, we are, my brethren, invested with the same commission as Jeremiah. God has said to us as well as to this prophet, "Go down to the pot-

ter's house; see him mar, and form his vessels anew, giving them a form according to his pleasure." Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in my hand, O house of Israel. At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom to pluck up, and pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them." The foundation of these hopes is stronger than all that we can ask.

In particular, we found our hope on the love which God has uniformly cherished for this republic. Has not God established it by a series of miracles, and has he not preserved it by a series of miracles still greater? Has he not at all times surrounded it as with a wall of fire, and been himself the buckler on the most pressing occasions? Has he not inverted the laws of nature, and of the elements for its defence?

We found our hopes on the abundant mercies with which God has loaded us during the time of visitation. With the one hand he abases, with the other he exalts. With the one hand he brings the pestilence to our gates, and with the other he obstructs it from entering; from desolating our cities, and attacking our persons.

We found our hope on the resources he has still left the state to recover, and to re-establish itself in all the extent of its glory and prosperity. We found our hopes also on the solemnities of this day; on the abundance of tears which will be shed in the presence of God, on the many prayers which will be offered to heaven, and on the numerous purposes of conversion, which will be formed. Frustrate not these hopes by a superficial devotion, by forgetfulness of promises, and violation of vows. Your happiness is in your own hands. "Return ye now every one from his evil way, and amend your doings." Here is the law, here is the condition. This law is general; this condition concerns you all.

Yes, this law concerns you; this condition is imposed on all. High and mighty lords: it is required of you this day to lay a new foundation for the security of this people: Return ye then, my lords, from your evil ways and be converted. In vain shall you have proclaimed a fast, if you set not the fairest example of decency in its celebration. In vain shall you have commanded pastors to preach against the corruption which predominates among us, if you lend not an arm to suppress it; if you suffer profaneness and infidelity to lift their head with impunity; if you suffer the laws of chastity to be violated in the face of the sun, and houses of infamy to be open as those of temples consecrated to the glory of God; if you suffer public routs and sports to subsist in all their fury; if you abandon the reins to mammon, to establish its maxims, and communicate its poison, if possible, to all our towns and provinces. Have compassion, then, on the calamities of our country. Be impressed with its sighs. Place her under the immediate protection of Almighty God. May he deign, in clothing you with his grandeur and power, to clothe you also with holiness and equity. May

he deign to give you the Spirit of Esdras, of Nehemiah, of Josiah, of Hezekiah, princes distinguished in the sacred Scriptures, who brought their nation back to reformation and piety, and thereby to happiness and glory.

This law concerns you, this condition, pastors, is imposed on you. "Return from your evil ways and amend." The ministry with which God has invested you; this ministry, at all times weighty and difficult, is particularly so in this age of contradiction and universal depravity. You are appointed to censure the vices of the people, and every one is enraged against you, the moment you cast an eye on his particular crimes. They will treat you as enemies when you tell them the truth. No matter. Force your hearers to respect you. Testify to them by your generosity and disinterestedness, that you are ready to make every sacrifice to sustain the glory of your ministry. Give them as many examples as precepts; and then ascend the pulpit with a mind confident and firm. You have the same right over the people, as the Isaiahs, as the Micahs, and as the Jeremiahs, had over Israel and Judah. You can say like them, the Lord has spoken. And may the God who has invested you with the sacred office you fill, may he grant you the talents requisite for its faithful discharge; may he assist you by the most intimate communications in the closet, to bear the crosses laid upon you by the public; may he deign to accept the purity of your intentions, to have compassion on your weakness, and enable you to redouble your efforts by the blessings he shall shed on your work!

This law concerns you, this condition is imposed on you, rebellious men: on you sinners, who have excelled in the most awful courses of vice, in fighting, in hatred, in brutality, in profaneness, in insolence, and every other crime which confounds the human kind with demons. It is you, chiefly you who have uplifted the arm of vengeance which pursues us; it is you who have dug those pits which are under our feet. But "return from your evil ways, and amend." Let your reformation have some proportion to your profligacy, and your repentance to your crimes. And may the God who can of these stones raise up children unto Abraham, and make to rush from the hardest rocks fountains of living water, may he deign to display on you the invincible power he has over the heart: may he penetrate the abyss of your souls, and strike them in places the most tender and susceptible of anguish, of shame, and of repentance!

This law concerns you, it is imposed on you believers; and believers even of the first class. How pure soever your virtues may be, they are still mixed with imperfections: how firm soever the fabric of your piety may be, it still requires support; and how sincere soever your endeavours may be, they must still be repeated. It is on you that the salvation of the nation devolves. It is your piety, your fervour, and your zeal, which must for the future sustain this tottering republic. May there be ten righteous persons in our Sodom, lest it be consumed by fire from heaven: may there still be

a Moses, who knows how to stay the arm of God, and to say, O Lord, pardon this people; "and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book," Exod. xxxii. 32. O how glorious to be in a republic, if I may venture so to speak, the stay of the state, and the cause of its existence! May he who has chosen you to those exalted duties, assist you to discharge them with fidelity. May he purify all your yet remaining defects and imperfections! May he make you the salt of the earth, and enable you to shine as lights in the midst of this crooked and perverse generation, and cause you to find in the delights which piety shall afford, the first rewards of all the advantages it procures.

This law concerns us all, this condition is imposed on each. "Let us return from our evil ways, and amend." Why would we delay conversion? Why would we delay disarming the wrath of heaven till overwhelmed with its vengeance? Why should we delay our supplications till God shall "cover himself with a cloud, that our prayers cannot pass through?" Lam. iii. 44. Why should we delay till wholly enveloped in the threatened calamities? To say all in a single word, why should we delay till Holland becomes as Provence, and the Hague as Marseilles?

Ah! what word is that we have just pronounced? what horrors does it not oblige us to retrace? O consuming fire, God of vengeance, animate our souls; and may the piercing and awful ideas of thy judgments, induce us to avert the blow. O dreadful times, where death enters our houses with the air we breathe, and with the food we eat; every one shuns himself as death; the father fears the breath of his son, and the son the breath of his father. O dreadful times, already come on so many victims, and perhaps ready to come on us, exhibit the calamities in all their horrors! I look on myself as stretched on my dying bed, and abandoned by my dearest friends; I look on my children as entreating me to help them; I am terrified by their approach, I am appalled by their embraces, and receive the contagion by their last adieu!

My brethren, the throne of mercy is yet accessible. The devotion of so many saints who have besieged it to-day, have opened it to us. Let us approach it with broken and contrite hearts. Let us approach it with promises of conversion, and oaths of fidelity. Let us approach it with ardent prayers for the salvation of this republic; for the prosperity of the church; for the peace of Europe; and for the salvation of those victims, which the divine justice is ready to sacrifice. Let us prostrate before God as David at the sight of the destroying angel, and may we like that prince succeed in staying the awful executions. May this year, hitherto filled with alarms, with horror, and carnage, close with hope and consolation. May this day, which has been a day of fasting, humiliation, and repentance, produce the solemnities of joy and thanksgiving. God grant us the grace. To whom be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON XCIII.

DIFFICULTIES OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

1 COR. xii. 9.

We know in part.

THE systems of pagan theology have, in general, affected an air of mystery; they have evaded the light of fair investigation; and, favoured by I know not what charm of sanctified obscurity, they have given full effect to error and immorality. On this subject, the enemies of Christianity have had the presumption to confound it with the pagan superstition. They have said, that it has, according to our own confession, impenetrable mysteries; that it is wishful to evade investigation and research; and that they have but to remove the veil to discover its weakness. It is our design to expose the injustice of this reproach by investigating all the cases, in which mysteries can excite any doubts concerning the doctrines they contain, and to demonstrate on this head, as on every other, that the religion of Jesus Christ is superior to every other religion in the world. It is solely in this point of view, that we proceed to contemplate this avowal of our apostle, and in all its principal bearings. "We know in part."

There are chiefly four cases in which mysteries render a religion doubtful.

I. When they so conceal the origin of a religion, that we cannot examine whether it has proceeded from the spirit of error, or from the spirit of truth. For example, Mahomet secluded himself from his followers; he affected to hold conversations with God, concealed from the public, and he has refused to adduce the evidence. In this view, there is nothing mysterious in the Christian religion; it permits you to trace its origin, and to weigh the authenticity of its proofs.

II. Mysteries should render a religion doubtful, when they imply an absurdity. For example, the Roman Catholic religion establishes one doctrine which avowedly revolts common sense, and annihilates every motive of credibility. But the mysteries of our faith have nothing which originated in the human mind, and which our frail reason can in equity reject.

III. Mysteries should render a religion doubtful, when they tend to promote a practice contrary to virtue, and to purity of morals. For example, the pagan theology had mysteries of iniquity; and under the sanction of religious concealment, it favoured practices the most enormous, and the foulest of vices. But the mysteries of the gospel, are "mysteries of godliness," 1 Tim. iii. 15.

IV. In a word, mysteries should render a religion doubtful, when we find a system less encumbered with difficulties than the one we attack: but when the difficulties of the system we propose, surpass those of our religion, then it ought still to have the preference. For example, the system of infidelity and of atheism, is exempt from the difficulties of Christianity; but, its whole mass is a fertile source of incom-

prehensible absurdities, and of difficulties which cannot be resolved.

The whole of these propositions, my brethren, claim the most careful investigation. If Heaven shall succeed our efforts, we shall have a new class of arguments for the support of our faith. We shall have a new motive to console ourselves within the limits God has prescribed to our knowledge, and await with ardour and patience, the happy period, till "that which is perfect shall come;" till that "which is in part shall be done away;" till "we shall behold the Lord with open face, and be changed into glory by his Spirit." So be it. Amen.

1. Mysteries should render a religion doubtful, when we cannot examine whether that religion proceed from the spirit of truth, or from the spirit of error. Mankind neither can, nor ought to receive any religion as divine, unless it bear the marks of divine authority, and produce its documents of credibility.

For example, if you should require Mahomet to produce the proofs of his mission, he would say* that it had a peculiar character, and a singular sort of privilege; that till his call, all the sent of God were obliged to prove the divinity of their mission; and the prophets gave signs by which they might be known: that Jesus Christ gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, health to the sick, and life to the dead: but on his part, he had received authority to consign over to eternal torments, every one who shall dare to doubt the truth of his doctrine; and anticipating the punishment, he put every one to the sword who presumed to question the divine authority of his religion. But if you require of Jesus Christ the proofs of his mission, he will give you evidence the most obvious and satisfactory. "Though ye believe not me, believe the works. If I had not come and spoken unto them; if I had not done among them the works which no other man did, they had not had sin. But now are they without excuse. The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me," John x. 25. 38; xv. 22. 24.

If you ask the followers of Mahomet, how they know that the Alcoran was really transmitted by the prophet, they will confess that he knew neither how to read nor write; and that the name of prophet is often assumed by men ignorant of letters: but they will add, that he conversed for twenty years with the angel Gabriel; that this celestial spirit revealed to him, from time to time, certain passages of the Alcoran; that Mahomet dictated to his disciples the subjects of his revelation; that they carefully collected whatever dropped from his lips; and that the collection so made constitutes the subject of the Alcoran. But, if you wish to penetrate farther, and to trace the book to its source, you will find that after the death of Mahomet, his pretended revelations, were preserved merely on fugitive scrolls, or in the recollection of those who had heard him; that his successor, wishful to associate the scat-

* See the Alcoran, chap. on the lin. of Joach; chap. on gratifications; chap. on Jonah; chap. on thunder; chap. on the nocturnal journey; chap. on the Creator; chap. on the spider.

† See Maraccio on the Alcoran, page 36.

tered limbs in one body, made the collection more with presumption than precision; that this collection was a subject of long debate among the Mahometans, some contending that the prince had omitted many revelations of the prophet; and others, that he had adopted some which were doubtful and spurious. You will find, that those disputes were appeased solely by the authority of the prince under whom they originated, and by the permanent injunctions of those who succeeded him on the throne. Consequently, it is very doubtful, whether the impostures of Mahomet really proceeded from himself, or were imputed to him by his followers.

Some even of Mahomet's disciples affirm, that of the three parts which compose the Alcoran, but one is the genuine production of the prophet. Hence, when you show them any absurdity in the book, they will reply, that it ought to be classed among the two spurious parts which they reject.*

But if you ask us how we know that the books, containing the fundamentals of our faith, were composed by the holy men to whom they are ascribed, we readily offer to submit them to the severest tests of criticism. Let them produce a book whose antiquity is the least disputed, and the most unanimously acknowledged to be the production of the author whose name it bears; let them adduce the evidences of its authenticity; and we will adduce the same evidences in favour of the canon of our gospels.

If you ask the followers of Mahomet to show you in the Alcoran, some characteristics of its divine authenticity, they will extol it to the skies, and tell you "that it is an uncreated work; the truth by way of excellence; the miracle of miracles; superior to the resurrection of the dead; promised by Moses and the apostles; intelligible to God alone; worthy to be received of all intelligent beings, and constituted their rule of conduct."† But when you come to investigate the work of which they have spoken in such extravagant terms, you will find a book destitute of instruction, except what its author had borrowed from the books of the Old and New Testament; concerning the unity of God; the reality of future judgment; the certainty of the life to come; and those various maxims, that "we must not give alms in ostentation; that God loveth a cheerful giver, that all things are possible to him;" and that "he searches the heart." You will find a book in many places directly opposed to the maxims of the sacred authors, even when it extols the Deity, as in the laws it prescribes respecting divorce; in the permission of a new marriage granted to repudiated women; in the liberty of having as many wives as we please, a liberty of which Mahomet availed himself; in what he recounts of Pharaoh's conversion; of Jesus Christ's speaking in the cradle with the same facility as a man of thirty or of fifty years of age; in what he advances concerning a middle place between heaven and hell, where those must dwell who have done neither good nor evil, and those

whose good and evil are equal; in what he says concerning Jesus Christ's escape from crucifixion, having so far deceived the Jews that they crucified another in his place, who very much resembled him.*

You will find a book replete with fabulous tales. Witness what he says of God having raised a mountain, which covered the Israelites with its shadow.† Witness the dialogue he imagined between God and Abraham. Witness the puerile proofs he adduces of the innocence of Joseph. Witness the history of the seven sleepers. Witness what he asserts that all the devils were subject to Solomon.‡ Witness the ridiculous fable of the ant that commanded an army of ants, and addressed them with an articulate voice. Witness the notions he gives us of paradise and hell.¶ Whereas, if you require of Christians the characteristic authorities of their books, they adduce sublime doctrines, a pure morality, prophecies punctually accomplished, and at the predicted period, a scheme of happiness the most noble and the most assortable with the wants of man that ever entered the mind of the most celebrated philosophers.

If you ask the sectarians of Mahomet what signs God has wrought in favour of their religion, they will tell you, that his mother bore him without pain; that the idols fell at his birth; that the sacred fires of Persia were extinguished; that the waters in lake Sava diminished; that the palace of Chosroes fell to the ground.§ They will tell you, that Mahomet himself performed a great number of miracles, that he made water proceed from his fingers; that he cut the moon, and made a part of it fall into his lap.¶ They will tell you, that the stones, and the trees saluted him, saying, *Peace, peace be to the ambassador of God.*** They will tell you, that the sheep obeyed his voice; that an angel having assumed the figure of a dragon, became his guardian. They will tell you, that two men of enormous stature grasped him in their hands, and placed him on the top of a high mountain, opened his bowels, and took from his heart a black drop, the only evil Satan possessed in his heart: having afterward restored him to his place, they affixed their seal to the fact.†† Fabulous tales, adduced without proofs, and deservedly rejected by the more enlightened followers of Mahomet.

But, if you require of the Christians miracles in favour of their religion, they will produce them without number. Miracles wrought in the most public places, and in presence of the people; miracles, the power of which was communicated to many of those who embraced Christianity; miracles admitted by Zosimen, by Porphyry, by Julian, and by the greatest enemies of the gospel; miracles which demonstrate to us the truth by every test of which remote facts are susceptible; miracles sealed by the blood of innumerable martyrs, and rendered in some sort still visible to us by the con-

* Chap. on women.

† Preface, page 14.

‡ Chap. on Ruth.

¶ Chap. of orders.

§ See Maraccio's Life of Mahomet, page 10.

¶ Simon's Hist. Crit. of the Faith of the Nations of the Levant.

** Maraccio, preface, page 14, col. 2.

†† Ibid. page 13.

* See Joseph of St. Maria on the expedition to the East Indies.

† Maraccio on the Alcoran, chap. vi.

version of the pagan world, and by the progress of the gospel, and which can find no parallel in the religion of Mahomet, propagated with the sword, as is confessed by his followers, who say, that he fought sixty battles, and called himself *the military prophet*. Whereas Christianity was established by the prodigies of the Spirit, and by force of argument. The mysteries of the gospel are not therefore in the first class, which render a religion suspected. They do not conceal its origin. This is what we proposed to prove.

II. Mysteries should expose a religion to suspicion, when they imply an absurdity. Yes, and if Christianity notwithstanding the luminous proofs of its divine authority; notwithstanding the miracles of its founder; notwithstanding the sublimity of its doctrines; notwithstanding the sanctity of its moral code, the completion of its prophecies, the magnificence of its promises; notwithstanding the convincing facts which prove that the books containing this religion were written by men divinely inspired; notwithstanding the number and the grandeur of its miracles; notwithstanding the confession of its adversaries, and its public monuments; if it was possible, notwithstanding all this, should the Christian religion include absurdities, it ought to be rejected. Because,

Every character of the divinity here adduced, is founded on argument. Whatever is demonstrated to a due degree of evidence ought to be admitted without dispute. The proofs of the divine authority of religion are demonstrated to that degree; therefore the Christian religion ought to be received without dispute. But were it possible that a contradiction should exist; were it possible that a proposition, appearing to us evidently false, should be true, evidence would no longer then be the character of truth, and if evidence should no longer be the character of truth, you would have no farther marks by which you could know that a religion is divine. Consequently, you could not be assured, that the gospel is divine. To me, nothing is more true than this proposition, *a whole is greater than a part*. I would reject a religion how true soever it might appear, if it contradicted this fact; because, how evident soever the proofs might be alleged in favour of its divinity, they could never be more evident than the rejected proposition, that *a whole is greater than a part*. Our proposition is therefore confirmed, that mysteries ought to render a religion suspected when they imply absurdities. We wish you to judge of the Christian religion according to this rule.

Now if there be in our gospels a doctrine concerning which a good logician has apparent cause to exclaim, it is this; a God, who has but one essence, and who nevertheless has three persons; the Son, and the Holy Spirit who is God; and these three are but one. The Father, who is with the Son, does not become incarnate, when the Son becomes incarnate. The Son, who is with the Father, no longer maintains the rights of justice in Gethsemane, when the Father maintains them. The Holy Spirit, who is with the Father and the Son, proceeds from both in a manner ineffable: and the Father and the Son, who is with the Holy

Spirit, do not proceed in this manner. Are not these ideas contradictory? No, my brethren.

If we should say, that God has but one essence, and that he has three essences, in the same sense that we maintain he has but one; if we should say, that God is three in the same sense he is one, it would be a contradiction. But this is not our thesis. We believe on the faith of a divine book, that God is one in the sense to which we give the confused name of *essence*. We believe that he is three in a sense to which we give the confused name of *persons*. We determine neither what is this *essence*, nor what is this *personality*. That surpasses reason but does not revolt it.

If we should say, that God in the sense we have called *Essence*, is become incarnate, and at the same time this notion is not incarnate, we should advance a contradiction. But this is not our thesis. We believe on the faith of a divine book, that what is called the *person* of the Son in the Godhead, and of which we confess that we have not a distinct idea, is united to the humanity in a manner we cannot determine, because it has not pleased God to reveal it. This surpasses reason, but does not revolt it.

If we should advance, that God (the Spirit) in the sense we have called *Essence*, proceeds from the Father and the Son, while the Father and the Son do not proceed, we should advance a contradiction. But this is not our thesis. We believe on the credit of a divine book, that what is called the Holy Spirit in the Godhead, and of which we confess we have no distinct idea, because it has not pleased God to give it, has procession ineffable, while what is called the Father and the Son, differing from the Holy Spirit in that respect, do not proceed. This surpasses reason, but does not revolt it.

We go even farther. We maintain not only that there is no contradiction in those doctrines, but that a contradiction is impossible. What is a contradiction in regard to us? It is an evident opposition between two known ideas. For instance, I have an idea of this pulpit, and of this wall. I see an essential difference between the two. Consequently, I find a contradiction in the proposition, that this wall, and this pulpit are the same being.

Such being the nature of a contradiction, I say, it is impossible that any should be found in this proposition, that there is one divine essence in three persons: to find a contradiction, it is requisite to have a distinct idea of what I call *essence*, and of what I call *person*: and, as I profess to be perfectly ignorant of the one, and the other, it is impossible I should find an absurdity. When, therefore, I affirm, that there is a divine essence in three persons, I do not pretend to explain either the nature of the unity, or the nature of the Trinity. I pretend to advance only that there is something in God which surpasses me, and which is the basis of this proposition; viz. there is a Father, a Son, and a Holy Spirit.

But though the Christian religion be fully excupated for teaching doctrines which destroy themselves, the Church of Rome cannot be justified, whatever efforts her greatest geniuses may make, in placing the doctrine of the Trini

ty, on the parallel with the doctrine of transubstantiation, and in defending it against us with the same argument with which we defend the other against unbelievers.

Were we, I allow, to seek the faith of the church of Rome in the writings of some individual doctors, this doctrine would be less liable to objections. Some of them have expressed themselves, on this subject, in an undetermined way; and have avoided detail. They say in general, that the body of Christ is in the sacrament of the eucharist, and that they do not presume to define the manner.

But we must seek the faith (and it is the method which all should follow who have a controversy to maintain against those of that communion;) we must, I say, seek the faith of the church of Rome in the decisions of her general councils, and not in the works of a few individuals. And as the doctors of the council of Trent lived in a dark age, in which philosophy had not purified the errors of the schools, they had the indiscretion, not only to determine, but also to detail this doctrine; and thereby committed themselves by a manifest contradiction. Hear the third canon of the third session of the council of Trent. "If any one deny, that in the venerable sacrament of the eucharist, the body of Christ is really present in both kinds, and in such sort that the body of Christ is wholly present in every separate part of the host, let him be anathematized."

Can one fall into a more manifest contradiction? If you should say, that the bread is destroyed, and that the body of Christ intervenes by an effort of divine omnipotence, you might perhaps shelter yourself from the reproach of absurdity; you might escape under the plea of mystery, and the limits of the human mind. But to affirm that the substance of the bread is destroyed, while the kinds of bread, which are still but the same bread, modified in such a manner, subsist, is not to advance a mystery, but an absurdity. It is not to prescribe bounds to the human mind, but to revolt its convictions, and to extinguish its knowledge.

If you should say, that the body of Christ, which is in heaven, passes in an instant from heaven to earth, you might perhaps shelter yourself from the reproach of absurdity, and escape under the plea of mystery, and of the limits of the human mind. But to affirm, that the body of Christ, while it is wholly in heaven, is wholly on earth, is not to advance a mystery, but to maintain a contradiction. It is to revolt all its convictions, and to extinguish all its knowledge.

If you should say, that some parts of the body of Jesus Christ are detached, and mixed with the symbols of the holy sacrament, you might perhaps avert the charge of contradiction, and escape under the plea of mystery, and the limits of the human mind. But to affirm, that the body of Christ is but one in number, and meanwhile, that it is perfect and entire in all the parts of the host, which are without number, is not to advance a mystery, it is to maintain a contradiction. It is not to prescribe bounds to the human mind, but to revolt all its convictions, and to extinguish all its knowledge.

So you may indeed conclude, my brethren,

from what we said at the commencement of this article. A Roman Catholic, consonant to his principles, has no right to believe the divine authority of the Christian religion, for the evidences of Christianity terminate on this principle, that evidence is the character of truth. But if the doctrine of transubstantiation be true, palpable absurdities ought to be believed by the Roman Catholic; evidence, in regard to him, being no longer the character of truth. If evidence in regard to him be no longer the character of truth, proofs the most evident in favour of Christianity, can carry no conviction to him, and he is justified in not believing them.

I go farther still; I maintain to the most zealous defender of the doctrine of transubstantiation, that properly speaking, he does not believe the doctrine of transubstantiation. He may indeed verbally assert his faith, but he can never satisfy his conscience: he may indeed becloud his mind by a confusion of ideas, but he can never induce it to harmonize contradictory ideas: he may indeed inadvertently adhere to this proposition, *a body having but a limited circumference, is at the same time in heaven, and at the same time on earth, with the same circumference*. But no man can believe this doctrine, if by believing, you mean the connecting of distinct ideas; for no man whatever can connect together both distinct and contradictory.

III. We have said in the third place, that mysteries should render a religion suspected, when they hide certain practices contrary to virtue and good manners. This was a characteristic of paganism. The pagans for the most part affected a great air of mystery in their religious exercises. They said, that mystery conciliated respect for the gods. Hence, dividing their mysteries into two classes, they had their major and their minor mysteries. But all these were a covert for impurity! Who can read without horror the mysteries of the god Apis, even as they are recorded in pagan authors? What infamous ceremonies did they not practise in honour of Venus, when initiated into the secrets of the Goddess? What mysterious precautions did they not adopt concerning the mysteries of Ceres in the city of Eleusis? No man was admitted without mature experience, and a long probation. It was so established, that those who were not initiated, could not participate of the secrets. Nero did not dare to gratify his curiosity on this head;* and the wish to know secrets allowed to be disclosed only by gradual approach, was regarded as a presumption. It was forbidden under the penalty of death to disclose those mysteries, and solely, if we may believe Theodoret, and Tertullian, to hide the abominable ceremonies, whose detail would defile the majesty of this place. And if the recital would so deeply defile, what must the practice be?

The mysteries of Christianity are infinitely distant from all those infamous practices. The gospel not only exhibits a most hallowing morality, but whatever mysteries it may teach, it requires that we should draw from their very obscurity motives to sanctity of life. If we say, that there are three persons who participate in

* Life of Nero by Suetonius, chap. 34.

the divine Essence, it is to make you conceive, that all which is in God, if I may so speak, is interested for our salvation, and to enkindle our efforts by the thought. If we say, that the Word was made flesh, and that the Son of God expired on the cross, it is to make you abhor sin by the idea of what it cost him to expiate it. If we say, that grace operates in the heart, and that in the work of our salvation, grace forms the design and the execution, it is with this inference, that we should "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling." If we teach even the doctrines of God's decrees, it is "to make our calling sure," Phil. ii. 12; 1 Pet. i. 10.

IV. We have lastly said, that mysteries should render a religion doubtful, when we find a system, which on rejecting those mysteries, is exempt from greater difficulties than those we would attack. We make this remark as a compliment to unbelievers, and to the impure class of brilliant wits. When we have proved, reasoned, and demonstrated; when we have placed the arguments of religion in the clearest degree of evidence they can possibly attain: and when we would decide in favour of religion, they invariably insinuate, that "religion has its mysteries; that religion has its difficulties;" and they make these the apology of their unbelief.

I confess, this objection would have some colour, if there were any system, which on exempting us from the difficulties of religion, did not involve in still greater. And whenever they produce that system, we are ready to embrace it.

Associate all the difficulties of which we allow religion to be susceptible. Associate whatever is incomprehensible in the doctrine of the Trinity, and in the ineffable manner in which the three persons subsist, who are the object of our worship. Add thereto whatever is supernatural in the operations of the Holy Spirit, and in the mysterious methods he adopts to penetrate the heart. Neither forget the depths into which we are apparently cast by the doctrines of God's decrees, and make a complete code of the whole.

To these difficulties which we avow, join all those we do not avow. Join all the pretexts you affect to find in the arguments which nature affords of the being of a God, and the reality of a providence. Join thereto whatever you shall find the most forcible against the authenticity of our sacred books, and what has been thought the most plausible against the marks of Divine authority exhibited in those Scriptures. Join to these all the advantages presumed to be derived from the diversity of opinions existing in the Christian world, and in all its sects which constantly attack one another. Make a new code of all these difficulties.—Form a system of your own objections. Draw the conclusions from your own principles, and build an edifice of infidelity on the ruins of religion. But for what system can you decide which is not infinitely less supportable than religion?

Do you espouse that of atheism? Do you say, that the doctrine of the being of a God owes its origin to superstition and the fears of men? And is this the system which has no dif-

iculties? Have rational men need to be convinced, that the mysteries of religion are infinitely more defensible than the mysteries of atheism.

Do you espouse the part of irreligion? Do you allow with Epicures, that there is a God; but that the sublimity of his Majesty obstructs his stooping to men, and the extension of his regards to our temples, and our altars? And is this the system which has no difficulties? How do you reply to the infinity of objections opposed to this system? How do you answer this argument, that God having not disdained to create mankind, it is inconceivable he should disdain to govern them? How do you reply to a second, the inconceivableness that a perfect being should form intelligences, and not prescribe their devotion to his glory? And what do you say to a third, that religion is completely formed, and fully proved in every man's conscience?

Do you take the part of denying a divine revelation? And is this the system which is exempt from difficulties? Can you really prove that our books were not composed by the authors to whom they are ascribed? Can you really prove that those men have not wrought miracles? Can you really prove that the Bible is not the book the most luminous, and the most sublime, that ever appeared on earth? Can you really prove, that fishermen, publicans, and tent-makers, and whatever was lowest among the mean populace of Judea; can you prove, that people of this description, have without divine assistance, spoken of the origin of the world; and of the perfections of God; of the nature of man, his constitution, and his duties, in a manner more grand, noble, and better supported than Plato, than Zeno, than Epicurus, and all the sublime geniuses, which render antiquity venerable, and which still fill the universe with their fame?

Do you espouse the cause of deism? Do you say with the Latitudinarian, that if there be a religion, it is not shut up in the narrow bounds which we prescribe? Do you maintain that all religions are indifferent? Do you give a false gloss to the apostle's words, that "in all nations he that feareth God is accepted of him?" Acts x. 35. And is this the system which is exempt from difficulties? How, superseding the authority of the Bible, will you maintain this principle? How will you maintain it against the terrors God denounces against the base, "and the fearful," Rev. xxi. 8; against the injunction "to go out of Babylon; against the duty prescribed of confessing him in presence of all men," Isa. xlvi. 20; Matt. x. 32; and with regard to the fortitude he requires us to display on the rack, and when surrounded with fire and fagots, and when called to brave them for the sake of truth! How will you maintain it against the care he has taken to teach you the truth without any mixture of lies?

Do you take the part of believing nothing? Do you conclude from these difficulties, that the best system is to have none at all. Obstinate Pyrrhonian, you are then resolved to doubt of all! And is this the system which is exempt from difficulties? When you shall be agreed with yourself; when you have conciliated your singular system with the convictions of your

mind, with the sentiments of your heart, and with the dictates of your conscience, then you shall see what we have to reply.

What then shall you do to find a light without darkness, and an evidence to your mind? Do you take the part of the libertine? Do you abandon to colleges the care of religion, and leaving the doctors to waste life deciding who is wrong, and who is right, are you determined as to yourself to rush head foremost into the world? Do you say with the profane, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die?" Do you enjoy the present without pursuing uncertain rewards, and alarming your mind with fears of miseries which perhaps may never come? And is this the system destitute of mysteries? Is this the system preferred to what is said by our *apostles*, our *evangelists*, our *doctors*, our *pastors*, and by all the holy men God has raised up "for the perfecting of the saints, and for the work of the ministry?" But though the whole of your objections were founded; though the mysteries of the gospel were a thousand times more difficult to penetrate; though our knowledge were incomparably more circumscribed; and though religion should be infinitely less demonstrated than it is; should this be the part you ought to take? The sole probability of religion, should it not induce us, if not to believe it, yet at least, so to act, as if in fact we did believe it? And the mere alternative of an eternal happiness, or an eternal misery, should it not suffice to restrict us within the limits of duty, and to regulate our life, in such *scra*, that if there be a hell, we may avoid its torments?

We conclude. Religion has its mysteries; we acknowledge it with pleasure. Religion has its difficulties; we avow it. Religion is shook (we grant this for the moment to unbelievers, though we detest it in our hearts,) religion is shook, and ready to fall by brilliant wits. But after all, the mysteries of the gospel are not of that cast which should render a religion doubtful. But after all, Christianity all shook, all wavering, and ready to fall, as it may appear to the infidel, contains what is most certain, and the wisest part a rational man can take, is to adhere to it with an inviolable attachment.

But how evident soever these arguments may be, and however strong this apology for the difficulties of religion may appear, there always remains a question on this subject, and indeed an important question, which we cannot omit resolving without leaving a chasm in this discourse. Why these mysteries? Why these shadows? And why this darkness? Does not the goodness of God engage to remove this stumbling-block, and to give us a religion radiant with truth, and destitute of any obscuring veil? There are various reasons, my brethren, which render certain doctrines of religion impenetrable to us.

The first argument of the weakness of our knowledge is derived from the limits of the human mind. It is requisite that you should favour me here with a little more of recollection than is usually bestowed on a sermon. It is not requisite to be a philosopher to become a Christian. The doctrines of our religion, and the precepts of our moral code, are sanctioned by the testimony of an infallible God: and not deriving their origin from the speculations of men,

it is not from their approbation that they derive their authority. Meanwhile, it is a felicity, we must confess, and an anticipation of the happy period when our faith shall be changed to sight, to find in sound reason the basis of all the grand truths religion reveals, and to convince ourselves by experience, that the more we know of man, the more we see that religion was made for man. Let us return to our first principle. The narrow limits of the human mind shall open one source of light on the subject we discuss; they shall convince us, that minds circumscribed, as ours, cannot before the time penetrate far into the adorable mysteries of faith.

We have elsewhere distinguished three faculties in the mind of man, or rather three classes of faculties which comprise whatever we know of this spirit; the faculty of *thinking*; the faculty of *feeling*; and the faculty of *loving*. Examine these three faculties, and you will be convinced that the mind of man is circumscribed within narrow bounds; they are so closely circumscribed, that while attentively contemplating a certain object, they cannot attend to any other.

You experience this daily with regard to the faculty of thinking. Some persons, I allow, extend attention much beyond common men; but in all it is extremely confined. This is so received an opinion, that we regard as prodigies of intellect, those who have the art of attending closely to two or three objects at once; or of directing the attention, without a glance of the eye, on any game, apparently less invented to unbend than to exercise the mind. Meanwhile, this power is extremely limited in all men. If the mind can distinctly glance on two or three objects at once, the fourth or the fifth confounds it. Properly to study a subject, we must attend to that alone; be abstracted from all others, forgetful of what we do, and blind to what we see.

The faculty of *feeling* is as circumscribed as that of thinking. One sensation absorbs or diminishes another. A wound received in the heat of battle; in the tumult, or in the sight of the general whose approbation we seek, is less acute than it would be on a different occasion. For the like reason the same pain we have borne during the day, is insupportable in the night. Violent anguish renders us insensible of a diminutive pain. Whatever diverts from a pleasing sensation diminishes the pleasure, and blunts enjoyment; and this is done by the reason already assigned; that while the faculty is attentive to one object, it is incapable of application to another.

It is the same with regard to the faculty of *loving*. It rarely happens that a man can indulge two or three leading passions at once: "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other." So is the assertion of Jesus Christ, who knew the human heart better than all the philosophers put together. The passion of avarice, for the most part, diminishes the passion of glory; and the passion of glory, diminishes that of avarice. It is the same with the other passions.

Besides, not only an object engrossing a faculty, obstructs its profound attention to any other object related to that faculty; but when a faculty is deeply engrossed by an object, all

others, if I may so speak, remain in solitude and slumber; the capacity of the soul being wholly absorbed. A man who concentrates himself in research, in the illustration of a difficulty, in the solution of a problem, in the contemplation of a combined truth; he loses for the moment, the faculty of feeling, and becomes insensible of sound, of noise, of light. A man, on the contrary, who freely abandons himself to a violent sensation, or whom God afflicts acutely, loses for the time, the faculty of thinking. Speak, reason, and examine; draw consequences, and all that is foreign to this point: he is no longer a thinking being; he is a feeling being, and wholly so. Thus the principle we establish is an indisputable axiom in the study of man, that the human mind is circumscribed, and inclosed in very narrow limits.

The relation of this principle to the subject we discuss, obtrudes itself on our regard. A slight reflection on the limits of the human mind will convince us, that men who make so slow a progress in abstruse science, can never fathom the deep mysteries of religion. And it is the more evident, as these limited faculties can never be wholly applied to the study of truth. There is no moment of life, in which they are not divided; there is no moment in which they are not engaged in the care of the body, in the recollection of some fugitive ideas, and on subjects which have no connexion with those to which we would direct our study.

A second reason of the limits of our knowledge arises from those very mysteries which excite obscurity, astonishment, and awe. What are those mysteries? Of what do they treat? They treat of what is the most elevated and sublime: they concern the essence of the Creator: they concern the attributes of the Supreme Being: they concern whatever has been thought the most immense in the mind of eternal wisdom: they concern the traces of that impetuous wind, "which blows where it listeth," and which moves in one moment to every part of the universe. And we, insignificant beings; we altogether obstructed, confounded, and absorbed, we affect an air of surprise because we cannot fathom the depths of those mysteries! It is not merely while on earth that we cannot comprehend those immensities; but we can never comprehend them in the other world; because God is always unlimited, always infinite, and always above the reach of circumscribed intelligences; and because we shall be always finite, always limited, always creatures circumscribed. Perfect knowledge belongs to God alone. "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than hell, what canst thou know?" Job xi. 7, 8. "Where wast thou when he laid the foundations of the earth? When he shut up the sea with doors? When he made the clouds the garments thereof, and thick darkness a swaddling band for it. When he subjected it to his laws, and prescribed its barriers, and said, hitherto shalt thou come, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed?" xxxvii. 4. 9—11. "Who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom,

and of the knowledge of God; how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Rom. xi. 33—35. Let us adore a Being so immense; and let his incomprehensibility serve to give us the more exalted ideas of his grandeur; and seeing we can never know him to perfection, let us, at the least, form the noble desire of knowing him as far as it is allowable to finite intelligences. And as Manoaah, who, after receiving the mysterious vision recorded Judges xiii. prayed the angel of the Lord, saying, "Tell me, I pray thee, thy name;" and received the answer, "It is wonderful;" so should we say with this holy man, "I pray thee, tell me thy name;" give me to know this "wonderful name." Let us say with Moses, "Lord, let me see thy glory," Exod. xxxiii. 18. And with the prophet, "Lord, open thou mine eyes, that I may behold the marvels of thy law," Ps. cxix. 18.

The *third* cause of the obscurity of our knowledge is, that truths the most simple, and objects the least combined, have, however, certain depths and abysses beyond the reach of thought; because truths the most simple, and objects the least combined, have a certain tie with infinity, that they cannot be comprehended without comprehending this infinity. Nothing is more simple, nothing is less combined, in regard to me, than this proposition; there are certain exterior objects which actually strike my eyes, which excite certain emotions in my brain, and certain perceptions in my mind. Meanwhile, this proposition so simple, and so little combined, has certain depths and obscurities above my thought, because it is connected with other inquiries concerning this infinity, which I cannot comprehend. It is connected with this; cannot the perfect Being excite certain perceptions in my mind, and emotions in my brain without the aid of exterior objects? It is connected with another; will the goodness and truth of this perfect Being suffer certain perceptions to be excited in the mind, and emotions in the brain, by which we forcibly believe that certain exterior objects exist, when in fact, they do not exist? It is connected with divers other inquiries of like nature, which involve us in discussions, which absorb and confound our feeble genius. Thus, we are not only incapable of fathoming certain inquiries which regard infinity, but we are equally incapable of fully satisfying ourselves concerning those that are simple, because they are connected with the infinite. Prudence, therefore, requires that men should admit, as proved, the truths which have, in regard to them, the characters of demonstration. It is by these characters they should judge. But after all, there is none but the perfect Being, who can have perfect demonstration; at least, the perfect Being alone can fully perceive in the immensity of his knowledge, all the connexions which finite beings have with the infinite.

A fourth reason of the obscurity of our knowledge, is the grand end God proposed when he placed us upon the earth: this end is our sanctification. The questions on which religion leaves so much obscurity, do not devolve on simple principles, which may be comprehended in a moment. The acutest mathematician, he who can make a perfect demonstration of a given

number, cannot do it in a moment, if that number be complicated: and the tardy comprehension of him to whom a complicated problem is demonstrated, requires a still greater length of time. He must comprehend by a succession of ideas what cannot be proved by a single glance of the eye. A man, posted on an elevated tower, may see at once the whole of a considerable army in motion; but he at the base of this tower, can see them only as they present themselves in succession. God is exalted above all creatures; he sees the whole by a single regard. He has but, if I may so speak, to apply his mind, and all are seen at once. But we, poor abject creatures, we are placed in the humblest point of the universe. How then can we, during the period of fifty, or if you please, a hundred years of life, destined to active duties, how can we presume to make a combination of all the Creator's perfections and designs, though he himself should deign in so great a work to be our guide. Great men have said, that all possible plans were presented to the mind of God when he made the universe, and that, comparing them one with another, he chose the best. Let us make the supposition without adopting it; let us suppose that God, wishful to justify to our mind the plan he has adopted, should present to us all his plans; and comparison alone could ensure approbation; but does it imply a contradiction, that fifty, or a hundred years of life, engrossed by active duties, should suffice for so vast a design? Had God encumbered religion with the illustration of all abstruse doctrines, concerning which it observes a profound silence; and with the explication of all the mysteries it imperfectly reveals; had he explained to us the depths of his nature and essence; had he discovered to us the immense combination of his attributes; had he qualified us to trace the unsearchable ways of his Spirit in our heart; had he shown us the origin, the end, and arrangement of his counsels; had he wished to gratify the infinite inquiries of our curiosity, and to acquaint us with the object of his views during the absorbing revolutions prior to the birth of time, and with those which must follow it; had he thus multiplied to infinity speculative ideas, what time should we have had for practical duties? Dissipated by the cares of life, occupied with its wants, and sentenced to the toils it imposes, what time would have remained to succour the wretched, to visit the sick, and to comfort the distressed? Yea, and what is still more, to study and vanquish our own heart?—O how admirably is the way of God, in the restriction of our knowledge, worthy of his wisdom! He has taught us nothing but what has the most intimate connexion with our duties, that we might ever be attentive to them, and that there is nothing in religion which can possibly attract us from those duties.

5. The miseries inseparable from life, are the ultimate reason of the obscurity of our knowledge both in religion and in nature. To ask why God has involved religion in so much darkness, is asking why he has not given us a nature like those spirits which are not clothed with mortal flesh. We must class the obscurity of our knowledge with the other infirmities of

life, with our exile, our imprisonment, our sickness, our perfidy, our infidelity, with the loss of our relatives, of separation from our dearest friends. We must answer the objection drawn from the darkness which envelops most of the objects of sense, as we do to those drawn from the complication of our calamities. It is, that this world is not the abode of our felicity. It is, that the awful wounds of sin are not yet wholly healed. It is, that our soul is still clothed with matter. We must lament the miseries of a life in which reason is enslaved, in which the sphere of our knowledge is so confined, and in which we feel ourselves obstructed at every step of our meditation and research. We have a soul greedy of wisdom and knowledge; a soul susceptible of an infinity of perceptions and ideas; a soul to which knowledge and intelligence are the nourishment and food: and this soul is localized in a world: but in what world? In a world, where we do but imperfectly know ourselves; in a world, where our sublimest knowledge, and profoundest researches resemble little children who divert themselves at play. The idea is not mine; it is suggested by St. Paul, in the words subsequent to our text. "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child." The contrast is not unjust. Literally, all this knowledge, all these sermons, all this divinity, and all those commentaries, are but as the simple comparisons employed to make children understand exalted truths. They are but as the types, which God employed in the ancient law to instruct the Jews, while in a state of infancy. How imperfect were those types! What relation had a sheep to the Victim of the new covenant? What proportion had a priest to the Sovereign Pontiff of the church! Such is the state of man while here placed on the earth.

But a happier period must follow this of humiliation. "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things." Charming thought, my brethren, of the change that death shall produce in us; it shall supersede the puerilities of infancy; it shall draw the curtain which conceals the objects of expectation. How ravished must the soul be when this curtain is uplifted! Instead of worshipping in these assemblies, it finds itself instantly elevated to the choirs of angels, "the ten thousand times ten thousand before the Lord." Instead of hearing the hymns we sing to his glory, it instantly hears the hallelujahs of celestial spirits, and the dread shouts of "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of thy glory." Instead of listening to this frail preacher, who endeavours to develop the imperfect notions he has imbibed in a confined understanding, it instantly hears the great head of the church, "who is the author, and finisher of our faith." Instead of perceiving some traces of God's perfections in the beauties of nature, it finds itself in the midst of his sublimest works; in the midst of "the heavenly Jerusalem, whose gates are of pearl, whose foundations are of precious stones, and whose walls are of jasper."—Do we then still fear death! And have we still need of comforters when we approach that

happy period? And have we still need to resume all our constancy, and all our fortitude to support the idea of dying! And is it still necessary to pluck us from the earth, and to tear us by force to the celestial abode, which shall consummate our felicity? Ah! how the prophet Elisha, who saw his master ascend in the chariot of fire, ploughing the air on his brilliant throne, and crossing the vast expanse which separates heaven from earth; how Elisha regretted the absence of so worthy a master, whom he now saw no more, and whom he must never see in life; how he cried in that moment, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof." These emotions are strikingly congenial to the sentiments of self-love, so dear to us. But Elijah himself—Elijah, did he fear to soar in so sublime a course! Elijah already ascended to the middle regions of the air, in whose eyes the earth appeared but as an atom retiring out of sight; Elijah, whose head already reached to heaven; did Elijah regret the transition he was about to complete! Did he regret the world, and its inhabitants!—O soul of man;—regenerate soul—daily called to break the fetters which unite thee to a mortal body, take thy flight towards heaven. Ascend this fiery chariot, which God has sent to transport thee above the earth where thou dwellest. See the heavens which open for thy reception; admire the beauties, and estimate the charms already realized by thy hope. Taste those ineffable delights. Anticipate the perfect felicity, with which death is about to invest thee. Thou needest no more than this last moment of my ministry. Death himself is about to do all the rest, to dissipate all thy darkness, to justify religion, and to crown thy hopes.

SERMON XCIV.

CONSECRATION OF THE CHURCH AT VOORBURGH, 1726.

EZEK. ix. 16.

Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come.

THE cause of our assembling to-day, my brethren, is one of the most evident marks of God's powerful protection, extended to a multitude of exiles whom these provinces have encircled with a protecting arm. It is a fact, that since we abandoned our native land, we have been loaded with divine favours. Some of us have lived in affluence; others in the enjoyments of mediocrity, often preferable to affluence; and all have seen this confidence crowned, which has enabled them to say, while living even without resource, "In the mountain of the Lord, it shall be seen; in the mountain of the Lord, he will there provide."

But how consoling soever the idea may be in our dispersion of that gracious Providence, which has never ceased to watch for our welfare, it is not the principal subject of our gratitude. God has corresponded more directly with the object with which we were animated

when we were enabled to bid adieu, perhaps an eternal adieu, to our country: what prompted us to exile was not the hope of finding more engaging company, a happier climate and more permanent establishments. Motives altogether of another kind animated our hearts. We had seen the edifices reduced to the dust, which we had been accustomed to make resound with the praises of God: we had heard "the children of Edom," with hatchets in their hand, shout against those sacred mansions, "down with them; down with them, even to the ground."—May you, ye natives of these provinces, among whom it has pleased the Lord to lead us, ever be ignorant of the like calamities. May you indeed never know them, but by the experience of those to whom you have so amply afforded the means of subsistence. We could not survive the liberty of our conscience, we have wandered to seek it, though it should be in dens and deserts. Zeal gave animation to the aged, whose limbs were benumbed with years. Fathers and mothers took their children in their arms, who were too young to know the danger from which they were plucked: each was content "with his soul for a prey," and required nothing but the precious liberty he had lost. We have found it among you, our generous benefactors; you have received us as your brethren, as your children; and have admitted us into your churches. We have communed with you at the same table; and now you have permitted us, a handful of exiles, to build a church to that God whom we mutually adore. You wish also to partake with us in our gratitude, and to join your homages with those we have just rendered to him in this new edifice.

But alas! those of our fellow-countrymen, whose minds are still impressed with the recollection of those former churches, whose destruction occasioned them much grief, cannot taste a joy wholly pure. The ceremonies of this day will associate themselves, with those celebrated on laying the foundation-stone of the second temple. The priests officiated, indeed, in their pontifical robes, the Levites, sons of Asaph, caused their cymbals to resound afar; one choir admirably concerted its response to another; all the people raised a shout of joy, because the foundation of the Lord's house was laid. But the chiefs of the fathers, and the aged men, who had seen the superior glory of the former temple, wept aloud, and in such sort that one could not distinguish the voice of joy from the voice of weeping.

Come, notwithstanding, my dear brethren, and let us mutually praise the God, who, "in the midst of wrath remembers mercy," Hab. iii. 2. Let us gratefully meditate on this fresh accomplishment of the prophecy I have just read in your presence; "Though I have cast them far off among the heathen, and among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come." These are God's words to Ezekiel: to understand them, and with that view I attempt the discussion, we must trace the events to their source, and go back to the twenty-ninth year of king Josiah, to form correct ideas of the end of our prophet's ministry. It was in this year, that Nabopolassar, king of Babylon, and Astyages, king of Media, being allied by

the marriage of Nebuchadnezzar, son of Nabopolassar, with Amytis, daughter of Astyages, united their forces against the Assyrians, then the most ancient and formidable power, took Nineveh, their capital, and thus, by a peculiar dispensation of Providence, they accomplished, and without thinking so to do, the prophecies of Jonah, Nahum, and Zephaniah, against that celebrated empire.

From that period the empire of Nineveh and of Babylon formed [again] but one, the terror of all their neighbours, who had just grounds of apprehension soon to experience a lot like that of Nineveh.

This induced Pharaoh Nechoh, king of Egypt, who, of all the potentates of the east, was the best qualified to resist those conquerors, to march at the head of a great army, and make war with a prince, who for the future, to use the expression of a prophet, was regarded as "the hammer of all the earth," Jer. 1. 32. Pharaoh took his route through Judea, and sent ambassadors to king Josiah, to solicit a passage through his kingdom. Josiah's reply to this embassy, even to this day, astonishes every interpreter; he took the field, he opposed the designs of Nechoh, which seemed to have no object but to emancipate the nations Nebuchadnezzar had subjugated, and to confirm those that desponded through fear of being loaded with the same chain. Josiah, unable to frustrate the objects of Nechoh, was slain in the battle, and with him seemed to expire whatever remained of piety and prosperity in the kingdom of Judah.

Pharaoh Nechoh defeated the Babylonians near the Euphrates, took Carchemish, the capital of Mesopotamia, and, augmenting the pleasure of victory by that of revenge, he led his victorious army through Judea, deposed Jehoahaz, son of Josiah, and placed Eliakim, his brother, on the throne, whom he surnamed Jehoiakim, 2 Kings xxiii.

From that period Jehoiakim regarded the king of Egypt as his benefactor, to whom he was indebted for his throne and his crown. He believed that Pharaoh Nechoh, whose sole authority had conferred the crown, was the only prince that could preserve it. The Jews at once followed the example of their king; they espoused the hatred which subsisted in Egypt against the king of Babylon, and renewed with Nechoh an alliance the most firm which had ever subsisted between the two powers.

Were it requisite to support here what the sacred history says on this subject, I would illustrate at large a passage of Herodotus, who, when speaking of the triumph of Pharaoh Nechoh, affirms, that after this prince had obtained a glorious victory in the fields of Megiddo, he took a great city of Palestine, surrounded with hills, which is called *Cadytis*: there is not the smallest doubt but this city was Jerusalem, which in the Scriptures is often called *holy* by way of excellence; and it was anciently designated by this glorious title. Now, the word *holy*, in Hebrew, is *Keduscha*, and in Syriac *Kedutha*. To this name Herodotus affixed a Greek termination, and called *Kadytis* the city that the Syrians or the Arabs call *Kedutha*, which, correspondent to my assertion, was the appellation given to Jerusalem.

Resuming the thread of the history; this alliance which the Jews had contracted with Egypt, augmented their confidence at a time when every consideration should have abated it; it elevated them with the presumptuous notion of being adequate to frustrate the designs of Nebuchadnezzar, or rather those of God himself, who had declared that he would subjugate all the east to this potentate. He presently retook from Pharaoh Nechoh, Carchemish, and the other cities conquered by that prince. He did more; he transferred the war into Egypt, after having associated Nebuchadnezzar, his son, in the empire; and after various advantages in that kingdom, he entered on the expedition against Judea, recorded in the 37th chapter of the Second Book of Chronicles; he accomplished what Isaiah had foretold to Hezekiah, that the Chaldeans "should take his sons, and make them eunuchs in Babylon," Isa. xxxix. 7. He plundered Jerusalem; he put Jehoiakim in chains, and placed his brother Jehoiachin on the throne, who is sometimes called Jeconiah, and sometimes Coniah; and who availed himself of the grace he had received, to rebel against his benefactor. This prince quickly revenged the perfidy; he besieged Jerusalem, which he had always kept blockaded since the death of Jehoiakim, and he led away a very great number of captives into Babylon, among whom was the prophet Ezekiel.

Ezekiel was raised up of God to prophesy to the captive Jews, who constantly indulged the reverie of returning to Jerusalem, while Jeremiah prophesied to those who were yet in their country, on whom awaited the same destiny. They laboured unanimously to persuade their countrymen to place no confidence in their connexion with Egypt; to make no more unavailing efforts to throw off the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar; and to obey the commands of that prince, or rather the commands of God, who was wishful, by his ministry, to punish the crimes of all the east.

Our prophet was transported into Jerusalem; he there saw those Jews, who, at the very time while they continued to flatter them with averting the total ruin of Judea, hastened the event, not only by continuing, but by redoubling their cruelties, and their idolatrous worship. At the very crisis while he beheld the infamous conduct of his countrymen in Jerusalem, he heard God himself announce the punishments with which they were about to be overwhelmed; and saying to his ministers of vengeance, "Go through the city; strike, let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: Slay utterly old and young, both maids and little children; and women.—Defile my house, and fill the courts with the slain," ix. 5—7. But while God delivered a commission so terrible with regard to the abominable Jews, he cast a consoling regard on others; he said to a mysterious person, "Go through the midst of the city; and set a mark on the foreheads of the men that sigh, and that cry for the abominations committed in the midst thereof." I am grieved for the honour of our critics, who have followed the Vulgate version in a reading which disfigures the text; "set the letter *thau* on the foreheads of those that sigh." To how many puerilities

has this reading given birth? What mysteries have they not sought in the letter *thau*? But the Vulgate is the only version which has thus read the passage. The word *thau*, in Hebrew, implies a sign; to write this letter on the forehead of any one, is to make a mark; and to imprint a mark on the forehead of a man, is, in the style of prophecy, to distinguish him by some special favour. So the Seventy, the Arabic, and Syriac, have rendered this expression. You will find the same figures employed by St. John, in the Revelation.

The words of my text have the same import as the above passage; they may be restricted to the Jews already in captivity; I extend them, however, to the Jews who groaned for the enormities committed by their countrymen in Jerusalem. The past, the present, and the future time, are sometimes undistinguished in the holy tongue; especially by the prophets, to whom the certainty of the future predicted events, occasioned them to be contemplated, as present, or as already past. Consonant to this style, "I have cast them far off among the heathen," may imply, I will cast them far off; I will disperse them among the nations, &c.

To both those bodies of Jews, of whom I have spoken, I would say, those already captivated in Babylon when Ezekiel received this vision, and those who were led away after the total ruin of Jerusalem, that however afflictive their situation might appear, God would meliorate it by constant marks of the protection he would afford. "Though I may or have cast them far off among the heathen; and among the countries; though I may disperse them among strange nations; yet I will be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they are come."

This is the general scope of the words we have read. Wishful to apply them to the design of this day, we shall proceed to draw a parallel between the state of the Jews in Babylon, and that in which it has pleased God to place the churches whose ruin we have now deplored for forty years. The dispersion of the Jews had three distinguished characters.

I. A character of horror;

II. A character of justice;

III. A character of mercy.

A character of horror; this people were dispersed among the nations; they were compelled to abandon Jerusalem, and to wander in divers countries. A character of justice; God himself, the God who makes "judgment and justice the habitation of his throne," Ps. lxxxix. 15, was the author of those calamities; "I have cast them far off among the heathen; and dispersed them among the countries." In fine, a character of mercy: "though I have cast them far off among the heathen, I have been," as we may read, "I will be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they are come." These are the three similarities between the dispersed Jews, and the reformed, to whom these provinces have extended a compassionate arm.

I. The dispersion of the Jews, connected with all the calamities which preceded and followed, had a character of horror: let us judge of it by the lamentations of Jeremiah, who attested, as well as predicted the awful scenes.

1. He deplores the carnage which stained Judea with blood: "The priests and the prophets have been slain in the sanctuary of the Lord. The young and the old lie on the ground in the streets; my virgins and the young men are fallen by the sword: thou hast slain; thou hast killed, and hast not pitied them in the day of thine anger. Thou hast convened my terrors, as to a solemn day," chap. ii. 20—22.

2. He deplores the horrors of the famine which induced the living to envy the lot of those that had fallen in war: "The children and the sucklings swoon in the streets; they say to their mothers, when expiring in their bosom, where is the corn and the wine? They that be slain with the sword are happier than they that be slain with hunger. Have not the women eaten the children that they suckled? Naturally pitiful, have they not baked their children to supply them with food?" chap. ii. 11, 12. 20; iv. 9, 10.

3. He deplores the insults of their enemies: "All that pass by clap their hands at thee; they hiss and shake their heads at the daughter of Jerusalem, saying, Is this the city called the perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth?" chap. ii. 15.

4. He deplores the insensibility of God himself, who formerly was moved with their calamities, and ever accessible to their prayers: "Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud that our prayers should not pass through: and when I cry and shout, he rejecteth my supplication," chap. iii. 44. 8.

5. He deplores the favours God had conferred, the recollection of which served but to render their grief the more poignant, and their fall the more insupportable: "Jerusalem in the days of her affliction remembered all her pleasant things that she had in the days of old. How doth the city sit in solitude that was full of people? How is she that was great among the nations become a widow, and she that was princess among the provinces become tributary?" chap. i. 7. 1.

6. Above all, he deplores the strokes levelled against religion: "The ways of Zion do mourn because none come to the solemn feasts: all her gates are desolate: her priests sigh; her virgins are afflicted. The heathen have entered into her sanctuary; the heathen concerning whom thou didst say, that they should not enter into thy sanctuary," chap. i. 4. 10.

These are the tints with which Jeremiah paints the calamities of the Jews, and making those awful objects an inexhaustible source of tears; he exclaims in the eloquence of grief; "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger. For this cause I weep, mine eye, mine eye runneth down with tears, because the Comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me. Zion spreadeth her hands, and there is none to comfort her. Mine eyes fail with tears: whom shall I take to witness for thee; to whom shall I liken thee, O daughter of Jerusalem; to whom shall I equal thee to console thee, O daughter of Zion, for thy breach is great!—O wall of the daughter of

Zion, let tears run down like a river day and night: give thyself no rest, let not the apple of thine eye cease. Arise, cry out in the night: in the beginning of the watches pour out thine heart like water before the Lord," chap. i. 12. 16. 17; ii. 11. 13. 18, 19.

But is all this a mere portrait of past ages, or did the Spirit of God designate it as a figure of ages that were to come! Are those the calamities of the Jews that Jeremiah has endeavoured to describe, or are they those which for so many years have ravaged our churches! Our eyes, accustomed to contemplate so many awful objects, have become incapable of impression. Our hearts, habituated to anguish, are become insensible. Do not expect me to open the wounds that time has already closed; but in recalling the recollection of those terrific scenes which have stained our churches with blood, I would inquire whether the desolations of Jerusalem properly so called, or those of the mystic Jerusalem be most entitled to our tears? May the sight of the calamities into which we have been plunged excite in the bosom of a compassionate God, emotions of mercy! May he in crowning the martyrs, extend mercy to those that occasioned their death.

I am impelled to the objects which the solemnities of this day recall to your minds, though I should even endeavour to dissipate the ideas; I would say, to the destruction of our churches, and to the strokes which have been levelled against our religion. The colours Jeremiah employed to trace the calamities of Jews, cannot be too vivid to paint those which have fallen on us. One scourge has followed another for a long series of years, "One deep has called unto another deep at the noise of his water-spouts," Ps. xlii. 7. A thousand and a thousand strokes were aimed at our unhappy churches prior to that which rased them to the ground! and if we may so speak, one would have said, that those armed against us were not content with being spectators of our ruin; they were emulous to effectuate it.

Sometimes they published edicts against those who foreseeing the impending calamities of the church, and unable to avert them, sought the sad consolation of not attesting the scenes.* Sometimes against those who having had the baseness to deny their religion, and unable to bear the remorse of their conscience, had recovered from their fall.† Sometimes they prohibited pastors from exercising their discipline on those of their flock who had abjured the truth.‡ Sometimes they permitted children at the age of seven years to embrace a doctrine, in the discussion of which they affirm, that even adults were inadequate to the task.§ At one time they suppressed a college, at another they interdicted a church.|| Sometimes they envied us the glory of converting infidels and idolaters; and required that those unhappy people should not renounce one kind of idolatry but to embrace another, far less excusable, as it dared to show its front amid the light of the gospel. They envied us the glory also of

confirming those in the truth who we had instructed from our infancy. Sometimes they prohibited the pastors from exercising the ministerial functions for more than three years in the same place.* Sometimes they forbade us to print our books;† and sometimes seized those already published.‡ Sometimes they obstructed our preaching in a church: sometimes from doing it on the foundations of one that had been demolished; and sometimes from worshipping God in public. At one time they exiled us from the kingdom; and at another, forbade our leaving it on pain of death.§ Here you might have seen trophies prepared for those who had basely denied their religion, there you might have seen dragged to the prisons, to the scaffold, or to the galleys, those who had confessed it with an heroic faith: yea, the bodies of the dead dragged on hurdles for having expired confessing the truth. In another place you might have seen a dying man at compromise with a minister of hell, on persisting in his apostacy, and the fear of leaving his children destitute of bread; and if he made not the best use of those last moments that the treasures of Providence, and the long-suffering of God, yet afforded him to recover from his fall. In other places, fathers and mothers tearing themselves away from children, concerning whom the fear of being separated from them in eternity made them shed tears more bitter than those that flowed on being separated in this life. Elsewhere you might have seen whole families arriving in Protestant countries with hearts transported with joy, once more to see churches, and to find in Christian communion, adequate sources to assuage the anguish of the sacrifices they had made for its enjoyment. Let us draw the curtain over those affecting scenes. Our calamities, like those of the Jews, have had a character of horror; this is a fact; this is but too easy to prove. They have had also a character of justice, which we proceed to prove in our second head.

II. That public miseries originate in the crimes of a chastened people, is a proposition that scarcely any one will presume to deny when proposed in a vague and general way; but perhaps it is one of those whose evidence is less perceived when applied to certain private cases, and when we would draw the consequences resulting from it in a necessary and immediate manner: propose it in a pulpit, and each will acquiesce. But propose it in the cabinet; say, that the equipment of fleets, the levy of armies, and contraction of alliances, are feeble barriers of the state, unless we endeavour to eradicate the crimes which have enkindled the wrath of Heaven, and you would be put in the abject class of those *good and weak sort of folks* that are in the world. I do not come to renew the controversy, and to investigate what is the influence of crimes on the destiny of nations, and the rank it holds in the plans of Providence. Neither do I appear at the bar of philosophy the most scrupulous and severe, and at the bench of policy the most refined and profound, to prove that it is

* The edict of August, 1689.

† Declaration against the relapsed, May 1679.

‡ June 1680. § June 1681. || January 1683.

* August 1684.

† Sept. 6th, 1685.

‡ July 9th, 1685.

§ July 30th, 1680.

not possible for a state long to subsist in splendour which presumes to derive its prosperity from the practice of crimes. For,

Who is he that will dare to exclaim against a proposition so reasonable, and so closely connected with the grand doctrines of religion; and which cannot be renounced without a stroke at the being of a God, and the superintendence of a Providence? a man admitting those two grand principles, and presuming to make crimes subservient to the support of society, should digest the following propositions. There is indeed a God in heaven, who has constituted society to practise equity; to maintain order; and to cherish religion; he has connected its prosperity with these duties; but by the secrets of my policy, by the depths of my counsels, by the refinement of my wisdom, I know how to elude his designs, and avert his denunciations. God is indeed an Almighty Being whose pleasure has a necessary connexion with its execution; he has but to blow with his wind on a nation, and behold it vanishes away; but I will oppose power to power; I will *force his strength*;* and by my fleets, my armies, my fortress, I will elude all those ministers of vengeance. God has indeed declared, that he is *jealous of his glory*; that soon or late he will exterminate incorrigible nations; and that if from the nature of their vices there proceed not a sufficiency of calamities to extirpate them from the earth, he will superadd those unrelenting strokes of vengeance which shall justify his Providence; but the state, over which I preside, shall be too small, or perhaps too great to be absorbed in the vortex of his commanding sway. It shall be reserved of Providence as an exception to this general rule, and made to subsist in favour of those very vices, which have occasioned the sackage of other nations. My brethren, there is, if I may presume so to speak, but a front of iron and brass that can digest propositions so daring, and prefer the system of Hobbs and of Machiavel to that of David and of Solomon.

But what awful objects should we present to your view, were we wishful to enter on a detail of the proofs concerning the equity of the strokes with which God afflicted the Jews; and especially were we wishful to illustrate the conformity found in this second head, between the desolations of those ancient people, and those of our own churches?

To justify what we have advanced on the first head, it would be requisite to investigate many of their kings, who were monsters rather than men; it would be requisite to describe the hardness of the people who were wishful that the ministers of the living God, sent to rebuke their crimes, might contribute to confirm them therein; and who, according to the expression of Isaiah, "said to the seer, see not; and to those who had visions, see no more visions of uprightness; speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceit. Get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us," xxx. 10, 11. It would be requisite to exhibit the connivance of many of their pastors, who, as Jeremiah

says, "healed the hurt of his people slightly, saying, peace, peace, when there was no peace;" vi. 14; and who were so far from suppressing the licentiousness of the wicked, as to make it their glory to surpass them! It would be requisite to describe the awful security which in the midst of the most tremendous visitations infatuated them to say, "We have made a covenant with death, and with hell we are at agreement," Isa. xxviii. 15. It would be requisite to trace those sanguinary deeds, which occasioned that just rebuke, "In the skirts of thy robe is found the blood of the innocent poor," Jer. ii. 34. It would be requisite to exhibit those scenes of idolatry, which made a prophet say, "Lift up thine eyes on the high places, and see where thou hast been lien with. O Juda, thy gods are as many as thy cities," ii. 28; iii. 2. It would be requisite to speak of that paucity of righteous men, which occasioned God himself to say, "Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now and know, and seek ye in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh truth, and I will pardon it," v. i.

But instead of retracing those awful recollections, and deducing from them the just application of which they are susceptible, it would be better to comprise them in that general confession, and to acknowledge when speaking of your calamities what the Jews confessed when speaking of theirs: "The Lord is righteous, for I have rebelled against him. Certainly thou art righteous in all the things that have happened, for thou hast acted in truth, but we have done wickedly. Neither have our kings, our princes, our priests, nor our fathers, kept thy law, nor hearkened unto thy commandments, and to thy testimonies wherewith thou didst testify against them," Lam. i. 18; Neh. ix. 34.

III. But it is time to present you with objects more attractive and assortable with the solemnities of this day. The calamities which fell upon the Jews, and those which have fallen on us; those calamities which had a character of justice; yea, even a character of horror, had also a character of mercy; and this is what is promised the Jews in the words of my text: "Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and among the countries; yet I will be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they are come." Whether you give these words, "as a little sanctuary," a vague, or a limited signification, all resolves to the same sense. If you give them a limited import, they refer to the temple of Jerusalem, which the Chaldeans had destroyed, and which was the emblem of God's presence in the midst of his people. "I have dispersed them among the heathen;" I have deprived them of their temple, but I will grant them supernaturally the favours I accorded to their prayers once offered up in the house, of which they have been deprived. In this sense St. John said, that he "saw no temple in the new Jerusalem, because God and the Lamb were the temple thereof," Rev. xxi. 22. If you give these words an extended import, they allude to the dispersion. "Although I have cast them off among the heathen, and put them far

* The versions vary very much in reading; Isaiah xvii. 5. Vide *Pols Synopsis Crit. in loc.*

away" from the place of their habitation; yet I will be myself their refuge. Much the same is said by the author of the xcth psalm; Lord, "thou hast been our retreat, or refuge, from one generation to another." But without a minute scrutiny of the words, let us justify the thing.

1. Even amid the carnage which ensued on the taking of Jerusalem, many of the principal people were spared. It appears from the sacred history, that Jeremiah was allowed to choose what retreat he pleased, either to remain in Babylon,* or to return to his country. He chose the latter; he loved the foundations of Jerusalem, and of his temple, more than the superb city; and it was at the sight of those mournful ruins, that he composed those Lamentations, from which we have made many extracts, and in which he has painted in the deepest tints, and described in the most pathetic manner, the miseries of his nation.

2. While some of the Jewish captives had liberty to return to their country, others were promoted in Babylon to the most eminent offices in the empire. The author of the second Book of Kings says, that Evil-merodach "lifted up the head of Jehoiachin out of prison—and set his throne above the throne of the kings that were with him in Babylon." Jeremiah repeats the same expression of this author, 2 Kings xxv. 28; Jer. lii. 32; and learned men have thence concluded, "that Jehoiachin reigned in Babylon over his own dispersed subjects." Of Daniel we may say the same; he was made governor of the province of Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar, "and chief of the governors over all the wise men," Dan. ii. 48. Darius conferred many years afterward the same dignities on this prophet; and Nehemiah was *cupbearer* to Artaxerxes.

3. How dark, how impenetrable soever the history of the seventy years may be, during which time the Jews were captive in Babylon, it is extremely obvious, that they had during that period some form of government. We have explained ourselves elsewhere concerning what is meant by the *Echmalotarks*; that is, the chiefs or princes of the captivity. We ought also to pay some attention to the book of Susanna: I know that this work bears various marks of reprobation, and that St. Jerome, in particular, regarded it with so much contempt as to assure us, in some sort, that it would never have been put in the sacred canon had it not been to gratify a brutish people. Meanwhile, we ought not to slight what this book records concerning the general history of the Jews: now we there see, that during the captivity, they had elders, judges, and senators; and if we may credit Origen, too much prejudiced in favour of the book of Susanna, it was solely to hide the shame of the princes of their nation that the Jews had suppressed it.

4. God always preserved among them the ministry, and the ministers. It is indubitable that there were always prophets during the captivity; though some of the learned have maintained, that the sacred books were lost during the captivity; though one text of

Scripture seems to favour this notion; and though Tertullian and Eusebius presume to say that Esdras had retained the sacred books in memory, and wrote them in the order in which they now stand; notwithstanding all this, we think ourselves able to prove that the sacred trust never was out of their hands. It appears that Daniel read the prophets. The end of the second book of Chronicles, which has induced some to conclude that Cyrus was a proselyte, leaves not a doubt that this prince must have read the xlvth and xlvi chapters of Isaiah, where he is expressly named, and to this knowledge alone we can attribute the extraordinary expressions of his first edict. "The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he has charged me to build him a temple in Jerusalem," 2 Chron. xxxvi. 23.

5. God wrought prodigies for the Jews, which made them venerable in the eyes of their greatest enemies. Though exiles; though captives; though slaves of the Chaldeans, they were distinguished as the favourites of the Sovereign of the universe. They made the God of Abraham to triumph even in the midst of idols; and aided by the prophetic Spirit, they pronounced the destiny of those very kingdoms in the midst of which they were dispersed. Like the captive Ark, they hallowed the humiliations of their captivity by symbols of terror. Witness the flames which consumed their executioners. Witness the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar, and of Belshazzar interpreted by Daniel, and realized by Providence; witness the praises rendered to God by idolatrous kings; witness the preservation of Daniel from the fury of the lions; and his enemies thrown to assuage the appetites of those ferocious beasts.

6. In a word, the mercy of God appeared so distinguished in the deliverance accorded to these same Jews, as to convince the most incredulous, that the same God who had determined their captivity, was he also who had prescribed its bounds. He moved in their behalf the hearts of pagan princes! We see Darius, and Cyrus, and Artaxerxes, become, by the sovereignty of Heaven over the heart of kings, the restorers of Jerusalem, and the builders of its temple! Xenophon reports, that when Cyrus took Babylon, he commanded his soldiers to spare all who spoke the Syrian tongue; that is to say, the Hebrew nation; and no one can be ignorant of the edicts issued in favour of this people.

Now, my brethren, nothing but an excess of blindness and ingratitude can prevent the seeing and feeling in our own dispersion those marks of mercy, which shone so bright in the dispersion of the Jews. How else could we have eluded the troops stationed on the frontiers of our country, to retain us in it by force, and to make us either martyrs or apostates?

What else could excite the zeal of some Protestant countries, whose inhabitants you saw going to meet your fugitives, guiding them in the private roads, and disputing with one another who should entertain them; and saying, "Come, come into our houses, ye blessed of the Lord?" Gen. xxiv. 31.

Whence proceeds so much success in our

* It appears, below, that Saurin thought Jeremiah and others returned from Babylon!

trade; so much promotion in the army; so much progress in the sciences; and so much prosperity in the several professions of many of us, who, according to the world, are more happy in the land of their exile, than they were in their own country?

Why has God been pleased to signalize his favours to certain individuals of the nations, and have extended to us a protecting arm? Why, when indigence and exiles seemed to enter their houses together, have we seen affluence, benediction, and riches emanate, if we may so speak, from the bosom of charity and beneficence?

By what miracle have so great a number of our confessors and martyrs been liberated from their tortures and their chains?

From what principle proceeds the extraordinary difference, God has put between those of our countrymen, who, without consulting "flesh and blood, have followed Jesus Christ without the camp, bearing his reproach," and those who have wished to join the interests of mammon with those of heaven? Gal. i. 16; Heb. xiii. 13.

We are masters of whatever property with which it pleased Providence to invest us on our departure; but our brethren cannot dispose of theirs but with vexatious restrictions and imposts.

We have over our children the rights which nature, society, and religion have given us; we can promise both to ourselves and to them the protection of the laws, while we shall continue to respect the laws, which we teach them to do. But our countrymen, on leaving their houses for a few hours, know not on their return, whether they shall find those dear parts of themselves, or whether they shall be dragged away to confinement in a convent, or thrown into a jail.

Whenever the sabbaths and festivals of the church arrive, we go with our families to render homage to the Supreme; we rise up in a throng with a song of triumph in the house of our God; we make it resound with hymns; we hear the Scriptures; we offer up our prayers; we participate of his sacraments; we anticipate the eternal felicities. But our countrymen have no part in the joy of our feasts; they are to them days of mourning; it is with difficulty in an obscure part of their house, and in the mortal fear of detection, that they celebrate some hasty act of piety and religion.

We, when conceiving ourselves to be extended on the bed of death, can call our ministers, and open to them our hearts, listen to their gracious words, and drink in the sources of their comfort. But our countrymen are pursued to the last moments of their life by their enemies, and having lived temporizing, they die temporizing.

We find then as the captive Jews, the accomplishment of the prophecy of my text; and we enjoy, during the years of our dispersion, favours similar to those which soothed the Jews during their captivity.

But can we promise ourselves that ours shall come to a similar close? The mercy of God on our behalf has already accomplished the promise in the text, "I will be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they are come." But when shall we see the accom-

plishment of that which follows. "I will gather you from among the people, and assemble you from the countries where ye have been scattered." When is it that so many Christians, who degenerate as they are, still love religion; when is it that they shall repair the insults they have offered to it? When is it, that so many children who have been torn from their fathers, shall be restored; or rather, when shall we see them restored to the church, from whose bosom they have been plucked? When is it that we shall see in our country what we see at this day, Christians emulous to build churches, to consecrate them, there to render God the early homage due to his Majesty, and to participate in the first favours he there accords? "Oh! ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence; give him no rest till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth," Isa. lxii. 5, 6. "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock, thou that dwellest between the cherubim shine forth. Before Ephraim and Benjamin, and Manasseh, stir up thy strength, and come and save us," Ps. lxxx. 1, 2. "O Lord God of hosts, how long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people?" ver. 4. "Thou shalt arise, and have mercy on Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time is come. For thy servants take pleasure in stones, and favour the dust thereof. Then the heathen shall fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth thy glory. When the Lord shall build up Zion; when he shall regard the prayer of the destitute, this shall be written for the generation to come; and the people which shall be created shall praise the Lord; for he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary," Ps. cii. 13, &c. May this be the first subject of the prayers we shall this day offer to God in this holy place.

But asking of him favours so precious, let us ask with sentiments which ensure success. May the purity of the worship we render to God in the churches he has preserved, and in those he has also allowed to build, obtain re-edification of those that have been demolished. May our charity to brethren, the companions of our exile, obtain a re-union with the brethren, from whom we have been separated by the calamities of the times. And while God shall still retard this happy period, may our respect for our rulers, may our zeal for the public good, may our punctuality in paying the taxes, may our gratitude for the many favours we have received in these provinces, which equalize us with its natural subjects; and compressing in my exhortations and prayers, not only my countrymen, but all who compose this assembly, may the manner in which we shall serve God amid the infirmities and miseries inseparable from this valley of tears, ensure to us, my brethren, that after having joined our voices to those choirs which compose the militant church, we shall be joined to those that form the church triumphant, and sing eternally with the angels, and with the multitude of the redeemed of all nations, and languages, the praises of the Creator. God grant us the grace. To whom be honour and glory henceforth and for ever. Amen.

SERMON XCV.

ON FESTIVALS, AND PARTICULARLY
ON THE SABBATH-DAY.

ISAIAH lviii. 13, 14.

If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight; the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thy own ways, nor finding thy own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words; then thou shalt delight thyself in the Lord, and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

"WHEN will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat?" This was the language that the prophet Amos put into the mouth of the profane men in his own time. It is less expressive of their presumptuous speeches, than of the latent wickedness which festered in their hearts. Religion and politics were closely connected in the Hebrew nation. The laws inflicted the severest penalties on those that violated the exterior of religion. The execrable men, of whom the prophet speaks, could not absent themselves from the solemn festivals with impunity; but they worshipped with constraint; they regretted the loss of their time; they reproached God with every moment wasted in his house; they ardently wished the feasts to be gone, that they might return, not only to their avocations, but also to their crimes; they said in their hearts, "When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat?" Amos viii. 5.

Against this disposition of mind, God has denounced by the ministry of this same prophet, those very awful judgments, which he has painted in the deepest shades. The Lord hath sworn:—"I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation. Behold the day cometh, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land; not a famine of bread, not a thirst of water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east; they shall run to and fro to hear the word of the Lord, and shall not find it."

My brethren, are you not persuaded, that the impious men, of whom the prophet speaks, have had imitators in succeeding times? whence is it then that some among us have been struck precisely with the same strokes, if they have not been partakers of the same crimes? whence comes this famine of God's word, my dear countrymen, with which we have been afflicted? Whence comes the necessity imposed upon us to wander from sea to sea, to recover this divine pasture, if we have not slighted it in places where it existed in so much abundance and union? Whence comes those awful catastrophes that have changed our solemn feasts into mourning, if we celebrated them, when it was in our power, with joy? Whence comes

those lamentations heard in one part of the church for forty years, and which awful melody has latterly been renewed, if we sung our sacred hymns with a devotion that the praises of the Creator require of the creature? "O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces. The Lord is righteous, though we have rebelled against him," Dan. ix. 7. 9. Happy those who groan under the strokes for the sins they have committed, provided the school of adversity make them wise. Happy those of you, my brethren, who are simply the spectators of those calamities, provided you abstain from the sins which have occasioned them, and become wise at the expense of others.

This is the design of my discourse, in which I am to address you on the respect due to the solemn feasts, and to the sabbath-day in particular, leaving conscience to decide whether it be caprice, or necessity, which prompts us to choice; whether it be inconsideration, or mere accident; or whether it has been compulsion, through the dreadful enormities into which we are plunged, in regard of the profanation of religious festivals, and of the sabbath-day in particular, that people have for so long a time justly branded us with reproach: profaneness alone, unless we make efforts to reform it, is sufficient to bring down the wrath of God on these provinces. May Heaven deign to avert those awful presages! May the Almighty engrave on our hearts the divine precept inculcated to-day, that we may happily inherit the favours he has promised! May he enable us so "to make the sabbaths our delight," that we may be made partakers of "the heritage of Jacob;" I would say, that of "the finisher of our faith. Amen."

"If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable, and shalt honour him, not doing thy ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words; then thou shalt delight thyself in the Lord, and I will cause thee to ride on the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." This is our text, and here is our design.

We shall consider the words,

I. With regard to the Jewish church;

II. With regard to the Christian church; or to be more explicit, God has made two very different worlds, the world of nature, and the world of grace. Both these are the heritage of the faithful, but in a very different way. The Jews contemplating the world of grace as a distant object, had their imagination principally impressed with the kingdom of nature. Hence, in their form of thanksgiving, they said, "Blessed be God who hath created the wheat; blessed be God who hath created the fruit of the vine." Christians, on the contrary, accounting themselves but strangers in this world, place all their glory in seeing the marvels of the world of grace. Hence it is the common theme of their thanksgivings to say, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead," 1 Pet. i. 3, 4. Thus it was in

a point of order that the difference of dispensations was apparent in the two churches. The Jew in his sabbath, celebrated the marvels of nature; but the Christian, exalted to sublimer views, celebrated the marvels of grace: and this memorable day of the Saviour's resurrection, the day in which he saw the work of redemption finished, and the hopes of the church crowned; two objects to which we shall call your attention.

I. We shall consider the words of the text with regard to the Jews. With that view we shall state, 1. The reasons of the institution of the Sabbath; 2. The manner in which the prophet required it to be celebrated; 3. The promises made to those who worthily hallow the sabbath-day.

Four considerations gave occasion for the institution of the sabbath-day. God was wishful to perpetuate two original truths on which the whole evidence of religion devolves; the first is, that the world had a beginning; the second is, that God is its author. You feel the force of both these points, without the aid of illustration, because, if the world be eternal, there is some being coeval with the godhead; and if there be any being coeval with the godhead, there is a being which is independent of it, and which is not indebted to God for its existence: and if there be any being which is not dependent on God, I no longer see in him all the perfection which constitutes his essence: our devotion is irregular; it ought to be divided between all the beings which participate of his perfections.

2. But if the world have not God for its author, it is requisite to establish the one or the other of these suppositions, either that the world itself has a superintending intelligence, or that it was formed by chance. If you suppose the world to have been governed by an intelligence peculiar to itself, you fall into the difficulty you wish to avoid. You associate with God a being, that, participating of his perfections, must participate also of his worship. On the contrary, if you suppose it was made by chance, you not only renounce all the light of reason, but you sap the whole foundation of faith: for, if chance have derived us from nothing, it may reduce us to nothing again; and if our existence depend on the caprice of fortune, the immortality of the soul is destitute of proof, infidelity obtains a triumph, religion becomes a pun, and the hopes of a life to come are a chimera.—It was therefore requisite, that there should remain in the church this monument of the creation of the universe.

The second reason was to prevent idolatry. This remark claims peculiar attention, many of the Mosaic precepts being founded on the situation in which the Jews were placed. Let this general remark be applied to the subject in hand. The people, on leaving Egypt, were separated from a nation that worshipped the sun, the moon, and the stars. I might prove it by various documents of antiquity. A passage of Diodorus of Sicily, shall suffice: "The ancient Egyptians (he says,) struck with the beauty of the universe, thought it owed its origin to two eternal divinities, that presided over all the others: the one was the sun, to whom they gave the name of Osiris; the other was the

moon, to whom they gave the name of Isis." God, to preserve his people from these errors, instituted a festival which sapped the whole system, and which avowedly contemplated every creature of the universe, as the production of the Supreme Being. And this may be the reason why Moses remarked to the Jews on leaving Egypt, that God renewed the institution of the sabbath. The passage I have in view is in the fifth chapter of Deuteronomy. "Remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and the Lord thy God brought thee out, therefore he commandeth thee to keep his sabbath."

We must consequently regard the sabbath-day as a high avowal of the Jews of their detestation of idolatry, and of their ascribing to God alone the origin of the universe. An expression of Ezekiel is to the same effect: he calls the sabbath a sign between God and his people: "I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them," Ezek. xx. 12. It is for this very reason, that the prophets exclaim so strongly against the violation of the sabbath: it is for the same reason that God commanded it to be observed with so high a sanction: it is for the same reason that the sabbath-breakers were so rigorously punished; even that one for gathering a bundle of sticks, was stoned by the people. The law expressly enjoins that those who profane the festival should be awfully anathematized. The passage is very remarkable. "Ye shall therefore keep the sabbath; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death; for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from amongst his people," Exod. xxxi. 14. This expression is appropriate to the great anathema, which was always followed by death. Whence should proceed so many cautions, so many rigours, so many threatenings, so many promises? You cannot account for them, if the sabbath be placed among the ceremonial institutions of the Hebrew code.*

3. God was wishful to promote humanity. With that view he prescribed repose to the servants and handmaids; that is, to domestics and slaves. Look on the situation of slaves: it is as oppressive as that of the beasts. They saw no termination of their servitude but after the expiration of seven years: and it might happen, that their masters seeing the servitude about to expire, would become more rigorous, with a view to indemnify themselves beforehand for the services they were about to lose. It was requisite to remind them, that God interests himself for men whose condition was so abject and oppressive. This reminds me of a fine passage in PLATO, who says, "that the gods, moved by the unhappy situation of slaves, have instituted the sacred festivals to procure them relaxation from labour."† And CICERO says, "that the festivals are destined to suspend the disputes between freemen, and the labours of slaves."‡ For the motives of humanity, it is subjoined in the precept, "Thou shalt do no

* It is to be regretted that several writers in our own country have latterly attempted to class the sabbath among the ceremonial institutions, which is a perversion of its design.

† De legibus lib. 2.

‡ De legibus.

manner of work, neither thou, nor thine ox, nor thine ass."

I may here put the same question that St. Paul once put to the Corinthians, "Doth God take care for oxen?" No; but there is a constitutional sympathy, without which the heart is destitute of compassion. So is the import of a text in St. John, "No man hath seen God at any time: if we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfect in us.—If any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" There is here an apparent defect in the argumentation, because the faults we may see in our brother, may obstruct our attachment, which cannot be the case with regard to God. But the apostle's meaning was, that if an object striking the senses, as our brother, does not excite affection, we cannot love an object that is abstract, as the Divine Nature. Now, those who are habitually cruel to animals, are generally less tender, and they insensibly lose that constitutional sympathy which produces the affections of the heart and the mind. This constitutional sympathy excites in us a painful impression, that on seeing a wounded man, we are spontaneously moved to succour the afflicted. This sympathy is excited not only by the sight of a man, but also by the sight of a beast, when treated with cruelty. Hence, on habituating ourselves to be cruel to animals, we do violence to our feelings, harden the heart, and extinguish the sympathy of nature. Ah! how suspicious should we be of virtues merely rational, and unconnected with the heart. They are more noble indeed, but they are not so sure. We may also remark, that those employed in slaughtering animals, are often wanting in tenderness and affection. And this very notion illustrates several of the Mosaic laws, which appear at first destitute of propriety, but which are founded on what we have just said. Such is the law which prohibits *eating of things strangled*; such is the law on finding a bird's nest, which forbids our taking the dam with the young: such also is that where God forbids our "seething a kid in his mother's milk," Gen. ix. 4; Deut. xxii. 6, 7; Exod. xxiii. 19. In the last, some have thought that God was wishful to fortify the Jews against a superstitious custom of the heathens, who after having gathered the fruits of the vine, seethed a kid in his mother's milk, and then sprinkled the milk to Bacchus, that he might cruelly kill this animal which presumes to browse on the vine consecrated to the god. But I doubt, whether from all the ancient authors they can adduce a passage demonstrative that this species of superstition was known to subsist in the time of Moses. This difficulty is obviated by the explication I propose: besides, it excites humanity by enjoining compassion to animals, a duty inculcated by the heathens. The Phrygians were prohibited from killing an ox that trod out the corn. The judges of the Areopagus exiled a boy, who had plucked out the eyes of a living owl; and they severely punished a man who had roasted a bull alive. The duty of humanity is consequently a *third* motive of the institution of the sabbath. Hereby God recalled to the recollection of the Jews the situation in which they had been placed in the land

of Egypt. "The seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God,—that thy man-servant, and thy maid-servant may rest as well as thou. And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee thence, through a mighty hand and outstretched arm: therefore the Lord thy God commandeth thee to keep the sabbath-day," Deut. v. 14, 15.

4. In a word, the design of God in the institution of the sabbath, was to recall to the minds of men the recollection of their original equality: he requires masters and servants alike to abstain from labour, so as in some sort to confound the diversity of their conditions, and to abate that pride, of which superior rank is so common a source.

There was among the heathens one festival very singular, which they call the *Saturnalia*. It was one of the most ancient festivals of paganism. MACROBIUS affirms, that it was celebrated in Greece long before the foundation of Rome. The masters gave the servants a treat; they placed them at their own table, and clothed them in their own raiment. The heathens say, that this festival was instituted by king JANUS, to commemorate the age of Saturn, when men were equal, and unacquainted with the distinctions of rank and fortune. The institution was highly proper, being founded on fact, and it may serve as an illustration of our text.

God in recalling to men the original equality of their condition, apprised them in what consisted the true excellence of man. It is not in the difference of rank, or what is called fortune. It consists in being men: it consists in the image of God, after which we were made; and consequently, the humblest of men made in his image, are entitled to respect.

This important reflection, I would inculcate on imperious masters, who treat their domestics as the brutes destitute of knowledge. We must not, I grant, disturb the order of society: the Scriptures themselves suppose the diversity of conditions. Hence they prescribe the duties of masters to their servants, and the duties of servants to their masters. But rank cannot sanction that haughty and disdainful carriage. Do you know what you do in manning those whom certain advantages have placed in your power? You degrade yourselves; you renounce your proper dignity; and in assuming an extraneous glory, you seem but lightly to esteem that which is natural. I have said, that the glory of man does not consist in riches, nor in royalty, but in the excellence of his nature, in the image of God, after which he was made, and in the immortality to which he aspires. If you despise your servants, you do not derive your dignity from these sources, but from your exterior condition; for, if you derive it from the sources I have noticed, you would respect the persons committed to your care.—This may suffice for the reasons of the institution of the sabbath, let us say a word on the manner in which it must be celebrated.

2. On this subject, the less enlightened rabbins have indulged their superstition more than on any other. Having distorted the idea of the day, they would ascribe to the sabbath the power of conferring dignity on inanimate crea-

tures: they even assign this reason, that God prohibited their offering him any victim not a week old; and circumcising their children till that time; they assign, I say, this reason that no creature could be worthy to be offered to him, till he had first been consecrated by a sabbath!

They have distorted also the obligation imposed upon them of ceasing from labour. The Rabbins have reduced to thirty-nine heads whatever they presume to be forbidden on that day. Each of those heads includes the *minutiæ*, and not only the *minutiæ*, and things directly opposed to the happiness of society, but also to the spirit of the precept. Some have even scrupled to defend their own lives on that day against their enemies. Ptolemy Lagus, and Pompey after him, at the siege of Jerusalem, availed themselves of this superstition. Antiochus Epiphanes perpetrated an action still more cruel and vile. He pursued the Jews to the caves, whither they had fled to hide from his vengeance. There, on the sabbath-day, they suffered themselves to be slaughtered as beasts, without daring either to defend themselves or even to secure the entrance of their retreat.

Some others, the Dositheans, a branch of the Samaritans, imposed a law of abiding the whole day in whatever place they were found by the sabbath. We recollect the story of the Jew, who having fallen into an unclean place, refused to be taken out on the sabbath-day; as also the decision of the Bishop of Saxony on that point, who, after knowing his scruple, condemned him to remain there the whole of the Sunday also, it being just that a Christian sabbath should be observed with the same sanctity as the Jewish.

They have likewise cast a gloom on the joy which the faithful should cherish on this holy day. It is a fact, that some of them fasted to the close of the day: to this custom the emperor Augustine alludes, when having remained a whole day without meat, he wrote to Tiberias, that a Jew did not better observe the fast of the sabbath, than he had observed it that day. But the greater number espoused the opposite side, and under a presumption that the prophet promised the divine approbation to those that "make the sabbath their delight," they took the greater precaution to avoid whatever might make them sad. They imposed a law to make three meals that day. They regarded fasting the day which preceded, and followed the sabbath, as a crime, lest it should disturb the joy. They allowed more time for sleep than on the other days of the week; they had fine dresses for the sabbath; they reserved the best food, and the most delicious wines to honour the festival: this is what they called "making the sabbath a delight!" this induced Plutarch to believe that they celebrated this festival in honour of Bacchus, and that the word sabbath was derived from the Greek *sebazein*, a word appropriate to the licentious practices indulged in the festivals of this false god. They affirm, on not attaining the sublime of devotion, that the cause is a deficiency of rejoicing. They even presume, that this joy reaches to hell, and that the souls of Jews condemned to its torments, have a respite on the sabbath-day. Evident it is, that all those no-

tions and licentious customs have originated from an imaginary superstition, and not from the word of God.

Instead of the whimsical notions they had imbibed, God required a conduct consonant to the injunctions of his law. The import of the phrase, "doing thy own pleasure on my holy day," is, that thou follow not thy own caprice in the notions thou hast formed of religion, but what I myself have prescribed.

Instead of the imaginary excellence they attributed to the sabbath, God requires them to reverence it because it was a sign of communion with him; because in approaching him on this day, they became more holy; because they then renewed their vows, and became more and more detached from idolatry, and in fine, because on this day they became devoted to his worship in a peculiar manner. This is the import of the expression, "it is holy to the Lord;" I would say, it is distinguished, it is separated, from the other days of the week, for the duties of religion.

Instead of this rigorous sabbath, God required a cessation from all kinds of labour, which would tend to interrupt their meditations on all the marvels he had wrought for their country. He especially required that they should abstain from travelling long journeys; so is the gloss which some have given to the words, "If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath," though, perhaps, withdrawing the foot from the sabbath is a metaphorical expression for "ceasing to profane it." But withal, they were allowed to do works of mercy, whether divine, or for the preservation of life. Hence the maxim of their wiser men, that "the dangers of life superseded the sabbath." And the celebrated Maimonides has decided the lawfulness of the Jews besieging and defending cities on the sabbath-day. We see likewise in the history of the Maccabees, that Matthias and his sons defended themselves with resolution on that day. Besides, they were always allowed to walk what is called "a sabbath-day's journey;" that is, two hundred cubits, the distance between the camp and the tabernacle, while they were in the desert: every Jew being obliged to attend the divine service, it was requisite that this walk should be allowed.*—This was the divine worship, which above all objects must engross their heart, and especially, the reading of God's word. This, perhaps, is the import of the phrase, which excites a very different idea in our version, "nor speaking thine own words," which may be read, that thou mayest attach thyself to the word.

3. It remains to consider the promise connected with the observation of the sabbath. "Then thou shalt delight thyself in the Lord, and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth; and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father." This promise is susceptible of a double import, the one literal, the other spiritual.

The literal refers to temporal prosperity; it is couched in figures consonant to the oriental

* From the centre, the place of the Tabernacle, to the extremities of a camp of nearly three millions of people could not be less than four miles. Hence the prohibition of journeys of pleasure, and unholy diversions, seems to have been the object of the precept.

style, and particularly to the prophetic. The high places of the earth, are those of Palestine; so called, because it is a mountainous country. The idea of our prophet coincides with what Moses has said in the xxxiid chapter of Deuteronomy. "He has made him to ride upon the high places of the earth: or to ride on horseback," as in our text, which implies the surmounting of the greatest difficulties. Hence, God's promise to those who should observe his sabbath, of riding on the high places of the earth, imports, that they should have a peaceful residence in the land of Canaan.

Plenty is joined to peace in the words which follow: "I will feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father." Here is designated the abundance which the descendants of the patriarch should enjoy in the promised land. Some presume that the name of Jacob is here mentioned in preference of Abraham, because Jacob had a peculiar reverence for the sabbath-day. They say, that Isaiah here refers to an occurrence in the patriarch's life. It is recorded in the xxxiid of Genesis, that Jacob, coming from Padan-aram, encamped before the city of Shechem: and they contend, that it was to hallow the sabbath, which intervened during his march. Reverie of the Rabbins. The promises made to Abraham, and Isaac, respecting the promised land, were renewed to Jacob; hence it might as well be called *the heritage of Jacob*, as the heritage of Abraham. This is the literal sense of my text.

It has also a spiritual sense, which some interpreters have sought in this phrase, "the high places of the earth." They think it means the abode of the blessed. Not wishful to seek it in the expression, we shall find it in the nature of the object. What was this "heritage of Jacob?" Was it only Canaan properly so called? This St. Paul denies in the xith chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Speaking of the faith of the patriarchs, he positively asserts, that the promised land was not its principal object. The "heritage of Jacob," according to the apostle, "is a country better than that which the patriarchs had left;" "that is, a heavenly country." This is the heritage of which the expiring patriarch hoped to acquire the possession; and of which he said in his last moments, "O God, I have waited for thy salvation," Gen. xlix. 18. This Jerusalem, the apostle calls a high place, the "Jerusalem which is above," not because it is situate on the mountains, but because it really is above the region of terrestrial things. This is the Jerusalem which is the mother of us all, and to which the claims of Christians are not less powerful than the Jews.

This induces us, my brethren, to consider the text in regard to Christians, as we have considered it in regard to Jews. Perhaps you have secretly reproached us, during the course of this sermon, with having consumed, in less instructive researches, the limits of our time.—But, my brethren, if you complain of the remote reference which the subject has to your state, I fear, I do fear, you will murmur against what follows, as touching you too closely. I said in the beginning, that it was the dreadful excess into which we are plunged; the horrible profanation of the sabbath, a profanation which

has so long and so justly reproached us, which determined me on the choice of this text. We proceed therefore to some more pointed remarks, which shall close this discourse.

II. The whole is reduced to two questions, in which we are directly concerned. *First*, are Christians obliged to observe a day of rest; and *secondly*, in these provinces, in this church, is that day celebrated, I do not say with all the sanctity it requires, but only, is it observed with the same reverence as in the rest of the Christian world, even in places the most corrupt?

1. Are Christians obliged to observe a day of rest? This question has been debated in the primitive church, and the subject has been resumed in our own age. Some of the ancient and of the modern divines have maintained, not only that the obligation is imposed on Christians, but that the fourth commandment of the law ought to be observed in all its rigour. Hence, in the first ages, some have had the same respect for Saturday as for Sunday. Gregory Nazianzen calls these two days two companions, for which we should cherish an equal respect. The constitution of Clement enjoin both these festivals to be observed in the church; the sabbath-day in honour of the creation, and the Lord's-day, which exhibits to our view the resurrection of the Saviour of the world.

We have no design, my brethren, to revive those controversies, this part of our discourse being designed for your edification. You are not accused of wanting respect for the Saturday, but for the day that follows. Your defect is not a wish to observe two sabbaths in the week, but a refusal to observe one. It is then sufficient to prove, that Christians are obliged to observe one day in the week, and that day is the first. This is apparent from *four* considerations, which I proceed to name.

First, from the nature of the institution. It is a general maxim, that whatever morality was contained in the Jewish ritual; that whatever was calculated to strengthen the bonds of our communion with God, to reconcile us to our neighbour, to inspire us with holy thoughts, was obligatory on the Christians; and more so than on the Jews, in proportion as the new covenant surpasses the old in excellence. Apply this maxim to our subject. The precept under discussion has a ceremonial aspect, as-sortable to the circumstances in which the ancient church were placed. The selection of the seventh day, the rigours of its sanctity, and its designs to supersede the idolatrous customs of Egypt, were peculiar to the ancient church, and purely ceremonial; and in that view, not binding to the christian. But the necessity of having one day in seven consecrated to the worship of God, to study the grand truths of religion, to make a public profession of faith, to give relaxation to servants, to confound all distinction of rank in congregations, to acknowledge that we are all brethren, that we are equal in the sight of God, who there presides, all these are not comprised in the ritual, they are wholly moral.

2. We have proofs in the New Testament, that the first day of the week was chosen of God to succeed the seventh. This day is called in the Book of Revelation, "the Lord's-

day," by way of excellence, i. 10. It is said in the xxth chapter of the Book of Acts, that the apostles "came together on the first day of the week to break bread." And St. Paul, writing to the Corinthians to lay by on the first day of the week what each had designed for charity, sanctions the Sunday to be observed instead of the Saturday, seeing the Jews, according to the testimony of Philo, and Josephus, had been accustomed to make the collections on the sabbath-day, and receive the tenths in the synagogues to carry to Jerusalem.*

3. On this subject, we have likewise authentic documents of antiquity. Pliny, the younger, in his letter to the emperor Trajan concerning the Christians, says, that they set apart one day for devotion, and it is indisputable that he means the Sunday. Justin Martyr in his Apologies, and in his letter to Denis, pastor of Corinth, bears the same testimony. The emperor Constantine made severe laws against those who did not sanctify the sabbath. These laws were renewed by Theodosius, by Valentinian, by Arcadius; for, my brethren, these emperors did not confine their duties to the extension of trade, the defence of their country, and to the establishment of politics as the supreme law; they thought themselves obliged to maintain the laws of God, and to render religion venerable; and they reckoned that the best barriers of a state were the fear of God, and a zeal for his service. They issued severe edicts to enforce attendance on devotion, and to prohibit profane sports on this day. The second council of Macon,† held in the year 585, and the second of Aix-la-Chapelle, held in 836, followed by their canons the same line of duty.

4. But the grand reason for consecrating one day in seven arises from ourselves, from the in-

finity of dissipations which was the ordinary course of life. Tax your conscience with the time you spend in devotion when alone. Do we not know; do we not see; do we not learn on all sides, how your days are spent? Do we not know how those grave men live, who, from a notion of superior rank, think themselves excused from examining their conscience, and attending to the particulars of religion? Do we not know how that part of mankind live, who apparently have abandoned the care of their soul to care for their body, to dress and to undress, to visit and receive visits, to play both night and day, and thus to render diversions, some of which might be innocent as recreations, if used with moderation, to render them, I say, criminal, by the loss of time? Is it solitude, is it reading God's word which excite those reveries which constantly float in your brain; and those extravagances of pleasures whereby you seem to have assumed the task of astonishing the church by the amusement you afford to some, and the offence you give to others? It was, therefore, requisite that there should be one day destined to stop the torrent, to recall your wandering thoughts, and to present to your view those grand truths, which so seldom occur in the ordinary pursuits of life.

These remarks may suffice for the illustration of the first question, whether Christians are obliged to observe one day in seven: our second inquiry is, whether this day is celebrated in these provinces, I do not say as it ought; but, at least, is it celebrated with the same decency as in the most corrupt parts of the Christian world?

Ah! my brethren, must every duty of Christianity suggest occasion to complain of your conduct, and furnish impeachments for your condemnation? I look round for one trait in morality, to which we have nothing but applause to bestow, and of which we may say, go on, go on; that is well done, "Blessed is that servant, whom when his Lord cometh he shall find so doing. I look for one period in your life in which I may find you Christians in reality, as you are in name. I watch you for six days in the bustle of business, and I find you haughty, proud, voluptuous, selfish, and refractory to every precept of the gospel. Perhaps, on this hallowed day you shall be found irreproachable; perhaps, satisfied with giving to the world six days of the week, you will consecrate to the Lord the one which is so peculiarly devoted to him. But, alas! this day, this very day, is spent as the others; the same pursuits, the same thoughts, the same pleasures, the same employments, the same intemperance!

In other places, they observe the exterior, at least. The libertine suspends his pleasures, the workmen quit their trades, and the shops are shut: and each is accustomed to attend some place of worship. But how many among us, very far from entering into the spirit and temper of Christianity, are negligent of its exterior decencies!

How scandalous to see on the sabbath, the artificer, publicly employed at his work, profaning this hallowed festival by his common trade; wasting the hours of devotion in mechanical labours; and defying, at the same

* Saurin is here brief on the reasons assigned for the change of the sabbath, from the seventh to the first day of the week. The reader, however, may see them at large in the second volume of Dr. Lightfoot's works, and in the works of Mr. Mede. They are in substance as follow: that the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath; and the Supreme Lawgiver of his church. He has not only changed the old covenant for the new, but he has superseded the shadows of the ritual law for the realities; baptism for circumcision, and the holy supper for the passover. The sabbath was first instituted to commemorate the creation; and the redemption is viewed at large as a new creation. Isa. lxxv. The institution was renewed to commemorate the emancipation from Egypt; how much more then should it be enforced to commemorate the redemption of the world? To disregard it would apparently implicate us in a disbelief of this redemption. Moses, who renewed the sabbath, was faithful as a servant, but Christ, who changed it, is the Son, and Lord of all. The sabbath was the birth-day of the Lord of Glory from the tomb: "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee." Ps. ii. It was not less so the birth-day of our hope; God hath begotten us again "unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead," 1 Pet. i. 3. And this was the day in which he began his glorious reign. He then affirmed, that "All power was given unto him in heaven and earth," Matt. xxviii. 18. And how could the church rejoice while the Lord was enveloped in the tomb? But on the morning of the resurrection, it was said by the Father to the Son, "Thy dead men shall live." The Son replies, "Together with my dead body shall they arise! Awake, and sing; ye that dwell in dust," 1 Sa. xxvi. 19. "This is the day the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." Psalms xxvii. 24. l. 8.

† Macon, Matisco, is situate 40 miles north of Lyons, and was a depot of the Romans.—Boiste's Dict. 1806. l. 8.

time, both the precepts of religion, and the institutions of the church!

How scandalous to see persons of rank, of age, of character, live, I do not say whole weeks, I do not say whole months, but whole years, without once entering these churches, attending our devotion, and participating of our sacraments!

How scandalous that this sabbath is the very day marked by some for parties, and festivity in the highest style! How scandalous to see certain concourses of people; certain doors open; and certain flambeaux lighted: those who have heard a report that you are Christians, expect to find you in the houses of prayer: but what is their astonishment to see that those houses are the rendezvous of pleasure!

And what must we think of secret devotion, when the public is so ill discharged? How shall we persuade ourselves that you discharge the more difficult duties of religion, when those that are most easy are neglected? Seeing you do not sufficiently reverence religion to forego certain recreations, how can we think that you discharge the duties of self-denial, of crucifying the old man, of mortifying concupiscence, and of all the self-abasement, which religion requires?

What mortifies us most, and what obliges us to form an awful opinion on this conduct is, that we see its principle.—Its principle, do you ask, my brethren? It is, in general, that you have very little regard for religion; and this is the most baneful source, from which our vices spring. When a man is abandoned to a bad habit; when he is blinded by a certain passion; when he is hurried away with a throng of desire, he is then highly culpable, and he has the justest cause of alarm, if a hand, an immediate hand, be not put to the work of reformation. In this case, one may presume, that he has, notwithstanding, a certain respect for the God he offends. One may presume, that though he neglects to reform, he, at least, blames his conduct; and that if the charm were once dissolved, truth would resume her original right, and that the motives of virtue would be felt in all their force. But when a man sins by principle; when he slights religion; when he regards it as a matter of indifference; what resource of salvation have we then to hope? This, with many of you, is the leading fault. The proofs are but too recent, and too numerous. You have been often reproached with it, and if I abridge this point, it is not through a deficiency, but a superabundance of evidence, which obliges me to do it. And meanwhile, what alas! is this fortune; what is this prosperity; what is the most enviable situation in life; what is all this that pleases, and enchants the soul, when it is not religion which animates and governs the whole?

Ah! my brethren! to what excess do you extend your corruption? What then is the time you would devote to piety? When will you work for your souls? We conjure you by the bowels of Jesus Christ, who on this day finished the work of your salvation, that you return to recollection. When we enforce, in general, the necessity of holiness, we are lost in the multitude of your duties, and having too many things to practise, you often practise none at

all. But here is one particular point; here is a plain precept, *Remember the Sabbath day.*

A mournful necessity induces us, my brethren, to exhort you to estimate the privilege God affords you of coming to his house, of pouring out your souls into his bosom, and of invigorating your love.

Ah! poor Christians, whom Babylon encloses in her walls, how are you to conduct yourselves in the discharge of those duties! O that God, wearied with the strokes inflicted upon you, would turn away from his indignation! O that the barriers which prohibit your access to these happy climates were removed! O that your hopes, so often illusive, were but gratified. I seem to see you, running in crowds: I seem to see the fallen rise again; and our confessors, more grateful for their spiritual, than their temporal liberty, come to distinguish their zeal. But these are things as yet, "hid from your eyes."

O my God! and must thy church still be a desolation in all the earth? Must it in one place be ravaged by the tyrant, and in another seduced by the tempter; an enemy more dangerous than the tyrants, and more cruel than the heathen? Must our brethren at the galleys still be deprived of the sabbath, and must we, by the profanation of this day, force thee to visit us, as thou hast visited them? Let us prevent so great a calamity; let us return to ourselves; let us hallow this august day; let us reform our habits; and let us "make the sabbath our delight."

It is requisite that each should employ the day in contemplating the works of nature; but especially the works of grace; and like the cherubim inclined toward the ark, that each should make unavailing efforts to see the bottom, and trace the dimensions, "the length and breadth, the depth and height, of the love of God, which passeth all knowledge," Eph. iii. 19.

It is requisite, that our churches should be crowded with assiduous, and well-disposed hearers; that God should there hear the vows that we are his people, his redeemed, and that we wish the sabbath to be a "sign between us and him," as it was to the Israelites.

It is requisite, on entering this place, that we should banish from our mind all worldly thoughts. Business, trade, speculations, grandeur, pleasure, you employ me sufficiently during the week, allow me to give the sabbath to God. Pursue me not to his temple; and let not the flights of incomming birds disturb my sacrifice.

It is requisite at the close of worship, that each should be recollected, that he should meditate on what he has heard, and that the company with whom he associates should assist him to practise, not to eradicate the truths from his mind.

It is requisite that the heads of houses should call their children, and their servants together, and ask them, What have you heard? What have you understood? What faults have you reformed? What steps have you taken? What good resolutions have you formed?

It is requisite wholly to dismiss all those secular cares and servile employments which have occupied us during the week; not that

holiness consists in mere abstinence, and in the observance of that painful minutiae; but in a more noble and exalted principle. It is, no doubt, the obtrusion of a galling yoke, that we, who are made in the image of God, and have an immortal soul, should be compelled, during the whole of this low and grovelling life, to follow some trade, some profession, or some labour, by no means assortable with the dignity of man. So is our calamity. But it is requisite at least, it is highly requisite, that one day in the week we should remember our origin, and turn our minds to things which are worthy of their excellence. It is requisite, that one day in the week we should rise superior to sensible objects; that we should think of God, of heaven, and of eternity; that we should repose, if I may so speak, from the violence which must be done to ourselves to be detained on earth for six whole days. O blessed God, when shall "the times of refreshing come," in which thou wilt supersede labour, and make thy children fully free? Acts iii. 21. When shall "we enter the rest that remaineth for thy people?" Heb. iv. 9; in which we shall be wholly absorbed in the contemplation of thy beauty, we shall resemble thee in holiness and happiness, because "we shall see thee as thou art," and thou thyself shalt "be all in all?" Amen.

SERMON XCVI.

THE CALAMITIES OF EUROPE.

LUKE xiii. 1—5.

There were present at that season some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering, said unto them, suppose ye that these Galileans, were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, nay; but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all that dwell in Jerusalem? I tell you, nay; but except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish.

"I HAVE cut off the nations, I have made their towers desolate, I have sapped the foundation of their cities; I said, surely thou shalt receive instruction, so that thy dwelling shall not be cut off," Zeph. iii. 6, 7. This instructive caution God once published by the ministry of Zephaniah. And did it regard that age alone, or was it a prophecy for future times? Undoubtedly, my brethren, it regarded the Jews in the prophet's time. They saw every where around them exterminated nations, fortresses in ruins, villages deserted, and cities sapped to the foundation. The judgments of God had fallen, not only on the idolatrous nations, but the ten tribes had been overwhelmed. The Jews, instead of receiving instruction, followed the crimes of those whom God had cut off, and involved themselves in the same calamities.

And if these words were adapted to that age, how strikingly, alas! are they applicable

to our own? What do we see around us? Nations exterminated, villages deserted, and cities sapped to the foundation. The visitations of God are abroad in Europe; we are surrounded with them; and are they not intended, I appeal to your conscience, for our instruction? But let us not anticipate the close of this discourse. We propose to show you in what light we ought to view the judgments which God inflicts on the human kind. You have heard the words of our text. We shall stop but a moment to mark the occasion, and direct the whole of our care to enforce their principal design. After having said a word respecting "the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices;" and respecting the dreadful fall of this tower which crushed *eighteen persons* under its ruins, we shall endeavour to examine.

I. The misguided views with which mankind regard the judgments God openly inflicts upon their neighbours.

II. The real light in which those judgments ought to be considered. The first of these ideas we shall illustrate on the occasion of the tragic accidents mentioned in the text, which were reported to Jesus Christ. The second, we shall illustrate on occasion of the answer of Jesus Christ himself; "Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans? Suppose ye that those eighteen were sinners above all that dwell in Jerusalem? I tell you, nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Considering the text in this view, we shall learn to avert the judgments of God from falling on our own heads, by the way in which we shall consider his visitations on others. God grant it. Amen.

What was the occasion of Pilate's cruelty, and of the vengeance he inflicted on those Galileans? This is a question difficult to determine. The most enlightened commentators assure us, that they find no traces of it either in Jewish, or in Roman history. The wary Josephus, according to his custom on those subjects, is silent here; and, probably, on the same principle which induced him to make no mention of the murder of the infants committed by the cruel Herod.

Pilate you know in general. He was one of those men whom God, in the profound secrets of his providence, suffers to attain the most distinguished rank to execute his designs, when they have no view but the gratification of their own passions. He was a man, in whom much cruelty, joined to extreme avarice, rendered proper to be a rod in God's hand; and who, following the passions which actuated his mind, sometimes persecuting the Jews to please the heathens, and sometimes the Christians to please the Jews, sacrificed the Finisher of our faith, and thus after troubling the synagogue, he became the tyrant of both the churches.

Perhaps the vengeance he executed on the Galileans was not wholly without a cause. Here is what some have conjectured upon this narrative. Gaulon* was a town of Galilee: here a certain Judas was born, who on that account was surnamed the Gaulonite, of whom

* Joseph. Antic. lib. 18. c. 1.

we have an account in the fifth chapter of the book of the Acts.* This man was naturally inclined to sedition. He communicated the spirit of revolt to his family, from his family to the city, from the city to the province, and from the province to all Judea. He had the art of catching the Jews by their passions; I would say, by their love of liberty. He excited them to assert their rights, to maintain their privileges, to throw off the yoke the Romans wished to impose, and to withhold the tribute. He succeeded in his designs; the Jews revered him as a patriot. But to remedy an inconsiderable evil, he involved them in a thousand disgraces. It has been conjectured that those whose blood was mingled with their sacrifices, were some of the seditious who had come to Jerusalem to celebrate the passover, and of whom Pilate wished to make an example to intimidate others.

What he said of Pilate's cruelty, suggested by the subject, is wholly uncertain; we say the same of the tragic accident immediately subjoined in our text; I would say, the tower of Siloam, which crushed eighteen people under its ruins. We know in general, that there was a fountain in Jerusalem called Siloam, mentioned in the ninth chapter of St. John, and in the eighth chapter of Isaiah. We know that this fountain was at the foot of mount Zion, as many historians have asserted. We know that it had five porches, as the gospel expressly affirms. We know several particulars of this fountain, that it was completely dried up before the arrival of the emperor Titus; and that it flowed not again till the commencement of the siege of Jerusalem: so we are assured by Josephus.† We know likewise, that the empress Helena embellished it with various works, described by Nicephorus.‡ We know likewise various superstitions to which it has given birth; in particular, what is said by Geoffroy de Viterbus, that there was near it another fountain called the Holy Virgin, because, they say, this blessed woman drew water from it to wash the linen of Jesus Christ, and of her family. We are told also that the Turks have so great a veneration for it as to wash their children in the same water, and to perform around it various rituals of superstition.§ But what this tower was, and what the cause of its fall was, we cannot discover, nor is it a matter of any importance.

Let us make no more vain efforts to illustrate a subject, which would be of little advantage, though we could place it in the fullest lustre. Let us turn the whole of our attention to what is of real utility. We have proposed, conformably to the text, to inquire, *first*, into the erroneous light in which men view the judgments God inflicts on their own species; and, *secondly*, the real light in which they ought to be considered. Here is in substance the subject of our discourse. Mankind regard the judgments God inflicts on their own species, 1. With a spirit of indifference; but Jesus Christ would thereby excite in them a disposition of

thought and reflection. 2. They regard them with a spirit of blindness; but Jesus Christ would excite in them a spirit of instruction and knowledge. 3. They regard them with a spirit of rigour to others, and preference of themselves; but Jesus Christ would excite in them a compassionate and humble temper. 4. They regard with an obdurate spirit; but Jesus Christ would excite in them a spirit of reformation and repentance. These are terms to which we must attach distinct ideas, and salutary instructions. If we shall sometimes recede from the words of Jesus Christ, it shall be to approximate ourselves more to the situation in which Providence has now placed us. And if we shall sometimes recede from the circumstances in which Providence has now placed us, it shall be to approach the nearer to the views of Jesus Christ.

The first characteristic of the erroneous disposition with which we regard the judgments God inflicts on other men, is stupor and inattention. I do not absolutely affirm, that people are not at all affected by the strokes of Providence. The apathy of the human mind cannot extend quite so far. How was it that this unheard-of cruelty could scarce impress the mind of those who were present? Here are men who came up to Jerusalem, who came to celebrate the feast with joy, who designed to offer their victims to God; but behold, they themselves became the victims of a tyrant's fury, who mixed their blood with that of the beasts they had just offered! Here are eighteen men employed in raising a tower, or perhaps accidentally standing near it; and behold, they are crushed to pieces by its fall! Just so, wars, pestilence, and famine, when we are not immediately, or but lightly involved in the calamity, make indeed a slight, though very superficial, impression on the mind. We find, at most, in these events, but a temporary subject of conversation; we recite them with the news of the day, "There were present at that season, some who told him of the Galileans;" but we extend our inquiries no farther, and never endeavour to trace the designs of Providence. There are men who feel no interest but in what immediately affects themselves, provided their property sustain no loss by the calamity of others; provided their happiness flow in its usual course; provided their pleasures are not interrupted, though the greatest calamities be abroad in the earth, and though God inflict before our eyes the severest strokes, to them, it is of no moment. Hence the first mark of the misguided disposition with which men regard the judgments of the Lord on others, is stupor and inattention.

But how despicable is this disposition! Does one live solely for one's self? Are men capable of being employed about nothing but their own interests? Are they unable to turn their views to the various bearings under which the judgments of God may be considered? Every thing claims attention in these messengers of the divine vengeance. The philosopher finds here a subject of the deepest speculation. What are those impenetrable springs, moved of God, which shake the fabric of the world, and suddenly convulse the face of society? Is it the earth, wearied of her primitive fertility, which

* Theudas, v. 30.

† Wars of the Jews, lib. v. cap. 26.

‡ Eccles. Hist. lib. viii. cap. 20.

§ Voyez Jesuit Eusebius Niereberg de Lerrapromis, cap. 48.

occasions barrenness and famine? Or, is it some new malediction, supernaturally denounced by him who renders nature fruitful in her ordinary course? Is it the exhalations from the earth which enpoison the air; or, are there some pernicious qualities formed in the air which enpoison the earth? By what secret of nature, or phenomenon of the Creator, does the contagion pass with the velocity of lightning from one clime to another, bearing on the wings of the wind the infectious breath of one people to another? The statesman admires here the catastrophes of states, and the vicissitudes of society. He admires how the lot of war in an instant raises him who was low, and abases him who was high. He sees troops trained with labour, levied with difficulty, and formed with fatigue; he sees them destroyed by a battle in an hour; and what is more awful still, he sees them wasted by disease without being able to sell their lives, or to dip their hands in the enemies' blood. The dying man sees, in the calamities of others, the image of his own danger. He sees death armed at all points, "and him that hath the power of death"* moving at his command the winds, the waves, the tempests, the pestilence, the famine and war. The Christian here extending his views, sees how terrible it is "to fall into the hands of the living God."† He adores that Providence which directs all events, and without whose permission a hair cannot fall from the head: he sees in these calamities messengers of the God "who makes flames of fire his angels, and winds his ministers."‡ He "hears the rod, and who hath appointed it."§ Fearing to receive the same visitations, he "prepares to meet his God."|| He "enters his closet, and hides himself till the indignation be overpast." He saves himself "before the decree bring forth."¶ He cries as Israel once cried, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God?"** Such are the variety of reflections and of emotions which the calamities of Providence excites in an enlightened mind. Truths which we proceed to develop, and which we enumerate here solely to demonstrate the stupidity of this first disposition, and to oppose it by a spirit of recollection and seriousness implied in our Saviour's answer, and which he was wishful to excite in us.

2. We have marked, in the second place, a spirit of blindness, and our wish to oppose it by an enlightened and well-informed disposition. When we speak of those who have a spirit of blindness, we do not mean men of contracted minds, who having received it from nature, are incapable of reflection; men who think merely to adopt phantoms, and who talk merely to maintain absurdities. We attack those wiflings who pique themselves on a superiority, who, under a pretence of emancipating the mind from error and prejudice, and of rising above the vulgar, so immerse themselves in error and prejudice, as to sink below the vulgar. Persons who have knowledge indeed; but "professing themselves to be wise, they became fools;"†† and are so much the more blind, to speak as the Scripture, "because they say, we see."‡‡

* Heb. ii. 14.

† Heb. x. 31.

‡ Heb. i. 7.

§ Mic. vi. 9.

¶ Amos iv. 12.

|| Zeph. ii.

** Mic. vi. 6.

†† Rom. i. 22.

‡‡ John ix. 41.

They treat those as weak-headed, whom the visitations of Heaven prompt to self-examination, who recognise the hand of God, and who endeavour to penetrate his designs in the afflictions of mankind. More occupied with Pilate than with him whose counsel has determined the conduct of Pilate; more occupied with politics, and more attentive to nature, than to the God of nature, they refer all to second causes, they regard nature and politics as the universal divinities, and the arbitrators of all events. This is what we call a spirit of blindness. And as nothing can be more opposite to the design of this text, and the object of this discourse, we ought to attack it with all our power, and demonstrate another truth supposed by Jesus Christ in the text, not only that God is the author of all calamities, but that in sending them, he correctly determines their end. This shall appear by a few plain propositions.

Proposition first. Either nature is nothing, or it is the assemblage of the beings God has created; either the effects of nature are nothing, or they are the products and effects of the laws by which God has arranged, and by which he governs beings; consequently, whatever we call natural effects, and the result of second causes, are the work of God, and the effects of his established laws. This proposition is indisputable. One must be an Atheist, or an Epicurean, to revoke it in doubt. For instance, when you say that an earthquake is a natural effect, and that it proceeds from a second cause: do you know that there are under our feet subterranean caverns, that those caverns are filled with combustible matter, that those substances ignite by friction,* expand, and overturn whatever obstructs their passage? Here is a natural effect; here is a second cause. But I ask; who has created this earth? Who has formed those creatures susceptible of ignition? Who has established the laws of expansive force? You must here confess, that either God, or chance is the author. If you say chance, atheism is then on the throne; Epicurus triumphs; the fortuitous concourse of atoms is established. If you say God, our proposition is proved, and sufficiently so; for those that attack us here, are not Atheists and Epicureans; hence, in refuting them, it is quite sufficient to prove, that their principle tends to the Epicurean and the atheistical system.

Proposition second. God, in forming his various works, and in the arrangement of his laws, knew every possible effect which could result from them. If you do not admit this principle, you have no notion of the perfect Being; an infinity of events might happen in the world independent of his pleasure; he would daily learn; he would grow wiser with age; and become learned by experience! These are principles which destroy themselves, and combine by their contradiction to establish our second proposition, that God, in creating his works, and in prescribing the laws of motion, was apprised of every possible effect.

* This was the received opinion in our author's time; but modern observations attest that great masses of sulphureous coals thrown on heaps kindle spontaneously by the accession of air and rain. So on the falling of the alum shell of Boulby cliffs, the rain and air caused the mass to ignite. See *Sutcliffe's Geological Essays: and Hist. of Whitby.*

Proposition third. God, foreseeing all those effects, has approved of them, and determined each to an appropriate end. It is assortable to the nature of a wise Being to do nothing but what is consonant to wisdom, nothing but what is connected with some design; and to make this the distinguishing characteristic of the smallest, as well as of the greatest works. The wisest of men are unable to follow this law, because circumscribed in knowledge, their attention is confined to a narrow sphere of objects. If a prince, wishful to make his subjects happy, should endeavour to enter into all the minutæ of his kingdom, he could not attend to the main design; and his measures would tend to retard his purpose. But God, whose mind is infinite, who comprises in the immense circle of his knowledge an infinity of ideas without confusion, is directed by his wisdom to propose the best design in all his works. Consequently the works of nature which he has created, and the effects of nature which he has foreseen, all enter into his eternal counsels, and receive their destination. Hence, to refer events to second causes, not recognising the designated visitations of Providence by the plague, by war, and famine; and under a presumption, that these proceed from the general laws of nature, not perceiving the Author and Lord of nature, is to have a spirit of blindness.

Moreover, all these arguments, suggested by sound reason, are established in the clearest and most indisputable manner in the Scriptures, to which all wise men should have recourse to direct their judgment. Does Joseph arrive in Egypt, after being sold by his brethren? It was God that sent him thither, according to his own testimony, Gen. xlv. 5. "Be not grieved nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither, for God did send me before you to preserve life." Do Kings arrange their counsels? "Their heart is in the hands of God: he turneth them as the rivers of water," Prov. xxi. 1. Does Assyria afflict Israel? "He is the rod of God's anger," Isa. x. 5. Do Herod and Pilate persecute Jesus Christ? They do that which God had previously "determined in counsel," Acts iv. 27. Does a hair fall from our head? It is not without the permission of God, Luke xii. 7. If you require particular proof that God has designs in chastisements, and not only with regard to the chastised but to those also in whose presence they are chastised, you have but to remember the words at the opening of this discourse; "I have cut off all nations, I have made their towers desolate, and said, Surely thou shalt receive instruction;" you have but to recollect the words of Ezekiel, "As I live, saith the Lord, surely because thou hast defiled my sanctuary with thy detestable things, a third part of you shall die with the pestilence, and another part of you shall fall by the sword, and a third part shall be scattered: and thou shalt be a reproach, and a taunt, and an instruction," Ezek. v. 11—15. Pay attention to this word, "an instruction." My brethren, God has therefore designs, when he afflicts other men before our eyes; and designs in regard to us; he proposes *our instruction*. Hence his visitations must be regarded with an enlightened mind.

3. Men regard with a spirit of severity and of preference, the judgments which God inflicts on others; but Jesus Christ was wishful to excite in them a disposition of tenderness and humiliation; he apprises them, that the most afflicted are not always the most guilty. So is the import of these expressions, "Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans? Suppose ye that those eighteen on whom the tower of Siloam fell, and killed, were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, nay."

The Jews had much need of this caution. Many of them regarded all the calamities of life, as the punishment of some sin committed by the afflicted. The mortifying comforts of Job's friends, and all the rash judgments they formed of his case, were founded upon this principle: you find likewise some of our Saviour's disciples, on seeing a man born blind, asking this question: "Lord, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?" John ix. 2. How could they conceive that a man, blind from his birth, could have committed a crime to superinduce the calamity? This corresponds with our assertion: they were persuaded that all calamities were the result of some crime; and even in this life, that the most calamitous were the most culpable; and they even preferred the supposition of sins committed in a pre-existent state, to the ideas of visitations not preceded by crime. They admitted, for the most part, the doctrine of metempsychosis, and supposed the punishments sustained in one body, were the result of sins committed in other bodies. This sentiment the Jews of Alexandria had communicated to their brethren in Judea: but we suppress, on this head, a long detail of proofs from Philo, Josephus, and others.* They had also another notion, that children might have criminal thoughts while slumbering in the womb. It is probable that those who, in the text, reported to Jesus Christ the unhappy end of the Galileans, were initiated into this opinion. This is the spirit of severity and of preference by which we regard the calamities of others. This is what the Lord attacks: "Suppose ye that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell, were sinners above all that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, nay: but except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish."

This is the most afflicted man in all the earth; therefore he is more wicked than another who enjoys a thousand comforts. What a pitiful argument!

To reason in this way is to "limit the Holy One of Israel," Ps. lxxviii. 41; and not to recognise the diversity of designs an infinite Intelligence may propose in the visitations of mankind. Sometimes he is wishful to prove them: "Now I know that thou lovest me, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son," Gen. xxii. 12. Sometimes he designs to be glorified by their deliverance. Thus the opening of the eyes of the man born blind was designated, to make manifest "the works of God;" and the sickness of Lazarus was "to glorify the Son of God." Sometimes he pro-

* Philo on the Giants; and on Dreams; Joseph. Wars of the Jews, book ii. cap. 12.

poses to make their faith conspicuous; this was the end of Job's affliction.

To reason in this way, is to revolt against experience, and to prefer the worst of sinners to the best of saints. Herod who is on the throne, to Jesus Christ who is driven to exile; Nero who sways the world, to St. Paul who is reckoned "the filth and offscouring of the earth."

To reason in this way, is to disallow the turpitude of crime. If God sometimes defer to punish it on earth, it is because the punishments of this life are inadequate to the enormity of sin.

To reason in this way, is to be inattentive to the final judgment which God is preparing. If this life were eternal; if this were our principal period of existence, the argument would have some colour. But if there be a life after death; if this be but a shadow which vanishes away; if there be a precise time when virtue shall be recompensed, and vice punished, which we cannot dispute without subverting the principles of religion, and of reason, then this conjecture is unfounded.

To reason in this way, is to be ignorant of the value of afflictions. They are one of the most fertile sources of virtue, and the most successful means of inducing us to comply with the design of the gospel. If the calamities which mortals suffer in this life were allowed to form a prejudice, it should rather be in favour of God's love, than of his anger: and instead of saying, this man being afflicted, he is consequently more guilty than he who is not afflicted, we should rather say, this man having no affliction, is, in fact, a greater sinner than the other who is afflicted.

In general, there are few wicked men to whom the best of saints, in a comparative view, have the right of preference. In the life of a criminal, you know at most but a certain number of his crimes; but you see an infinite number in your own. Comparing yourselves with an assassin about to be broken on the wheel, you would no doubt find a preference in this point. But extend your thoughts; review the history of your life; investigate your heart; examine those vain thoughts, those irregular desires, those secret practices, of which God alone is witness; and then judge of vice and virtue, not by the notions that men form of them, but by the portrait exhibited in God's law; consider that anger, envy, pride and calumny, carried to a certain degree, are more odious in the eyes of God, than those notorious crimes punished by human justice; and on investigating the life of a criminal, you will be obliged to confess that there is nothing more revolting than what is found in your own.

Besides, a good man is so impressed with his own faults, that the sentiment extenuates in his estimation the defects of others. This was the sentiment of St. Paul: "I am the chief of sinners; but I obtained mercy." This was his injunction; "In lowliness of mind, let each esteem another better than himself," Phil. ii. 5; 1 Tim. i. 13. But is this awful founded on fact? Is the maxim practicable? It is, my brethren, in the sense we have just laid down. But the Jews, whom our Saviour addressed, had no need of those solutions: their lives real-

ized his assertions; and would to God that ours, compared with the multitude of victims which this day cover the earth, might not suggest the same reflection? "Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans? Suppose ye that those eighteen were sinners above all the men that dwelt in Jerusalem?" Do you suppose that those whose dead bodies are now strewed over Europe? Do you suppose that the people assailed with famine, and those exempt from famine, but menaced with the plague and pestilence, are greater sinners than the rest of the world? "I tell you, nay."

IV. Lastly: mankind regard the judgments which God obviously inflicts on others with an obdurate disposition; but Jesus Christ is wishful to reclaim them by a spirit of reformation and repentance. This is the design of his inference, which is twice repeated; "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

One of the designs God proposed in permitting the cruelty of Pilate to those Galileans, and the fall of the tower of Siloam on eighteen of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, was to give others an idea of the punishment which awaited themselves, in case they should persist in sin, and thereby of exciting them to repentance. He has now the same designs in regard to us, while afflicting Europe before our eyes.

That this was his design with regard to the Jews, we have a proof beyond all exception, and that proof is experience. The sentence pronounced against that unhappy nation; "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish," was literally executed, and in detail. Yes, literally did the Jewish nation perish as the Galileans, whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices, and as the others on whom the tower of Siloam fell.

Read what happened under Archelaus, on the day of the passover. The people were assembled from all parts, and thought of nothing but of offering their sacrifices. Archelaus surrounded Jerusalem, placed his cavalry without the city, caused his infantry to enter, and to defile the temple with the blood of three thousand persons.*

Read the sanguinary conduct of those cruel assassins, who in open day, and during their most solemn festival in particular, caused the effects of their fury to be felt, and mingled human gore with that of the animals slain in the temple.

Read the furious battle fought by the zealous in the same temple, where without fear of defiling the sanctity of religion, to use the expression of the Jewish historian, "they defiled the sacred place with their impure blood."†

Read the pathetic description of the same historian concerning the factions who held their sittings in the temple. "Their revenge," he says, "extended to the altar; they massacred the priests with those that offered sacrifices. Men who came from the extremities of the earth to worship God in his holy place, fell down slain with their victims, and sprinkled their blood on the altar, revered, not only by the Greeks, but by the most barbarous nations. The blood was seen to flow as rivers; and the

* Joseph. Antiq. lib. xvii. cap. 11.

† Joseph. Wars of the Jews, book iv. chap. 14.

dead bodies, not only of natives, but of strangers, filled this holy place.*

Read the whole history of that siege, rendered for ever memorable by the multitude of its calamities. See Jerusalem swimming with blood, and entombed in its own ashes. Mark how it was besieged, precisely at the time of their most solemn festival, when the Jews were assembled from all parts of the world to celebrate their passover. See how the blood of eleven hundred thousand persons was mingled with their sacrifices, and justified the expression in the text, "Suppose ye that these Galileans were more culpable? I tell you, nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." See how the walls of Jerusalem, in the same siege, sapped by the Roman ram, and by a thousand engines of war, fell down and buried the citizens in their ruins, literally accomplishing this other part of the prophecy; "Suppose ye, that those eighteen on whom the tower of Siloam fell, were sinners above all that dwelt in Jerusalem; I tell you, nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

God has the same designs in regard to us, while afflicting Europe before our eyes. This is the point at which we must now stop. We must leave the Jews, from whom the means of conversion were ultimately removed, to profit by their awful example; and especially, from the consideration of their impenitency, to derive the most serious motives for our own conversion.

CONCLUSION.

There is then so perfect a conformity between us, my brethren, and those who came to report to Jesus Christ the calamity of the poor Galileans, that one must be wilfully blind not to perceive it. 1. The Jews had just seen examples of the divine vengeance, and we also have lately seen them. 2. The Jews had been spared, and we also are spared. 3. The Jews were likewise as great offenders as those that had fallen under the strokes of God; and we are as great offenders as those that now suffer before our eyes. 4. The Jews were taught by Jesus Christ what disposition of mind they should in future assume; and we are equally instructed. 5. Those Jews hardened their hearts against his warning, and were ultimately destroyed; (O God, avert this awful augur!) we harden our hearts in like manner, and we shall experience the same lot, if we continue in the same state.

1. We ourselves, like the Jews who were present at that bloody scene, have seen examples of the divine vengeance. Europe is now an instructive theatre, and bespangled with tragic scenes. The destroying angel, armed with the awful sword of celestial vengeance, goes forth on our right hand, and on our left, distinguishing his route by carnage and horror. "The sword of the Lord intoxicated with blood," Jer. xlvii. 6, refuses to return to its scabbard, and seems wishful to make the whole earth a vast sepulchre. Our Europe has often been visited with severe strokes; but I know not whether history records a period in which they were so severe, and so general. God once proposed to David a terrible choice of pestilence, of war, or of famine. The best was

awful. But now God does not propose; he inflicts them. He does not propose any one of three; he inflicts the whole at once. On what side can you cast your regards, and not be presented with the like objects? To what voice can you hearken which does not say, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish?" Hear the people whose unhappy countries have for many years become the theatre of war; who hear of nothing "but wars and rumours of wars," who see their harvest cut down before it is ripe, and the hopes of the year dissipated in a moment. These are instructive examples; these are loud calls, which say, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Hear those people over whose heads the heavens are as brass, and under whose feet the earth is as iron, who are consumed by scarcity and drought: these are instructive examples; these are loud calls which say, "except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Hear those people among whom death enters with the air they breathe, who see fall down before their eyes, here an infant, and there a husband, and who expect every moment to follow them. These are awful examples; these are loud calls, which say, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Thus our first parallel is correct; we, like the Jews, have seen examples of the divine vengeance.

2. We, like the Jews, are still spared; and whatever part we may have hitherto had in the calamities of Europe, thank God, we have not fallen. "He has covered us with his feathers, and given us refuge under his wings." We have not been struck with "terror by night," nor with "the arrow that flieth by day," nor with "the pestilence that walketh in darkness," nor, "with the destruction that wasteth at noon-day. A thousand have fallen at our side, and ten thousand on our right hand; but the destruction has not come nigh to us," Ps. xci. 4—7. Our days of mourning and of fasting have ever been alleviated with joy; and this discourse which recalls so many gloomy thoughts, excites recollections of comfort. The prayers addressed to Heaven for so many unhappy mortals precipitated to peril, are enlivened with the voice of praise, inasmuch as we are still exempt from the scourge. We weep between the porch and the altar, with joy and with grief at the same instant; with grief, from a conviction that our sins have excited the anger of God against Europe; with joy because his fury has not as yet extended to us; and if we say, with a contrite heart, "O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee; but unto us confusion of face: O Lord, enter not into judgment with thy servants: O Lord, pardon the iniquity of thy people," we shall make these walls resound with our thanksgiving. We shall say with Hezekiah, "A great bitterness is come upon me, but thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption." We shall say, with the prophet Jonah, "Thy billows and thy waves have passed over me; then I said I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again towards thy holy temple; and with Jeremiah, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, and because his compassions fail not: they are new every morning." Our second parallel is there-

* Joseph. Wars of the Jews, book v.

fore correct; we like the Jews, are still spared. Dan. ix. 7; Joel ii. 17; Isa. xxxviii. 17; Jonah ii. 3; Lam. iii. 22, 23.

3. Like the Jews, we are not less guilty than those who fall before our eyes under the judgments of God. What a revolting proposition, you will say? What! the men whose hands were so often dipped in the most innocent blood, the men who used their utmost efforts to extinguish the lamp of truth, the men who are rendered for ever infamous by the death of so many martyrs, are they to be compared to us? Can we say of their calamities, what the Lord said to the Jews concerning the calamities named in the text, "Think ye that these Galileans were sinners above all Galileans? Think ye that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell, were sinners above all that dwell in Jerusalem? I tell you, nay." We would wish you, my brethren, to have as much patience in attending to the parallel, as we have had ground for drawing it. Who then, in your opinion, is the greater sinner, he who opposes a religion he believes to be bad, or he who gives himself no sort of concern to cherish and extend a religion he believes to be good? He, who for the sake of his religion sacrifices the goods, the liberty, and the lives of those that oppose it, or he who sacrifices his religion to human hopes, to a sordid interest, and to a prudence purely worldly? He who enters with a lever and a hatchet into houses he believes profane, or he who feels but languor and indifference when called upon to revive the ashes he accounts holy, and to raise the foundations he believes sacred? A glance on the third parallel is, I presume, sufficient to induce you to acknowledge its propriety.

Amid so many dissipations, and this is the fourth point of similarity, Jesus Christ still teaches us the same lessons he once taught the Jews. He renders us attentive to Providence. He proves that we are concerned in those events. He opens our eyes to the war, the pestilence, and famine, by which we are menaced. He exhibits the example of the multitude who fall under those calamities. He says, "surely thou shalt receive instruction." He avers that the same lot awaits us. He speaks, he presses, he urges. "He hews us by his prophets, and slays us by his word," to use an expression of Hosea, vi. 5. To all these traits, our situation perfectly coincides. What then can obstruct our application of the latter, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

And shall events so bloody leave no impression on your mind? "Ye shall all likewise perish?" What would your situation be, if this prophecy were about to be accomplished? If our lot were about to be like that of the Galileans? If on a fast-day, a sacramental day, a day in which our people hold an extraordinary assembly, a cruel and ferocious soldiery, with rage in their hearts, with fury in their eyes, and murderous weapons in their hands, should rush and confound our devotion with carnage, sacrificing the father before the eyes of the son, and the son before the eyes of the father, and make this church swim with the blood of the worshippers? What would your situation be, if the foundations of this church were about to be shook under our feet,

if these walls which surround us were about to fall, and to make us like the eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell? And what would our situation be, if the curses on those ancient people, and which are this day accomplished in so many parts of Europe, should fall upon us? "The Lord shall make the pestilence cleave unto thee, until he consume thee from off the land. The heaven that is over thy head shall be brass, and the earth that is under thee shall be iron. The Lord shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies. And because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with joyfulness and with gladness of heart, thou shalt serve in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness, and in want, an enemy which shall put a yoke upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee. And thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body, the flesh of thy sons and of thy daughters which the Lord thy God shall give thee," Deut. xxviii. 21. 23. 25. 47, 48. 53.

My brethren, let us not contend with God, let us not arm ourselves with an infatuated fortitude. Instead of braving the justice of God, let us endeavour to appease it, by a speedy recourse to his mercy, and by a genuine change of conduct.

This is the duty imposed on this nation; this is the work of all the faithful assembled here. But permit me to say it, with all the respect of a subject who addresses his masters, and, at the same time, with all the frankness of a minister of the gospel who addresses the subjects of the King of kings, this is peculiarly your work, high and mighty lords of these provinces, fathers of this people. In vain do you adopt the measures of prudence to avert the calamities with which we are threatened, unless you endeavour to purge the city of God of the crimes which attract them. The languishing church extends to you her arms. The ministry, rendered useless by the profligacy of the age, has need of your influence to maintain itself, and to be exercised with success; to put a period to the horrible profanation of the sabbath, which has so long and so justly become our reproach; to suppress those scandalous publications which are ushered with insolence, and by which are erected before your eyes, with impunity, a system of atheism and irreligion; to punish the blasphemers; and thus to revive the enlightened laws of Constantine and Theodosius.

If in this manner, we shall correspond with the designs of God in the present chastisements of men, he will continue to protect and defend us. He will dissipate the tempests ready to burst on our heads. He will confirm to us the truth of that promise he once made to the Jews by the ministry of Jeremiah; "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation—to pull down and to destroy it—If that nation turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil I thought to do unto them," xviii. 7, 8. In a word, after having rendered our own life happy, and society tranquil, he will exalt us above all clouds and tempests, to those happier regions, where there shall be "no more sorrow, nor crying, nor pain;" and where "all tears shall be for ever wiped from our eyes." Rev. vii. 17; xxi. 4. God grant us the grace: to whom be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON XCVII.

A TASTE FOR DEVOTION.

PSALM lxxiii. 5, 6.

My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips: when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate upon thee in the night-watches.

It is a felicity to be acquainted with the arguments which forcibly attach us to religion. It is a great advantage to be able to arrange, with conclusive propriety, the arguments which render virtue preferable to vice. It is a high favour to be able to proceed from principle to principle, and from consequence to consequence, so as to say in one's own breast, with a conscious mind of the excellence of piety, I am persuaded that a good man is happy.

But how sublime soever this way of soaring to God may be, it is not always sufficient. Arguments may indeed impose silence on the passions; but they are not always sufficiently cogent to eradicate them. However conclusive demonstrations may be in a book, in a school, in the closet, they appear extremely weak, and of very inadequate force, when opposed to sentiments of anguish, or to the attractions of pleasure. The arguments adduced to suffer for religion, lose much of their efficacy, not to say of their evidence, when proposed to a man about to be broken alive on the wheel, or consumed on a pile. The arguments for resisting the flesh; for rising superior to matter and sense, vanish, for the most part, on viewing the objects of concupiscence. How worthy then is that man of pity who knows no way of approaching God, but that of discussion and argument!

There is one way of leading us to God much more safe; and of inducing to abide in fellowship with him, whenever it is embraced; that is, the way of taste and of sentiment. Happy the man, who, in the conflicts to which he is exposed from the enemy of his soul, can oppose pleasure to pleasure, and joy to joy; the pleasures of piety and of converse with Heaven to the pleasure of the world; the delights of recollection and solitude to those of brilliant circles, of dissipations, and of theatres! Such a man is firm in his duty, because he is a man; and because it depends not on man to refuse affection to what opens to his soul the fountains of life. Such a man is attached to religion by the same motives which attach the world to the objects of their passions, which afford them exquisite delight. Such a man has support in the time of temptation, because "the peace of God which passeth all understanding, keeps," so to speak, the propensities of his heart, and the divine comforts which inundate his soul, obstructs his being drawn away to sin.

Let us attend to-day to a great master in the science of salvation. It is our prophet. He knew the argumentative way of coming to God. "Thy word," said he to himself, "is a lamp unto my feet, and a lantern to my paths," Ps. cxix. 105. But he knew also the way of taste and of sentiment. He said to God in the words of my text, not only that he was persuaded and

convinced; but that religion charmed, ravished, and absorbed his soul by its comforts. "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my soul shall praise thee with joyful lips; when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate upon thee in the night-watches."—In discussing the subject,

I. We shall trace the emotions of our prophet, and to give you the ideas, if it be possible to give them, of what we understand by the piety of taste and sentiment.

II. We shall consider the words with regard to the humiliation they reflect on the most part of Christians; and inquire into the judgment we ought to form of our own state, when destitute of the piety of sentiment and taste, so consoling to a regenerate soul.

III. We shall investigate the cause of this calamity.

IV. We shall propose some maxims for the acquisition of this piety, the want of which is so deplorable; and to enable you to say with David, "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my soul shall praise thee with joyful lips, when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate upon thee in the night-watches."

I. We must define what we understand by the piety of taste and sentiment. Wishful to compress the subject, we shall not oppose profanation to eminent piety, nor apparent piety to that which is genuine. We shall oppose reality to reality; true piety to true piety; and the religion of the heart to that which is rational and argumentative. A few examples, derived from human life, will illustrate this article of religion.

Suppose two pupils of a philosopher, both emulous to make a proficiency in science; both attentive to the maxims of their master; both surmounting the greatest difficulties to retain a permanent impression of what they hear. But the one finds study a fatigue like the man tottering under a burden: to him study is a severe and arduous task: he hears because he is obliged to hear what is dictated. The other, on the contrary, enters into the spirit of study; its pains are compensated by its pleasures: he loves truth for the sake of truth; and not for the sake of the encomiums conferred on literary characters, and the preceptors of science.

Take another example. The case of two warriors, both loyal to their sovereign; both alert and vigilant in military discipline, which, of all others, requires the greatest vigilance and precision; both ready to sacrifice life when duty shall so require; but the one groans under the heavy fatigues he endures, and sighs for repose: his imagination is struck with the danger to which he is exposed by his honour: he braves dangers, because he is obliged to brave them, and because God will require an account of the public safety of those who may have had the baseness to sacrifice it to personal preservation: yet amid triumphs he envies the lot of the cottager, who having held the plough by day, finds the rewards at night of domestic repose. The other, on the contrary, is born with an insatiable thirst of glory, to which nothing can be arduous: he has by nature, that noble courage, shall I call it, or that happy temerity; that amid the greatest danger, he sees no dan-

ger; victory is ever before his eyes; and every step that leads to conquest is regarded as a victory already obtained.

These examples are more than sufficient to confirm your ideas, and make you perceive the vast distinction we make between a speculative and an experimental piety, and to enable you in some sort to trace the sentiments of our prophet, "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my soul shall praise thee with joyful lips; when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate upon thee in the night-watches." He who has a rational and a speculative piety, and he who has a piety of taste and sentiment, are both sincere in their efforts; both devoted to their duty; both pure in purpose; both in some sort pleasing to God; and both alike engaged in studying his precepts, and in reducing them to practice; but O, how different is their state!

The one prays because he is awed by his wants, and because prayer is the resource of the wretched. The other prays because the exercise of prayer transports him to another world; because it vanishes the objects which obstruct his divine reflections; and because it strengthens those ties which unite him to that God, whose love constitutes all his consolation, and all his treasure.

The one reads the word of God because his heart would reproach him for neglecting a duty so strongly enjoined, and because without the Bible he would be embarrassed at every step. The other reads because his heart burns whenever the Scriptures are opened; and because this word composes his mind, assuages his anguish, and beguiles his care.

The one gives alms, because the doors of heaven shall be shut against the unpitiable; because without alms there is no religion; because Jesus Christ shall one day say to those who have been insensible to the wants of others, "Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire, for I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat;" and because the rust of the gold and silver of "the covetous shall be a witness against them, and shall eat their flesh as a fire," Matt. xxv. 41; James v. 3. The other gives because there is a kind of instinct and mechanical impulse, if you will excuse the phrase, which excite in his breast the most delicious sensations in the distribution of alms: he gives because his soul is formed on the model of that God, whose character is love, "who left not himself without witness, in that he did good," and whose happiness consists in the power of imparting that felicity to others.

The one approaches the Lord's table, because the supreme wisdom has enjoined it; he subdues his passions because the sacrifice is required; in resuming his heart from the objects of vice, he seems to abscind his own flesh; it would seem requisite always to repeat in his ears this text, "He that eateth this bread, and drinketh this cup unworthily, eateth and drinketh his own condemnation." The other comes to the Lord's table as to a feast; he brings a heart hungering and thirsting for righteousness; he inwardly hears the gentle voice of God, saying, "Seek ye my face:" he replies, "Thy face, Lord, I will seek. As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after

thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, yea, for the living God," Ps. xxvii. 8; xlii. 1. The delicious sentiments he finds in the communion of Jesus Christ, prompts him to forget all the sacrifices he has made for a participation therein.

In a word, not to multiply cases, the one dies because he must die: he yields to that irrevocable sentence, "Return, ye children of men," Ps. xc. 3. Submission, resignation, and patience, are the pillars which sustain him in his agony. The other, on the contrary, meets death as one who would go to a triumph. He anticipates the happy moment with aspirations, which shall give flight to his soul; he cries, he incessantly cries, "Come Lord Jesus, come quickly." Patience, resignation, submission, seem to him virtues out of season: he exercised them while condemned to live; not when he is called to die. Henceforth his soul abandons itself wholly to joy, to gratitude, and to transports.

II. Let us inquire in the second article what judgment we should pass upon ourselves when destitute of the heartfelt piety we have just described.

There are few subjects in the code of holiness, which require greater precision, and in which we should be more cautious to avoid visionary notions. Some persons regard piety of taste and sentiment so essential to salvation, as to reprobate all those who, as yet, have not attained it. Certain passages of Scripture misconstrued serve as the basis of this opinion. Because the Spirit of God sheds a profusion of consolations on the souls of some believers, it would seem that he must shed it on all. They presume that a Christian must judge of the state of his mind less by the uprightness of his heart, and the purity of his motives, than by the enjoyments, or the privation of certain spiritual comforts. A man shall powerfully wrestle with his passions, be always at war with himself, and make to God the severest sacrifices, yet if we do not feel certain transports, he must be regarded as a reprobate. A man, on the contrary, who shall be less attentive to the conditions of salvation, and less severe towards himself, must, according to the casuists I attack, banish all sorts of doubt and scruple of his salvation, provided he attain to certain transports of ecstasy and joy.

Whatever basis or solidity there may be in one part of the principles which constitute the foundation of this system, there are few that are more dangerous. It often gives occasion to certain ebullitions of passion, of which we have too many examples. It is much easier to warm the imagination than to reform the heart. How often have we seen persons who thought themselves superior to all our instructions, because they flattered themselves with having the Spirit of God for a guide, which inwardly assured them of their pardon and eternal salvation? How often have we seen persons of this description take offence because we doubted of what they presumed was already decided in

* What critic besides our author gives this turn to these words of Moses! Their glosses are, either return by repentance, or, "Come again as the grass after the scythe, and re-people the earth, after being desolated a thousand years before the flood." J. S.

their breast, by a divine influence and supernatural voice? How often have we seen them reject with high disdain and revolt, strictures of which they were but too worthy? Let us not give place to enthusiasm. Let us ever preserve our judgment. The Spirit of God guides indeed, but he does not blind. I prefer a humility destitute of transports, to transports destitute of humility. The piety of taste and sentiment is certainly the privilege of some regenerate people: it is indeed a disposition of mind to which all the regenerate should aspire; but we must not exclude those that are weak from regeneration.*

But if there is danger of striking on the first rock, there is some danger of striking on the second. Under a plea that one may be saved without the conscious comforts we have described, shall we give ourselves no inquietude about acquiring them? Shall we give our heart, and our warmest affections to the world; and offer to God but an exhausted, a constrained and reluctant obedience? Let us inquire in what case, and what respects we may console ourselves when deprived of conscious comfort; and in what case, and what respects, we ought to mourn when deprived of those divine favours.

1. Abstract and spiritual objects seldom make so deep an impression on the mind as those which are sensible. This is not always

* Saurin, in twenty places of his sermons, attacks a class of opponents whom he calls *casuists*, or guides and directors of the soul. These were the supralapsarians. That class of men, I have little doubt, were very clear in the doctrine of the Spirit. And Saurin is not only clear, but sublimely so, as will appear from this sermon. But he errs in too much restricting it to the more highly favoured class of saints. Perhaps this arose from early prejudice; perhaps from want of seeing the work of conversion on an extended scale; perhaps the opposition he received urged his replies beyond the feelings of his heart, and so far as to drive him to apparent contradictions of himself. We must never console the well disposed with the doctrine of unconscious salvation, but urge them to seek it, as the Scriptures do, and as our author fully does in the latter part of this discourse. The exceptions are in favour of men of a nervous and dejected mind, who mostly die more happily than they live. Now, I would ask, is a man to attain the whole Christian temper without the influences of the Spirit? Can the harvest and the fruits ripen without the solar influence? Can we be satisfied with our imperfect marks of conversion till assured that we consciously love God from a reaction of his love shed abroad in our heart? Rom. v. 5. Did not the primitive Churches walk in the comforts of the Holy Ghost? Acts ix. 31. And is there any intimation that the witness—the seal—the unction—and the *σφραγισμὸν* or earnest and comforts of the Holy Spirit were confined to Christians of the first age? How are we to attain the Divine image without a Divine and conscious influence? And if God testify his frowns against all crimes by secret terrors of conscience, why may he not testify his approbation of the penitent, when he believes with the heart unto righteousness? Why should the most gracious of all beings keep us through the fear of death all our lives subject to bondage? Is heaven a feast of which only a few favoured ones can have a foretaste? Are there no consolations in Christ Jesus, exclusive of a future hope, to which our infirmities afford but a very defective title? Hence, I cannot but lament the ignorance, or bewail the error of ministers, who ridicule the doctrine of the Spirit. Assurance, comfort, and the witness of adoption, are subjects of prayer rather than of dispute. This part of religion, according to Bishop Bull, is better understood by the heart than by the head. The reader who would wish to be adequately acquainted with the doctrine of the Spirit, may consult St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, and Macarius. In our own tongue, Bishop Bull's sermons; the sermon of Bishop Smallridge, and Dr. Conant on the comforter; Mr. Joseph Mede and Dr. Cudworth on 1 John ii. 3; Dr. Owen on the Spirit; Dr. Watts' three sermons, and Mr. Wesley's sermon on the witness of the Spirit; the collect for the sixth Sunday after Trinity.

an effect of our depravity, but a consequence of our infirmity. A man may be able to pay a better supported attention to an exhibition than to a course of holy meditation; not that he loves an exhibition more than holy meditation, but because the one devolves on abstract and spiritual truths, while the other presents him with spiritual objects. You feel no wandering thoughts in presence of an earthly monarch who holds your life and fortune in his hands; but a thousand distractions assail you in converse with the God, who can make you eternally happy, or eternally miserable. This is not because more exalted ideas of God's power than of the monarch's are denied; it is because in God's power the object is abstract, but in the monarch's, the object is sensible; it is because the impression of sensible objects is stronger than those which are abstract. This, perhaps, induced St. John to say, "If a man love not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" This argument in appearance is defective.— Does it follow, that because I love not my brother, whom I see, being full of imperfections, that I do not love God, who, though unseen, is an all-perfect being? This is not the apostle's argument. He means, that the dispositions of the soul are moved by sensible, rather than by abstract and spiritual objects. If we possessed that source of tenderness, which prompts the heart to love God, our tenderness would be moved at the sight of a man in distress, and we should be instantly led to succour him. If the sight of an afflicted man; if this sensible object make no impression upon us, the Divine perfections which are spiritual and abstract objects, will leave us lukewarm and unanimated. Let each of us, my brethren, apply this remark to the subject in hand. We sometimes want a taste and inclination for devotion; this is because the objects of piety are abstract and spiritual, and make a less impression on the mind, than the objects of sense. This is not always an effect of our corruption; it is sometimes a consequence of natural frailty.

2. The piety of preference and of sacrifice has a peculiar excellence, and may sometimes afford encouraging marks of salvation, though unaccompanied with the piety of sentiment and taste. You do not find the same vivacity in prayer that you once found in public diversions, but you prefer prayer to those diversions, and you sacrifice them for the sake of prayer. You do not find the same pleasure in reading books of piety you felt in reading profane books, but you sacrifice profane reading for books of devotion. You have not the same pleasure in the contemplation of death as in the prospects of life, but on being called on to die, you prefer death both to health and life. You uniformly surrender your health and your life to the pleasure of Heaven on being called to the crisis. You would not ransom, by the slightest violation of the divine law, this life and health, how dear soever they may be to you. Console yourselves, therefore, with the testimony of a good conscience. Be assured that you are sincere in the sight of God; and that while aspiring at perfection, your sincerity shall be a substitute for perfection.

3. The holy Scriptures abound with passages

which promise salvation to those who use endeavours; to those "who take up the cross;" to those "who deny themselves;" to those "who crucify the flesh with its lusts;" to those "who strive, or agonize to enter in at the strait gate," Matt. xvi. 24; vii. 13; Gal. v. 24. But the Scriptures no where exclude from salvation those who do not find in the exercise of piety, the joy, the transports, and the delights of which we have spoken.

4. Experience sometimes discovers to us characters whose whole life has been a continual exercise of piety and devotion; characters who have forsaken all for Christ, and who have not as yet attained to the blessed state after which they breathe, and continually aspire.

5. The greatest of saints, and those whom the Scriptures set before us as models, and those even who have known the highest delights of piety, have not always been in this happy state. We have seen them, not only after great falls, but under certain conflicts, deprived of those sweet regards which had once shed such abundant joy into their soul. One may, therefore, be in a state of grace without a full experience of the consolations of grace.

6. In short, the hope of one day finding the piety of taste and sentiment should assuage the anguish which the privation excites in the soul. God often confers piety of taste and sentiment as a recompense for the piety of sacrifice and preference. We have no need to go and seek those comforts in the miraculous lives, whose memory is preserved by the Holy Ghost, nor in the supernatural endowments conferred on others. If you except certain miracles which God once performed for the confirmation of religion, and religion being established, they are now no longer necessary; God still holds the same conduct with regard to his saints which he formerly held. We have seen saints who have long, and with ineffectual sighs, breathed after the comforts of the Holy Ghost; and who, in the issue, have experienced all their sweetness. We have seen the sick, who having been alarmed at the idea of dying, who having sighed at the simple idea of its pains, its anguish, its separation, its obscurity, and all the appalling presages excited by the king of terrors: we have seen them, previous to his approach, quite inundated with consolation and joy. I know we must always suspect the reveries of the imagination, but it seems to us, that the more calm we were in our investigation, precaution, and even distrust, in the scrutiny of this phenomenon, the more we were convinced it ought to be wholly ascribed to the Spirit of God. Those transformations were not the effect of any novel effort we had caused to be excited in the souls of the sick. They sometimes followed a profound stupor, a total lethargy, which could not be the effect of any pleasure arising from some new sacrifice made for God, or from some recent victory over themselves. The sick, of whom we speak, seem to have previously cherished all imaginable deference for our ministry. Nothing human, nothing terrestrial was apparent in those surprising transformations. It was the work of God. Let us ask that we may receive. If he do not answer the first time we pray, he answers the second: if he do not open the door of mercy the second

time we knock, he opens the third. Suffer not thyself then, O my soul, to be depressed and discouraged, because thou dost not yet participate in the piety of taste and sentiment. Be determined to pierce the cloud with which God conceals himself from thy sight. Though he say to thee as to Jacob, "Let me go for the day dawneth," answer like the patriarch, "Lord, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." Though he affect to leave thee, as he feigned to leave the two disciples, constrain him as they did; and say with them, "Lord stay with me; it is toward evening: the sun is on the decline," Gen. xxxii. 26; Luke xxiv. 29.

These are the principal sources of consolation to those who have a sincere and vehement desire to please God, and who have not yet attained the piety of taste and sentiment. But though the privation of those comforts should not dispirit us, yet the defect is ever a most humiliating and deplorable consideration. So you may conclude from what you have just heard. Yes, it is very humiliating and deplorable, though we should even prefer our duty to our pleasure, when those duties abound with difficulties, and afford no consolations; and when we are merely enabled to repel attacks from the pleasures of the age with reason and argument, which persuade, it is true, but they stop in the tender part of the soul, if I may so speak, and neither warm the imagination nor captivate the heart. Yes, it is very humiliating and deplorable to know by description only, that "peace of God; that joy unspeakable and full of glory; that white stone; that satisfaction; that seal of redemption;" and those ever-ravishing pleasures, of which our Scriptures give us so grand a view. Yes, it is very humiliating and deplorable that we should resemble the Scripture characters, only in the drought and languor they sometimes felt, and always aspiring after a happier frame which we never attain.

Farther still: the privation of divine comfort should not only humble us, but there are occasions in which it should induce us to pass severe strictures on our destiny. There are especially two such cases of this nature.

1. When the privation is general; when a conviction of duty, and the motives of hope and fear, are ever requisite to enforce the exercises of religion; when we have to force ourselves to read God's word, to pray, to study his perfections, and to participate of the pledges of his love in the holy sacrament. It is not very likely that a regenerate soul should be always abandoned to the difficulties and duties imposed by religion, that it should never experience those comforts conferred by the Holy Spirit, which make them a delight.

2. The privation of divine comforts should induce us to pass severe strictures on ourselves, when we do not make the required efforts to be delivered from so sad a state. To possess a virtue, or not to possess it, to have a defect, or not to have it, is not always the criterion of distinction between the regenerate man, and him who has but the name and appearance of regeneration. To make serious efforts to acquire the virtues we have not yet attained, and to use endeavours to correct the faults to which we are still liable, is a true character of

regeneration. But to see those faults with indifference; and under a plea of constitutional weakness, not to subdue them, is a distinguishing mark of an unregenerate state. Thus it is apparent, that though the privation of the piety of taste and sentiment be not always criminal, it is always an imperfection; and that alone should prompt us to reform it. I will suggest to you the remedies of this evil, after having in the third place traced the causes which produce it.

III. To accomplish my purpose, and to exhibit the true causes which deprive us of the piety of taste and sentiment, we shall make a short digression on the nature of taste and sentiment in general; we shall trace to the source certain sympathies and antipathies which tyrannize over us without our having apparently contributed to the domination.

The task we here impose on ourselves, is a difficult one. We proceed under a conscious need of indulgence in what we propose. The causes of our inclinations and aversions are, apparently, one of the most intricate studies of nature. There is something it would seem, in the essence of our souls, which inclines us to certain objects, and which revolts us against others, when we are unconscious of the cause, and sometimes even against the most obvious reasons. The Creator has obviously given a certain impulse to our propensities, which it is not in our power to divert. Scarcely do the dawning of genius appear in children, before we see them biassed by peculiar propensities. Hence the diversity, and the singularity of taste apparent in mankind. One has a taste for navigation, another for trades of the most grovelling kind. Virtue and vice have also their scale in the objects of our choice. One is impelled to this vice; another to a vice of the opposite kind. One is impelled to a certain virtue, another to a different virtue. And who can explain the cause of this variety, or prescribe a remedy for the evil, after having developed the cause?

But how impenetrable soever this subject may appear, it is not altogether impossible, at least in a partial way, to develop it. The series of propositions we proceed to establish, shall be directed to that end. But we ask beforehand your indulgence, that in case we throw not on the subject all the light you would wish, do not attribute the defect to this discourse, which may probably proceed from the difficulty of the subject, and probably from the slight attention our hearers pay to truths which have the greatest influence on life and happiness.

Proposition first. We have already intimated, that a sensible object naturally makes a deeper impression on men, than an object which is abstract, spiritual, and remote. This is but too much realized by our irregular passions. A passion which controls the senses is commonly more powerful than those which are seated in the mind; ambition and the love of glory are chiefly resident in the mind; whereas, effeminacy and sensuality have their principal seat in the senses. Passions of the latter kind do more violence to the society than others. With the exception of those called heroes in the world, mankind seldom sacrifice

their ease, their sensuality, their effeminacy, to high notions, to ambition, and the love of glory. And how often have the heroes themselves sacrificed all their laurels, their reputation and their trophies, to the charm of some sensible pleasure? How often have the charms of a Delilah stopped the victories of a Samson; and a Cleopatra those of a Cesar and a Mark Antony?

Proposition second. The imagination captivates both the senses and the understanding. A good which is not sensible; a good even which has no existence, is contemplated as a reality, provided it have the decorations proper to strike the imagination. The features and complexion of a person do not prove that a connexion formed with her would be agreeable and happy. Meanwhile, how often have those features and tints produced a prejudice of that kind? Nothing is often more insipid than the pleasure found in conversation with the great. At the same time, nothing commonly appears so enviable. And why? Because the splendour attendant on this intercourse strikes the imagination. The retinues which follow them; the splendour of their carriages; the mansions in which they live; the multitude of people who flatter and adore them; all these are strikingly qualified to make an impression on the imagination, which supercedes the operations of sense, and the convictions of the mind.

Proposition third. A present, or at least, an approximate good, excites, for the most part, more vehement desires, than a good which is absent, or whose enjoyment is deferred to a remote period. The point where the edge of the passions is blunted, almost without exception, is, when they have to seek their object in distant epochs, and in future years.

Proposition fourth. Recollection is a substitute for presence: I would say, that a good in the possession of which we have found delight, produces in the heart, though absent, much the same desires, as that which is actually present.

Proposition fifth. A good, ascertained and fully known by experience, is much more capable of inflaming our desires, than a good of which we have but an imperfect notion, and which is known only by the report of others. A person endowed with good accomplishments, and whose conversation we have enjoyed, is more endeared to us than one known only by character; though the virtues of the latter have been represented as far surpassing the virtues of the other.

A sixth proposition is, that all things being equal, we prefer a good of easy acquisition, to one which requires care and fatigue. Difficulty sometimes, I grant, inflames desire, and seduces the imagination. When we have a high opinion of a good, which we believe is in our power to acquire by incessant endeavours, our ardours become invigorated, and we redouble our efforts in proportion as the difficulty augments. It is, however, an indisputable axiom, and founded on the nature of the human mind that things being equal, we prefer a good of easy acquisition, to one that requires anxiety and fatigue.

A seventh proposition is, that a good beyond

our reach, a good that we do not possess, and that we have no hope so to do, does not excite any desire. Hope is the food of the passions. Men do indeed sometimes pursue phantoms; and they frequently run after objects which they never enjoy; but it is always in hope of enjoying them.

The last proposition is, that avocations fill the capacity of the soul. A mind which is empty, at leisure, and unoccupied with ideas and sentiments, is much more liable to be animated with a passion, than one which is already attracted, occupied, and absorbed, by certain objects unconnected with that passion.

IV. These propositions may lead us to an acquaintance with the causes of our antipathies and our sympathies. We have laid them down with a view to assign the reasons why most people fall short of the piety of taste and sentiment. This is the point we proceed to prove. We shall also trace the sources of the evil, and prescribe the principal remedies which ought to be applied. We shall hereby make the fourth part, combined with the third, the conclusion of this discourse.

1. Are we destitute of the piety of taste and sentiment? It is because that a sensible object naturally makes a deeper impression upon us, than an object which is abstract, invisible, and spiritual. The God we adore, is a God that *hideth himself*. The lustre of the duties imposed by religion, appear so to the mind only; they have nothing that can attract the eyes of the body. The rewards promised by Jesus Christ, are objects of faith; they are reserved for a world to come, which we never saw and of which we have scarcely any conception: whereas the pleasures of this world are presented to our taste; they dazzle the eye, and charm the ear. They are pleasures adapted to a creature which naturally suffers itself to be captivated by sensible objects. Here is the first source of the evil. The remedy to be applied is to labour incessantly to diminish the sovereignty of the senses. To animate the soul to so laudable a purpose, we must be impressed with the base and grovelling disposition of the man who suffers himself to be enslaved by sense. What! shall the senses communicate their grossity and heaviness to our souls, and our souls not communicate to the senses their purity, their energies, and divine flame? What! shall our senses always possess the power, in some sort, to sensualize the soul, and our souls never be able to spiritualize the senses? What! shall a concert, a theatre, an object fatal to our innocence, charm and ravish the soul, while the great truths of religion are destitute of effect? What! do the ideas we form of the perfect Being; of a God, eternal in duration, wise in design, powerful in execution, magnificent in grace; what! does the idea of a Redeemer, who sought mankind in their abject state, who devoted himself for their salvation, who placed himself in the breach between them and the tribunal of justice; what! does the hope of eternal salvation, which comprises all the favours of God to man, do all these ideas still leave us in apathy and indifference? This consideration should make a Christian blush; it should induce him to call to his aid, meditation, reading, retirement, solitude, and whatever is

calculated to enfeeble the influence of his senses, whose sovereignty produces effects so awful and alarming.

2. Are we destitute of the piety of taste and sentiment? It is because the tyranny of the senses is succeeded by the tyranny of the imagination; it is because the objects of piety are not accompanied with that sensible charm with which the imagination is struck by the objects of our passions. This is the second source of the evil, and it points out the second remedy which must be applied. A rational man will be ever on his guard against his imagination. He will dissipate the clouds with which it disguises the truth. He will pierce the thin bark with which it covers the substance. He will make appearances give place to realities. He will summon to the bar of reason all the illusive conceptions his fancy has formed. He will judge of an object by the nature of the object itself, and not by the chimeras with which they are decorated by a seductive imagination.

Are we destitute of the piety of taste and sentiment? It is because that a present, or, at least, an approximate good, excites in us more ardent desires than a good which is absent, or whose enjoyment is deferred to a distant period. This third source of evil suggests the remedy that must be applied. Let us form the habit of anticipating the future, and of realizing it to our minds. Let us constantly exercise that "faith which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." Let us "not look at the things which are seen, which are temporal; but at eternal things, which are not seen," Heb. xi. 5; 2 Cor. iv. Let us often launch beyond the confined sphere of objects with which we are surrounded. Our notions must be narrow, indeed, if they do not carry us above the economy of the present life. It may terminate with regard to you in twenty years, or in ten years; it may terminate with regard to you in a few days, or in a few hours. This is not all, we must often reflect on the awful events which must follow the narrow sphere assigned us here below. We must often think that the world "shall pass away with a great noise, and its elements melt with fervent heat," and its foundations shall be shaken. "The mighty angels shall swear by Him that liveth for ever and ever, that time shall be no longer," 2 Pet. iii. 10; Rev. x. 6. We must often think on the irrevocable sentence which must decide the destiny of all mankind; on the joys, on the transports of those who shall receive the sentence of absolution; and on the dreadful desponding cries of those whom the Divine justice shall consign to eternal torments.

4. Are we destitute of the piety of taste and sentiment? It is because, to a certain degree, recollection is a substitute for presence. This is the *fourth* source of evil. You would yourselves, and without difficulty, prescribe the remedy, if, in this discourse which requires you to correct your taste by your reason, you did not consult your reason less than your taste. But plead for certain pleasures with all the energy of which you are capable; make an apology for your parties, your games, your diversions; say that there is nothing criminal in

those dissipations against which we have so often declaimed with so much strength in this holy place: be obstinate to maintain that preachers and critics decry them from misconceptions of their innocence. It is certain, however, that the recollection of pleasure attracts the heart to pleasure. The man who would become more sensible of the pleasures of devotion, should apply himself to devotion; and the man who would become less attracted by the pleasures of the age, should absent himself from the circles of pleasure.

5. Are we destitute of the piety of taste and sentiment? It is because that a good, known and experienced, is much more capable of inflaming our desires, than that which is imperfectly conceived, and known merely by the report of others. Why do we believe that a soul profoundly composed in meditation on the glories of grace, is "satisfied as with marrow and fatness?" We believe it on the positive testimony of the prophet. We believe it on the testimony of illustrious saints, who assert the same thing. But let us endeavour to be convinced of the fact in a better way. "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." So was the prayer of Philip to Jesus Christ, John xiv. 8. This request proceeded from the ignorance of the apostles, prior to the day of pentecost. The request was, however, founded both on reason and truth. Philip was fully persuaded, if he could once see with his own eyes the God, whose perfections were so gloriously displayed, that he should be ravished with his beauty; and that he should, without reluctance, make the greatest sacrifices to please him. Let us retain what is rational in the request of Philip, rejecting what is less enlightened. Let us say to Jesus, but in a sense more exalted than this disciple, "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." Lord, give me to know by experience the joy that results from the union of a soul reconciled to its God, and I shall ask no other pleasure; it shall blunt the point of all others.

6. Are we destitute of the piety of taste and sentiment? It is because all things being equal, we prefer a good, easy of acquisition, to one that requires labour and fatigue. And would to God, that we were always disposed to contract our motives with our fatigues; the estimate would invert our whole system of life. We should find few objects in this world to merit the efforts bestowed in their acquisition; or, to speak as the Supreme Wisdom, we should find that "we spend money for that which is not bread, and labour for that which satisfieth not," Isa. lv. 2. Would to God, that the difficulties of acquiring a piety of taste and sentiment, were but properly contrasted with the joy it procures those who surmount them. In this view, we should realize the estimate, "that the sufferings of this present life, are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us," Rom. viii. 18. Seeing then, that whatever part we espouse,

whether it be the part of religion, or the part of the world, this life is invariably a life of labour, we should prefer the labours attended with a solid peace, to those which involve us in anguish and inquietude.

7. The affairs of life engross the capacity of the soul. A mind which is empty, at leisure, and unoccupied with ideas and sentiments, is much more liable to be animated and filled with a passion, than one that is already concentrated on certain objects, which have no connexion with that passion. This is the last reason assigned for our non-attainment of the consolations of religion. Let us keep to the point. Casting our eye on the crimes of men, we regard, at first view, the greater part of them as monsters. It would seem that most men love evil for the sake of evil. I believe, however, that the portrait is distorted. Mankind are perhaps not so wicked as we commonly suppose. But to speak the truth, there is one duty, my brethren, concerning which their notions are quite inadequate; that is, recollection. There is likewise a vice whose awful consequences are by no means sufficiently perceived; that vice, is dissipation. Whence is it, that a man, who is appalled by the mere idea of death and of hell, should, nevertheless, brave them both? It is because he is dissipated; it is because his soul, wholly engrossed by the cares of life, is unable to pay the requisite attention to the idea of death and hell, and to the interests of this life. Whence is it, that a man distinguished for charity and delicacy, shall act in a manner so directly opposite to delicacy? It is because the dissipations inseparable from the office he fills, and still more so, those he ingeniously procures for himself, obstruct attention to his own principles. To sum up all in one word, whence is it, that we have such exalted views of piety, and so little taste for piety? The evil proceeds from the same source—our dissipations. Let us not devote ourselves to the world more than is requisite for the discharge of duty. Let our affections be composed; and let us keep within just bounds the faculty of reflection and of love.

If we adopt these maxims, we shall be able to reform our taste; and I may add, to reform our sentiment. We shall both think and love as rational beings. And when we think and love as rational beings, we shall perceive that nothing is worthy of man but God, and what directly leads to God. Fixing our eyes and our hearts on the Supreme object, we shall ever feel a fertile source of pure delight. In solitude, in deserts, overtaken by the catastrophes of life, or surrounded with the shadows and terrors of death, we shall exult with our prophet, "My soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips, when I remember thee in the night-watches;" and when I make thy adorable perfections the subject of my thought. May God enable us so to do: to whom be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON XCVIII.

ON REGENERATION.

PART I.

JOHN iii. 1—8.

There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do those miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, how can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

THE transition which happened in the condition of Saul was very remarkable. Born of an obscure family, actually employed in seeking strayed asses, and having recourse on this inconsiderable subject to the divine light of a prophet, Saul instantly found himself anointed with a mystic oil, and declared king, by the prophet, who added, "It is because the Lord hath anointed thee to be captain over his heritage." 1 Sam. x. 1.

To correspond with a rank so exalted, it was requisite that there should be as great a change in the person, as there was about to be in the condition, of Saul. The art of government has as many amplifications as there are wants and humours in those that are governed. A king must associate in some sort in his own person, every science and every art. He must be, so to speak, at the same juncture, artificer, statesman, soldier, philosopher. Those who are become gray-headed in this art find daily new difficulties in its execution. How then could Saul expect to acquire it in an instant? The same prophet that notified the high honour to which God had called him, discovered the source whence he might derive the supports of which he had need. "Behold (said he,) when thou shalt come to the hill of God, where there is a garrison of the Philistines, thou shalt meet a company of prophets. Then the spirit of the Lord shall come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy, and thou shalt be changed to another man," 1 Sam. x. 5, 6. The Spirit of the Lord shall come upon thee: here is support for the regal splendour; here is grace for the adequate discharge of the royal functions.

Does it not seem, my brethren, that the sacred historian, in reciting these circumstances, was wishful to give us a portrait of the change which grace makes in the soul of a Christian. "Conceived in sin, and shapen in iniquity, he

is by nature a child of wrath. His father is an Amorite, and his mother a Hittite; yet he is called out of darkness into marvellous light." He is called to be a prince and a priest. But in vain would he be honoured with a vocation so high, if the change in his soul did not correspond with that of his condition. Who is sufficient for so great a work? How shall men whose ideas are low, and whose sentiments are grovelling, attain to a magnanimity assortable with the rank to which they are called of God? The grace which elevates, changes the man who is called unto it. The Spirit of God comes upon him; it gives him a new heart, and he becomes another man.

These are the great truths which Jesus Christ taught Nicodemus in the celebrated conversation we have partly read, and which we propose to make the subject of several discourses, if God shall preserve our life, and our ministry. Here we shall discover the *nature*, the *necessity*, and the *Author*, of the regeneration which Christianity requires of us.

I. The nature of this change shall be the subject of a first discourse. Here in giving you a portrait of a regenerate man, and in describing the characters of regeneration, we shall explain to you the words of Jesus Christ, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit."

II. The necessity of this change shall be the subject of a second discourse. Here, endeavouring to dissipate the illusions we are fond of making on the obligations of Christianity, we shall press the proposition which Jesus Christ collects and asserts with so much force, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again. Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things?"

III. The author of the change shall be the subject of a third discourse. There using our best efforts to penetrate the vast chaos with which ignorance, shall I call it, or corruption, has enveloped this branch of our theology, we shall endeavour to illustrate and to justify the comparison of Jesus Christ; "the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof; but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth."

I. In giving a portrait of the regenerate, and in tracing the characters of regeneration (which is the duty of the present day,) we must explain the expressions of the Lord, "to be born again;—to be born of the Spirit," though it be not on grammatical remarks we would fix your attention, we would, however, observe, that the phrase, to be born of water and of the Spirit, is a Hebraical phraseology, importing to be born of spiritual water. By a similar expression, it is said in the third chapter of St. Matthew, "I indeed (says John Baptist) baptize you with water unto repentance, but there cometh after me one mightier than I; he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire;" that is, with spiritual life. When Jesus Christ says, that we cannot see the kingdom of God, except we are born of water and of the Spirit, he wishes to apprise us, that it is not sufficient to be a member of his church, to

be baptized, which is called "the washing of regeneration;"* but that greater renovations must take place in the heart, than what water can produce on the surface of the body.

With regard to the other expression, "To be born again," it is susceptible of a double sense. The original term may perhaps be so translated; so is its import in various places, which are not of moment to recite here. It may also be rendered, *born from above*; as in the third chapter of St. James, "The wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable." In this text, the original term is the same as that which we here translate *born again*; but though the variation might attract the critic's attention, it ought not to divert the preacher; for to whichever of the readings we may give the preference, the idea of our version invariably corresponds with the design of the Holy Ghost, and with the sense of the original. The uniform intention of Jesus Christ must be to distinguish our state of grace from that of nature. The state of nature is low and grovelling; that of grace is noble and sublime; consonant to what our Saviour said unto the Jews, "Ye are from beneath, I am from above," John viii. 23. Now for men whose birth is mean and grovelling, to acquire a great and noble descent, they must be born anew; thus to be born *from above*, and to be born *again*, are the same thing; and both these readings, how different soever they may appear, associate in the same sense. It is of much more importance to remark on the words which follow, "Born of water and of the Spirit;" first, that they are Hebraisms; and we have found the authorities so numerous, that we have had more difficulty in rejecting the less pertinent than in making the selection.

The Jews call the change which they presume their proselytes had experienced a *spiritual birth*; a *new birth*; a *regeneration*. It was one of their maxims, that the moment a man became a proselyte, he was regarded as a child, once born in sin, but now born in holiness. To be born in holiness, was, in their style, to be born in the covenant; and to this mode of speaking, St. Paul apparently refers in that remarkable passage in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, vii. 14. "The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; else were your children unclean, but now are they holy."—"Now are they holy;" that is, they are accounted as born within the covenant. Consonant to this notion, the Jews presumed that a man on becoming a proselyte, had no longer any consanguinity with those to whom nature had joined him with indissoluble ties; and that he had a right to espouse his sister, and his mother, if they became proselytes like himself! This gave Tacitus, a pagan historian, occasion to say, that the first lessons the Jews taught a proselyte was, to despise the gods, to renounce his country, and to regard his own children with disdain.† And Mai-

monides affirms, that the children with which an Egyptian woman is pregnant at the time she becomes a proselyte, are of the second birth. Hence some Rabbins have had the odd and confused refinement to suppose, that there is an infinity of souls born of I know not what *ideal mass*; that those destined to the just, lodge in a certain palace; that when a pagan embraces Judaism, one of those souls proceeds from its abode, and appears before the Divine Majesty, who embraces it, and sends it into the body of the proselyte, where it remains; that as an infant is not fully made a partaker of human nature, but when a pre-existent spirit is united to its substance in the bosom of its mother, so a man never becomes a true proselyte but when a new spirit becomes the substitute of that he derived from nature.*

Though it be not necessary to prove by numerous authorities the first remark we shall make on the words of Christ, "To be born of spiritual water," and to be "born again," it is proper at least to propose it; otherwise it would be difficult to account for our Saviour's reproving Nicodemus, as being "a master in Israel and not knowing these things." For a doctor in the law does not seem reprehensible for not understanding a language peculiar to Jesus Christ, and till then unheard of; whereas the blame naturally devolved on this Jew for exclaiming at expressions familiar to the Rabbins. No doubt, Nicodemus was one of those men, who, according to an ancient and still existing abuse, had superadded to his rank and dignity, the title of doctor, of which he was rendered unworthy by his ignorance. Hence the evangelist expressly remarks, that he was "a ruler of the Jews;" "a ruler of the Jews!" here are his degrees; here are his letters; here is his patent.

But Jesus Christ, and this is my *second* remark, in borrowing, corrected the language of the Jews. He meant not literally what he said to Nicodemus, that to enter the kingdom of God, or according to the language of Scripture and of the Jews, to be a disciple of the Messiah, one "must be born again;" he never imbibed the notion, that a man on embracing Christianity, receives a new soul to succeed the one he received from nature; he had not adopted the refinement of the Jewish cabalists, concerning the pre-existence of souls. The expressions are figurative, and consequently subject to the inconveniences of all similes, and figurative language in general. The metaphor he employs, when representing by the figure of "a new birth," the change which must take place in the soul of a man on becoming a Christian; this metaphor I say, must be

1. Restricted.
2. It must be justified.
3. It must be softened.
4. It must be fortified.

1. The expression of Jesus Christ must be restricted: We cannot well find the import of any metaphor, unless we separate whatever is

* Our learned Mede prefers the literal reading of Titus iii. 6. *The washing of the New Birth, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost*. From this distinction of St. Paul, many divines distinguished the New Birth as the entrance on Regeneration.—*The Translator*.

† Book i. chap. 5.

* When our Saviour says, that neither the blind man, nor his parents, had sinned in a pre-existent state, he obviously decides against this doctrine of Pythagoras and the Rabbins. How can a holy God send a holy soul into a sinful body? And St. Paul says, that Levi paid tithes in the loins of Abraham.—J. S.

extraneous to the subject to which it is applied. The ideas of all authors whatever would be distorted, did we wish to extend their figures beyond the just bounds. What is indisputable with regard to all authors, is peculiarly so with regard to the orientals, for excelling other nations in a warm imagination, they naturally abound in bolder metaphors. Hence the bolder the metaphors, the more is the need to restrict them; the more they would frustrate the proposed design, should we not avail ourselves of this precaution. What absurd systems have not originated from the license indulged on the comparison of Jesus Christ concerning the ties which unite us to himself, with the connexion they have with the aliments which nourish us, and which by manducation, are changed, if we may so speak, into our own substance? Properly to understand this comparison, we must restrict it. We must be aware that it turns on this single point, that as food cannot nourish us, unless it be received into the body by eating; just so, the religion of Jesus Christ will be unavailing, if we content ourselves with regarding it in a superficial manner; neglect a profound entrance into all its doctrines, and a close application of its maxims to the heart. Of other similes we may say the same. How many are the insipid notions which arise from straining the comparisons between the mystical significance of the ritual law, and the mysteries of the gospel? I here refer to the types; those striking figures, of which God himself is the author, and which in the first ages of the church traced the outlines of great events, which could not take place till many ages after they had been adumbrated by those figures. On contemplating those types in a judicious manner, you will find support for your faith, and indisputable proofs of the truth of your religion. But to contemplate them in a just point of view, they must be restricted in a thousand respects, in which they can have no connexion with the object they are designed to represent. Into how many mistakes should we run on neglecting this precaution; and on straining the striking metaphors taken from the priests, the victims, and other shadows in the ritual law? To understand those types and figures, we must restrict them; we must be aware that they bear on this single point; I would say, that as the office of the high-priest under the law was to reconcile God to the tribes of Israel, whose name he bore engraved on his mysterious pectoral; just so, the mediatorial office of Christ consisted in reconciling God to the men, with whose nature he was clothed.

Never had figure more need of this precaution; never had figure more need to be restricted than that employed by Jesus Christ in the words of my text. The restriction has a double bearing. First, it must be restricted to the persons of the unregenerate who are not in communion with his people; and secondly, to the things which Jesus Christ requires of the unregenerate. The comparison of Jesus Christ must be restricted to the profligate, or to the self-righteous, who are not in communion with his people. If we fail to make this distinction, but indiscriminately apply the expression to all, we confound the change required of a man

who has not yet embraced Christianity, with that required of a weak and wandering Christian, who makes daily efforts to attain the knowledge of the truth, and to practise virtue; or, who recovers from his errors and deviations. It would be unfair to say, that such a Christian has need to "be born again," at least, in the sense which Jesus Christ attaches to the words of my text.

2. The comparison must be restricted to the change itself, which Jesus Christ requires of those to whom it ought to be applied. But in what respects are those things called a *new birth*? The metaphor concentrates itself on a single point; that as an infant on coming into the world, experiences so great a change in its mode of existence in regard of respiration, of nourishment, of sight, and of all its sensations, and so very different from what was the case prior to its birth, as in some sort to seem a new creature; so a man on passing from the world to the church, is a new man compared with what he was before. He has now other ideas, other desires, other propensities, other hopes, other objects of happiness. If you should not make this restriction: but extend the metaphor, you would make very injudicious contrasts between the circumstances of the new, and of the natural birth; and you would form notions, not only unworthy of reception, but deemed unworthy of refutation in a place like this.

II. But the change here represented by the idea of a new birth, is not the less a reality, for being couched in figurative language. Hence we have said in the second place, that the expression of Jesus Christ must be justified. In what does the change required of those that would enter into fellowship with him consist? In what does this new birth consist? We have just insinuated, that it is a change of ideas; a change of desires; a change of taste; a change of hope; a change of the objects of happiness.

1. A change of ideas. An unregenerate man, unacquainted with Jesus Christ, is wishful to be the arbitrator of his own ideas. He admits no propositions but what are proved at the bar of reason; he takes no guide but his own discernment, or that of some doctor, often as blind, and sometimes more so, than himself. On the contrary, the regenerate man sees solely with the eyes of his Saviour: Jesus Christ is his only guide, and if I may so speak, his sole reason, and his sole discernment.

I have no clear idea of the manner in which my soul can subsist after the ties which unite it to matter are dissolved. I do not properly know my soul by idea; I know it solely by sentiment, and by experience; and I have never thought without the medium of my brain; I have never perceived objects without the medium of my eyes; I have never heard sounds without the organs of my ears; and it does not appear to me that these sensations can be conveyed in any other way. I believe, however, that I shall hear sounds when the organs of my ears are destroyed; I believe that I shall perceive objects when the light of my eyes is extinguished; I believe that I shall think, and in a manner more close and sublime when my brain shall exist no more.

I believe that my soul shall perform all these operations when my body shall be cold, pale, immovable, and devoured of worms in the tomb: I believe it;—but why? Because this Jesus to whom I have commended my spirit, has said to the penitent thief, and in him to every true Christian, “Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise,” Luke xxiii. 43.

I have no idea of this awful mystery, whereby a God, a God essentially One, associates in his own essence a Father, a Son, and a Holy Ghost; that as the distinction with regard to Paternity, Filiation, and Spiration, is as real as the union with regard to the Godhead. These mysteries have no connexion with my knowledge; yet I believe them: and why? Because I have changed my ideas, because this Jesus to whom I have yielded up my spirit, this Jesus, after preaching the doctrine of the unity of God, has decided, that the Father is God, that the Son is God, that the Holy Ghost is God: and he has said to his apostles, “Go, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”*

SERMON XCVIII.

ON REGENERATION.

PART II.

JOHN iii. 8.

The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

My brethren, it is not in our power to discuss the subject on which we now enter, without deploring the contests it has excited in the christian world. In our preceding discourses you have seen the nature, and the necessity of regeneration: we now proceed to address you on its Author; and to call your attention to this part of Jesus Christ's conversation with Nicodemus; “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.” How often has this subject armed Christian against Christian, and communion against communion? How often has it banished from the church that peace which it seems so much calculated to cherish? No sooner had the apostles entered on their ministry, than they magnified the doctrines of grace; but in magnifying them, they seemed sent to set the world on fire. The Jews and the philosophers, prepossessed in favour of human sufficiency, revolted at a doctrine so opposed to their pride: they presumed on making a progress in virtue, that they owed the praise solely to their own efforts of personal virtue.

No one is ignorant of the noise which the doctrine of grace excited in the ages which followed; of the schism of Pelagius, and of the immense volumes which the ancient fathers heaped on this heretic.—The doctrines of grace have been agitated in the church of Rome: they formed in its bosom two powerful parties, which have given each other alternate blows, and alike accused each other of overturning Christianity. No sooner had our reformers raised the standard, than the disputes concerning the doctrines of grace were on the point of destroying the work they had begun with so much honour, and supported with success; and one saw in the communion they had just formed, the same spirit of division, as that which existed in the communion they had left. The doctrines of grace have caused in this republic as much confusion as in any other part of the Christian world: and what is more deplorable is, that after so many questions discussed, so many battles fought, so many volumes written, so many anathemas launched, the dispositions of the public are not yet conciliated, and the doctrines of grace often remain enveloped in the cloud they endeavoured to dissipate; and so much so that the efforts they made to illustrate so interesting a subject, served merely to confuse and envelope it the more.

But how natty soever this subject may be, it is not my design to disturb the embers, and revive your disputes. I would endeavour, not to divide, but to conciliate and unite your minds: and during the whole of this discourse, in which the Holy Spirit is about to discover himself to you under the emblem of a wind, I shall keep in view the revelation with which a prophet was once honoured: God said to Elijah, “Go forth, and stand on the mountain before the Lord. And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind, an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake, a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire, a still small voice: (a sound coy and subtle.) Then Elijah, awed with reverence at the divine presence, wrapped his face in his mantle,” and recognised the token of Jehovah's presence. The first emblems of this vision have been but too much realized in the controversies of the Christian church: but when shall the latter be realized? Long enough; yea too long, have we seen “the great and strong wind which rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks.” Long enough; yea too long, has the earthquake shook the pillars of the church; but the Lord was not in the wind; the Lord was not in the earthquake. Yet at this very day the Vatican* kindles the fire, and with thunderbolts in its hand, it presumes to determine, or rather to take away, the laws of grace: “but the Lord was not in the fire.”

* The rest of this posthumous sermon is not in the original; neither is there any apology for the loss by the presbyters and deacons who edited the volume. The arguments being resumed in the next sermon, and especially the sermon on “A Taste for Devotion,” will, in some sort, develop the author's sentiments.

* The Vatican is a most magnificent palace at Rome; the residence of the Popes, and celebrated for its library. The learned Varro says it took its name from the answers or oracles called by the Latins *vaticinia*, which the Roman people received there from a god of the same name, who was said to be the author of the first sounds of infants, which is *vo*, from *vagire*, to cry.—J. S.

May thy still small voice, the precursor of the Divinity, and the symbol of his presence, be heard to-day in the midst of this assembly! Excite thy hallowing accents, in these tabernacles we have built for thy glory, and in which we assemble in thy name, O Holy Spirit, Spirit of peace: may thy peace rest on the lips and heart of the preacher; may it animate all those that compose this assembly, that discord may for ever be banished from our churches, and be confined to the abyss of hell from whence it came, and that charity may succeed. Amen.

We must now illustrate the doctrine of the text, and state at large the ideas of the gospel respecting the aids of the Spirit of God, to which regeneration is here ascribed by Jesus Christ, and without which we might justly exclaim with Nicodemus at our Saviour's assertion, "How can these things be?" With that view I shall propose certain maxims, which shall be as so many precautions one should take when entering on this discussion, and which will serve to guide in a road that controversies have rendered so thorny and difficult. We shall afterward include in six propositions all which seems to us a Christian ought to know, and all he ought to do on this subject. This is all that remains for me to say.

Maxim 1. In the selection of passages on which you established the doctrine of the aids of the Holy Spirit, be more cautious to choose those that are pertinent, than to amass a multitude that are inconclusive. The rule prescribed in the beginning of this discourse, and which we shall inviolably follow to the end, not to revive the controversy, prevents my assigning all the reasons that induce me to begin with this precaution. It is a general fault, and indeed a very delicate propensity in defending a proposition, to adopt with avidity, not only what favours it in effect; but what seems to favour it. In the warmth of conversation, and especially in the heat of debate, we use arguments of which we are ashamed when reason returns, and when we calmly converse. Divines are not less liable to this fault than other men. By how many instances might we support this assertion? But not to involve myself in a discussion so delicate and difficult, I only remark, that if there be in our Scriptures an equivocal term, it is that of *spirit*. It is equivocal not only with regard to the diversity of subjects to which it is applied, but also because of the diversity of its bearings on the same subject. And what ought to be the more carefully noticed in the subject we discuss, is, that it has significations without number when applied to the aids of the Holy Spirit which heaven accords to men. Do not imagine that every time it is said the Spirit of God is given to man, the gifts of sanctifying grace are to be understood. In very many places it signifies the gift of miracles. Select, therefore, the passages on which you would establish the doctrine of sanctifying grace; and be less solicitous of amassing a multitude, than of urging those which are pertinent and conclusive.

Maxim 2. In establishing the doctrine of the operation of grace, be cautious of overturning another not less essential to religion. When you establish this part of our Saviour's theo-

logy, be careful not to injure his moral code; and under the plea of rendering man orthodox, do not make him wicked. As there is nothing so rare in the intercourse of life, as a certain equanimity of temper, which makes a man always appear like himself, and unfluctuating, how much soever he may fluctuate in circumstances; so there is nothing more rare in the sciences than that candour of argument, which in maintaining a proposition, we leave in full force some other proposition we had maintained, and which we had had some particular reason for so doing. There are some authors constantly at variance with themselves. What is requisite to refute what a certain author advances in a recent publication? We have but to adduce what he has presumed to establish in a former work. By what means may we refute what a preacher has just advanced in the last sentences of a discourse? By adducing what he presumed to confirm but a moment before in the same discourse. Now, my brethren, there is one point of the Christian doctrine, on which this caution is very necessary; it is that on which we spake to-day. Let us take care that we do not merit the censure which has been made on the most celebrated of the ancient advocates of grace* (whether correct or incorrect I do not undertake to determine;) the censure is, that when attacking the Manicheans, he favoured the cause of the Pelagians; and when attacking the Pelagians, he favoured the cause of the Manicheans. Let us detest the maxims of certain modern preachers concerning the doctrines of grace; that a preacher should be orthodox in the body of his sermon, but heretic in the application. No; let us not be heretics either in the body or in the application of our sermons. Let us neither favour the system of Pelagius, nor that of the Manicheans. Let us have a theology and a morality equally supported. Let us take heed not to establish the doctrine of the divine aids, in a way that attacks the other doctrines, as those men do; for God, who is supremely holy, is not the author of sin. Let us take heed in expounding the passages which establish the doctrine of grace, not to do it in a way which makes them impugn those passages of Scripture, where God "invites all men to repentance;" Rom. ii. 4. and where it is said, that "he is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance," 2 Pet. iii. 9; where he declares that "if we do perish," "it is of ourselves," and only of ourselves, Hos. xiii. 9; where he calls upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem to confess, that he had taken all the proper care that his "vineyard should bring forth grapes, though it brought forth wild grapes," Isa. v. 3, 4; where he introduces himself as addressing to mankind the most pathetic exhortations, and entreaties the most ardent, to promote their conversion, and as shedding the bitterest tears on their refusal; as saying in the excess of his grief, "O that thou hadst known, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace," Luke xix. 41, 42. "O that my people had hearkened unto me," Ps. lxxxi. 13;

* Augustin.

“O that they were wise; that they understood this; that they would consider their latter end,” Deut. xxxii. 29.

Maxim 3. Do not abandon the doctrine of grace, because you are unable to explain all its abstruse refinements, or because you cannot reply to all the inquiries it may have suggested. There is scarcely a proposition which could claim our assent, were we to give it to those only whose several parts we can clearly explain, and to whose many questions we can fully reply. This maxim is essential to all the sciences. Theology has what is common to all human sciences: and in addition, as its object is much more noble and exalted, it has more points, concerning which it is not possible fully to satisfy the mind. This is especially the case with regard to the doctrine we now discuss. I might, were it required, give you many demonstrations, that the nature of the doctrine is such that we cannot perfectly comprehend it. We know so little of the manner in which certain ideas and certain sentiments are excited in the soul; we know so little how the understanding acquiesces, and how the will determines, that it is not surprising if we are ignorant of what is requisite for the understanding to acquiesce, and the will to determine, in religion: we especially know so little of the various means God can employ, when he is pleased to work on our soul, that it is really a chance to hit on the right one by which he draws us from the world: it may be by his sovereignty over our senses; it may be by an immediate operation on the substance of our souls. But without having recourse to this mode of reasoning, the doctrine of my text is quite sufficient to substantiate the maxim I advance. I presume that you ought to admit the doctrine of grace, though you can neither perfectly explain it, nor adequately answer all the questions it may have excited. This is the precise import of the comparison Jesus Christ makes between the agency of the Holy Spirit and the operations of the wind. “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”

Maxim 4. When two truths on the doctrines of grace are apparently in opposition, and cannot be reconciled, sacrifice the less important to that which is of greater moment. Two truths cannot in reality be in opposition. It is a fact demonstrated, that two contradictory propositions cannot both be true; but the limits of our understanding often present a contradiction where in reality none exists. I frequently hear learned men expound the gospel, but adopting different methods to attain the same end, they suggest difficulties alternately. Some press the duty of man; others enlarge on the inability of man, and on the need he has of divine assistance. The former tax the latter with giving sanction to the corruption of man: and the latter charge the former with flattering the pride of man. The first object to the second, that in totally destroying the faculties of man, and in straining the necessity of grace, they authorize him to say, “Seeing literally that I can do nothing, I ought not to blame myself for doing nothing;

nor to make a crime of remaining where I am.” The second charge the first that in conferring too much honour on the powers of man, and in affording him too much reason to believe he is still the arbitrator of his own will, they throw the temptation in his way to crown himself with his own merits, and to become the worker of his own salvation. Now, supposing we were obliged to choose either to lean to the *pride* of man, or to his *corruption*, for which must we decide? I am fully convinced that the necessity of diligence, which is imposed upon us, should not give any colour to our pride: and you will see it instantly; you will see that however great the application which the best of saints may have made to the work of their salvation, humility was their invariable sentiment. You will see that after having read, and thought, and reflected; that having endeavoured to subdue their senses, and to sacrifice the passions God requires in sacrifice, they have believed it their duty to abase their eyes to the earth, and to sink into the dust from which they were made; yea, always to say with the profoundest sentiments of abasement, “O God, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us shame and confusion of face,” Dan. ix. 7. Hence, if we were obliged to choose either a system which apparently favours the pride of man, or a system which apparently favours his corruption, we could not hesitate, we must sacrifice the last to the first. The reason is obvious, because in leaning to the pride of man, you do but favour *one* passion, whereas, by leaning to the corruption of man, you favour every passion; you favour hatred, revenge, and obduracy; and in favouring every passion, you favour this very pride you are wishful to destroy. Now, it must be incomparably better to favour but one passion, than to favour them all in one.

Maxim 5. In pressing the laws of grace, do not impose the law of making rules so general as to admit of no exceptions. I know indeed that God is always like himself, and that there is a certain uniformity which is the grand character of all his actions; but on this occasion, as on many others, he deviates from common rules. There are miracles in grace, as in nature: so you shall presently see, my brethren, in the use of this maxim, and in the necessity of this precaution.

II. Entering now on the doctrine of grace, and with the precautions just laid down, do not fear to follow us into this troubled sea, how dangerous soever it may appear, and how abundant soever it may be, in shipwrecks. I proceed to associate practice with speculation, and to comprise in six propositions all that a Christian ought to know, and all he ought to do, in regard to this subject.

1. Nature is so depraved, that man, without supernatural aids, cannot conform to the conditions of his salvation.

2. That how invincible soever this corruption may be, there is a wide difference between the man who enjoys, and the man who is deprived of revelation.

3. That the aids which man can neither derive from the wreck of nature, nor from exterior revelation, are promised to him in the gospel.

4. That though man can neither draw from the wreck of nature, nor from exterior revelation, the requisite aid to fulfil the conditions of his salvation; and though the grace of the Holy Spirit be promised to him; he has no right to presume on those aids, while he obstinately resists the aids afforded him by his frail nature, and by exterior revelation.

5. That the aids of the Holy Spirit promised to men, are imparted at first by measure; hence to abuse those he already has, is the surest way to obstruct the reception of fresh support.

6. To whatever degree one may have carried the abuse of past favours, one ought not to despair of obtaining fresh support, which should always be asked with fervent prayer.

These, brethren, are our six propositions, which apparently contain all that a Christian ought to know, and all he ought to do on this subject. God is my witness that I enter on the discussion in such a way as appears to me most proper to cherish among us that peace, which should ever be so dear, and to prevent all those unhappy controversies which have agitated the church in general, and this republic in particular. I shall proceed with these propositions in the same temper as I have enumerated them, and haste to make them the conclusion of this discourse.

1. Nature is so depraved, that man, without supernatural aids, cannot conform to the conditions of his salvation. Would to God that this proposition was less true! Would to God that we had more difficulty in proving it! But study your own heart. Listen to what it whispers in your ear concerning the precepts God has given in his word: listen to it on the sight of the man who has offended you. What animosity! what detestation! what revenge! Listen to it in prosperity. What ambition! what pride! what arrogance! Listen to it when we exhort you to humility, to patience, to charity. What evasions! what repugnance! what excuses!

From the study of your own heart, proceed to that of others. Examine the infancy, the life, the death of man. In his infancy you will see the fatal germ of his corruption; sad, but sensible proof of the depravity of your nature, an alarming omen of the future. You will see him prone to evil from his very cradle, indicating from his early years the seeds of every vice, and giving from the arms of the nurses that suckle him, preludes of all the excesses into which he will fall as soon as his capacity is able to aid his corruption. Contemplate him in mature age; see what connexions he forms with his associates! Connexions of ambition; connexions of avarice; connexions of cupidity. Look at him in the hour of death, and you will see him torn from a world from which he cannot detach his heart, regretting even the objects which have constituted his crimes, and carrying to the tomb, if I may so speak, the very passions which, during life, have divided the empire of his soul.

After studying man, study the Scriptures: there you will see that God has pledged the infallibility of his testimony to convince us of a truth, to which our presumption scrupled to subscribe. It will say, that "you were conceived in sin, and shapen in iniquity." It will

say, that "in you; that is, in your flesh, dwelleth no good thing." It will say, that "this flesh is not subject to the law of God; neither indeed can be." It will say, that you carry within you, "a law in your members, which wars against the law of your mind; a flesh which lusteth against the spirit." It will tell you, that man in regard to the conditions of his salvation is a stock, a stone, a nothing; that he is blind and dead. It would be easy to swell the list! It would be easy indeed, but in adducing to you those passages of Scripture on which we found the sad doctrine of natural depravity, I observe the caution already laid down, of preferring in the selection, a small number of conclusive passages, to the production of a multitude. Nature being so far corrupted, man cannot, without the aids of grace, conform to the conditions of his salvation.

Here is the first thing you ought to know, and the first thing you ought to do; it is, to feel your weakness and inability; to humble and abase yourselves in presence of the holy God; to cry from the abyss into which you are plunged, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" Rom. vii. 24. It is to groan under the depravity of sin. O glory of primitive innocence, whither art thou fled! O happy period, in which man was naturally prompted to believe what is true, and to love what is amiable, why art thou so quickly vanished away! Let us not deplore the curse on the ground; the infection of air; nor the animals destined for the service of man, that now turn their fury against him; let us rather deplore our disordered faculties; our beclouded reason, and our perverted will.

2. But however great, however invincible, the corruption of all men may be, there is a wide difference between him who has the advantage of revelation, and him to whom it is denied. This is the *second* thing you ought to know on the subject we discuss; and this *second* point of speculation is a second source of practice. Do not apply to Christians born in the Church, and acquainted with revelation, portraits which the holy Scriptures give solely to those who are born in pagan darkness. I am fully aware that revelation, unattended with the supernatural aids of grace, is inadequate for a man's conversion. The preceding article is sufficient to prove it. I know that all men are naturally "dead in trespasses and sins." It is evident, however, that this death has its degrees; and that the impotency of a man, favoured with revelation, is not of the same kind as that of him who is still in pagan darkness. It is equally manifest, that a man, who, after having heard the doctrine of the gospel, grovels in the same sort of error and of vice into which he was impetuously drawn by his natural depravity, is incomparably more guilty than he who never heard the gospel. Hear what Jesus Christ says of those who, having heard the gospel, and who had not availed themselves of its aids to forsake their error and vice; "Had I not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin." Here is the *second* thing you ought to know; hence the *second* thing you ought to do, is, not to shelter yourselves, with a view to extenuate voluntary depravity

under certain passages of Scripture, which exclaim not against the impotency of a Christian, but against that of a man who is still in pagan darkness; you must apply the general assertion of Jesus Christ to all the exterior cares that have been taken to promote your conversion: "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin." O my soul, with what humiliating ideas should those words of the Lord strike thee! If God had not come; if he had not made thee to suck truth and virtue with thy mother's milk; if he had not raised thee up masters in thy youth, and ministers in thy riper age; if thou hadst not heard so many instructive and pathetic sermons, and read so many instructive and affecting books; if thou hadst not been pressed by a thousand and a thousand calls, thou hadst not had sin; at least thou mightest have exculpated thyself on the ground of thy ignorance and natural depravity; but now thou art "without excuse." O unhappy creature, what years has God tutored thee in his church! What account canst thou give of all his care! Now thou art "without excuse." Here is the way we should study ourselves, and not lose sight of the precaution, not to sap morality under a plea of establishing this part of our theology.

3. The aids which man is unable to draw either from the wreck of nature or from exterior revelation, are promised to him in the gospel: he may attain them by the operations of the Holy Spirit. Thanks be to God this consolatory proposition is supported by express passages of Scripture; by passages the most conclusive, according to our first precaution. What else is the import of the thirty-first chapter of Jeremiah's prophecies? "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.—This shall be the covenant that I will make with them: I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts." What else is the import of the thirty-sixth chapter of Ezekiel's prophecies? "I will sprinkle clean water upon you; I will give you a new heart; I will put a new spirit within you." What else is the import of St. James' words in the first chapter of his general epistle? "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not. And of Jesus Christ in the words of my text, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth." Hence the third thing that we should know, and the third thing that we should do, is, to bless God that he has not left us to the weakness of nature; it is, like St. Paul, "to give thanks to God through Jesus Christ," Rom. i. 8; it is to ask of him those continual supports, without which "we can do nothing." It is often to say to him, "O God, draw us, and we will run after thee. Create in us a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within us," Cant. i. 8; Ps. li. 12.

4. But is it sufficient to pray? Is it enough to ask? We have said in the *fourth* place, that though a man may be unable to draw from frail nature, and exterior revelation, the requisite aids to conform to the conditions of his sal-

vation; he has no right to presume on the grace of the Holy Spirit, while he obstinately resists the aids which frail nature, and revelation afford. But here we seem to forget one of the maxims already laid down, and what we ourselves have advanced; that if it is requisite for me to fulfil the conditions with which the gospel has connected salvation, how can I do otherwise than obstinately resist the efforts which frail nature, and exterior revelation afford? This difficulty is but in appearance. To know, whether when abandoned to our natural depravity, and aided only by exterior revelation, we can conform to the conditions of the gospel; or whether, when abandoned to the depravity of nature, and aided only by exterior revelation, we are invincibly impelled to every species of crime, are two very different questions. That we cannot perform the conditions of salvation, I readily allow; but that we are invincibly impelled to every species of crime, is insupportable. Whence then came the difference between heathen and heathen, between Fabricius and Lucullus, between Augustus and Sylla, between Nero and Titus, between Commodus and Antony? Whatever you are able to do by your natural strength, and especially when aided by the light of revelation, do it, if you wish to have any well-founded hope of obtaining the supernatural aids, without which you cannot fulfil the conditions of your salvation. But the Scriptures declare, you say, that without the grace of the Holy Spirit you can do nothing, and that you can have no real virtue but what participates of your natural corruption: I allow it; but practice the virtues which participate of your natural corruption, if you would wish God to grant you his divine aids. Be corrupt as Fabricius, and not as Lucullus; be corrupt as Augustus, and not as Sylla; be corrupt as Titus, and not as Nero; as Antonius, and not as Commodus. One of the grand reasons why God withholds from some men the aids of grace, is, because they resist the aids they might derive from their frail nature. Here the theology of St. Paul, and the decision of that great preceptor in grace, imposes silence on every difficulty of which this point may be susceptible. Speaking of the heathens in the first chapter of his epistle to the Romans, he says, "That which may be known of God is manifested in them;" or, as I would rather read, is manifest to them; "but because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful," Rom. i. 19—21. "That which may be known of God is manifested unto them;" here then is the aid pagans might draw from the ruins of nature; they might know that there was a God; they might have been thankful for his temporal gifts, for rain and fruitful seasons; and instead of the infamous idolatry to which they abandon themselves, they might have seen the invisible things of God, which are manifest by his work. And because they did not derive those aids from the ruins of nature, they became wholly unworthy of divine assistance; "God gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts.—They changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever."

5. Our fifth proposition imports, that the aids of the Holy Spirit promised to man are gradually imparted; hence, to misapply the grace we have, is the most dangerous way to obstruct the reception of fresh support. But listen to some of our supralapsarians, and they will say, that the design of God in promising these aids, is to assure us that how much soever we shall resist one measure of grace, he will still give us a greater measure, and ever proportion the counterpoise of grace to that of a deliberate, obstinate, voluntary enemy. So many have understood the doctrine of our church respecting irresistible grace; to judge of it consonant to their ideas, this grace redoubles its efforts as the sinner redoubles his revolts; so that he who shall throw the greatest obstacles in its way, shall be the very man who shall have the fairest claims to its richest profusion.

Poor Christians! are these your conceptions of religion? My God! is it thus thy gospel is understood? I hope, my brethren, that not any one of us shall have cause to recognise himself in this portrait; for I am bold to aver, that of all the most heterodox opinions, and the most hostile to the genius of the gospel, the one I have just put into the mouth of certain Christians, is that which really surpasses them all. On the contrary, he who opposes the greatest obstacles to the operations of grace, is precisely the man who must expect the smallest share of it. Grace diminishes its efforts in proportion as the sinner redoubles his resistance. Obstinate revolt against its first operations, is the sure way to be deprived of the second; and the usual cause which deprives us of it, is the want of co-operation with its true design.

6. We are now come to the last proposition, with which we shall close this discourse. However unworthy we may be of the divine assistance, and whatever abuse we may have made of it, we should never despair of its aids. We do not say this to flatter the lukewarmness of man, and to soothe his shameful delay of conversion; on the contrary, if there be a doctrine which can prompt us to diligence; if there be a doctrine which can induce us to devote the whole time of our life to the work of salvation, it is the one we have just announced in this discourse, and made the subject of our two preceding sermons. We have considered three points in the conversation of Jesus Christ with Nicodemus; the *nature*, the *necessity*, and the *Author* of the "new birth." And what is there in all this which does not tend to sap the delay of conversion?

Let each of you recollect, as far as memory is able, what Jesus Christ has taught, and what we have taught after him, on the subject of regeneration. This work does not consist in a certain superficial change which may be made in a moment: in that case, it would suffice to have a skilful physician, and to commission him to warn us of the moment when we must leave the world, that we may devote that precise moment to the work of our salvation. But the regeneration which Jesus Christ requires, is an entire transformation; a change of ideas, a change of desires, a change of hopes, a change of taste, a change in the schemes of happiness. How then does the

system of delaying conversion accord with this idea? What time would you allow for this change and reformation? A month? a week? a day? the last extremity of a mortal malady? What! in so short a time would you consummate a work to which the longest life would hardly suffice? And in what circumstances would you do it! In delirium; in the agonies of death; at a time when one is incapable of the smallest application; at a time when we can scarce admit among the attendants, a friend, a child, whom we love as our own life; at a time when the smallest business appears as a world of difficulty?

But if what we have now said, after this "teacher come from God," on the nature of regeneration, has begun to excite some scruples in your mind concerning the plan of delaying conversion, let each of you recall, as far as he is able, what Jesus Christ has said, and what we have said, following him, concerning the necessity of regeneration: for since you are obliged to confess that regeneration cannot be the work of the last moments of life, I ask, on what ground you found the system of delaying conversion? Do you flatter yourselves that God will be so far satisfied with your superficial efforts towards regeneration, as to excuse the genuine change? Do you hope that this general declaration of the Saviour, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of God," shall have an exception with regard to you? have then the reflections we made in our second discourse against this chimerical notion, made no impression on you? Do we preach to rational beings? or do we preach to stocks and stones? Have ye not perceived that regeneration is founded on the genius of the gospel; and that every doctrine of it is comprised in the proposition, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." It is founded on the nature of man, and on the proposed design of Jesus Christ to make him happy; and the acquisition of this end would imply a contradiction, if a man should revolt at the change and the reformation; because, since the loss of primitive innocence, our state is become our calamity; and it would imply a contradiction that we should be delivered from our calamity, unless we should be delivered from our state. It is founded on the nature of God himself: of the two, God must either renounce his perfections, or we must renounce our imperfections; and if I may dare so to speak of my Maker, God must either regenerate himself, or we must regenerate ourselves.

Upon what then do you found your hopes of conversion on a death-bed? Upon the aids of that grace without which you never can be converted? But does the manner in which we have just described those aids, afford you any hope of obtaining them, when you shall have obstinately and maliciously resisted them to the end?

Meanwhile, I maintain my last proposition; I maintain that however unworthy you may have rendered yourselves of divine aid, you ought never to despair of obtaining it. Yes, though you should have resisted the Holy

Ghost to the end of life; though you should have but one hour to live, devote it; call in your ministers; offer up prayers, and take the kingdom of heaven by violence! We will not deprive you of this the only hope which can remain: we will not exclude you from the final avenues of grace. Perhaps your last efforts may have effect; perhaps your prayers shall be heard; perhaps the Holy Spirit will give effect to the exhortations of his ministers; and, to say all in a single word, perhaps God will work a miracle in your favour, and deviate from the rules he is accustomed to follow in the conversion of other men.

Perhaps; ah! my brethren, how little consolation does this word afford in the great events of life; and less consolation still when applied to our salvation! *Perhaps*; ah! how little is that word capable of consoling a soul when it has to contend with death. My brethren, we can never consent to make your salvation depend on a *perhaps*; we cannot see that you would have any other hope of salvation than that of a man, who throws himself from a tower; a man actually descending in the air, that may be saved by a miracle, but he has so many causes to fear the contrary. We cannot see that you would have any other ground of hope than that of a man who is under the axe of the executioner, whose arm is uplifted, which may indeed be held by a celestial hand; but how many reasons excite alarm that he will strike the fatal blow! We would wish to be able to say to each of you, "fear not," Mark v. 30. We would wish that each of you could say to himself, "I know; I am persuaded;" 2 Tim. i. 12. Second our wishes: labour; pray; pray without ceasing; labour during the whole of life. This is the only means of producing that gracious assurance and delightful persuasion. May God bless your efforts, and hear our prayers. Amen. To whom be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON XCVIII.

THE NECESSITY OF REGENERATION.

PART III.

[NOW FIRST TRANSLATED.]

JOHN iii. 5—7.

Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again.

It is a sublime idea that the prophets give of the change which the preaching of the gospel should effectuate in the earth, when they represent it under the figure of a new creation: "Behold I create new heavens, and a new earth; and the former things shall not be remembered," Isa. lxx. 17. These new heavens, and this new earth, my brethren, must have new inhabitants. It would imply an absurdity for God to unite the disorders of the old world with the felicities of the new crea-

tion. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are past away, and behold all things are become new," 2 Cor. v. 17.

This was the change which Jesus Christ announced to Nicodemus, though the Rabbi could not comprehend it. How explicit soever the declarations of the prophets had been on this subject; however familiar their style was among the Jews, *regeneration*, to *regenerate a new man*, were terms whose import Nicodemus could not distinguish. He flattered himself that it sufficed for admission into the communion of the Messiah, to acknowledge the authenticity of his mission, the sublimity of his doctrine, and the superiority of his miracles. "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do those miracles that thou dost, except God be with him." He hoped that this avowal would conciliate the esteem of Jesus Christ, while it equally preserved that of the Jews. He flattered himself with having found the just mean of distinction between that of his persecutors, and his disciples. Jesus Christ undeceived him in the words upon which our discourse must devolve. No, no, said he; God requires no such conduct; to him all accommodations are odious; you must choose, either to perish with those who fight against me, or become renovated with those who account it their glory to fight under my stewards. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. Art thou a doctor of the law, and knowest thou not these things?"

We said sometime ago, that one must not confound the change which the gospel requires of a weak and diffident Christian, with that which it requires of a man who has not as yet embraced religion, as it would be wrong to say of some who hear us, and who, notwithstanding their weakness and diffidence, are really members of Christ, that they shall not enter the kingdom of God, unless they are born again. But can we doubt, that among the many who compose the circles of Christian society, among the many who compose this congregation, there are many who are in the error of Nicodemus? Can we doubt that many of you also, like this doctor, still divide yourselves between God and the world; and who flatter themselves to have the essence of Christianity, when they have but the exterior name. It is to men of this class, that we address ourselves in this discourse. We proceed conformably to the example of our great Master to make an effort to open their eyes, and show them the inutility of this semi-Christianity to which their views are circumscribed; and declare, "verily, verily, except a man be born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

It is thus we shall continue the execution of the plan formed in our first discourse. We there remarked three things in the conversation of Jesus Christ with Nicodemus: the *nature* of regeneration; the *necessity* of regeneration; and the *Author* of regeneration. The first of these articles we have already discussed: we now proceed to the second, and relying on the aids of God already implored, and which we still implore with all the powers

of our souls, we proceed to enforce the necessity of regeneration, whose nature and characters we have already described.

We take it for granted, that this expression so familiar in our Scriptures, "the kingdom of God," or "the kingdom of heaven," cannot be wholly unknown to you. The Hebrews substitute heaven for God (and this mode of speaking is common enough in all languages;) hence come the expressions which abound in our writings, the aids of Heaven for the aids of God; and death inflicted by the hand of Heaven, for the hand of God. Just so, the kingdom of heaven, and the kingdom of God, are two phrases promiscuously used in the New Testament. I forbear more texts, which would only waste the time destined for truths more important and more controverted.

Now, this expression, "the kingdom of God," can have but one of those two meanings, of the most common occurrence in our Scriptures. It may signify either the economy of the Messiah, which the prophet Daniel represents under the idea of a kingdom, or the felicity of the blessed. The first is the import of our Saviour's words, Matthew the xiiith; "If I had cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you." That is to say, if I have received of God the gift of miraculous powers; if I eject demons by the power of God, you may be fully assured that the Advent of the Messiah, which you have awaited with so much desire, is come unto you; it being impossible that God should lend his Almighty power to an impostor.

This expression, "the kingdom of God," signifies also the state of the blessed. So it must be understood in the encomium which our Saviour pronounced on the great faith of a heathen centurion. "Verily, I say unto you, that many shall come from the east, and from the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven;" that is, many of those gentiles who were then "without God, and without hope in the world," shall be admitted with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to the celestial felicity, represented in our Scriptures by the idea of a feast. We think ourselves authorized to take this expression in the first of the meanings we here just assigned it: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he shall not enter the kingdom of God;" that is, to become a member of the church of Christ, he must be born again; but if any one will adhere to the latter sense, we feel no interest in disputing the point. Jesus Christ requires us to teach, that his communion affords no mean of attaining eternal happiness, but that of regeneration. The distinction has nothing that should stop us: to have named it, is enough; perhaps too much.

Let us come at once to the essential point, and prove that this regeneration is absolutely necessary to become a Christian, or as I have said, to attain to celestial happiness. This we shall prove by three arguments.

I. The first is taken from the genius of the Christian religion.

II. The second from the wants of man.

III. The third from the perfections of God.

I. From the genius of the Christian religion.

All the principles of the Christian religion, are in direct opposition to the principles of the unregenerate. It is not possible to embrace the Christian religion, without being born again in the sense we have given to this expression. What is the sense given to this figurative phrase, *born again*, in our first discourse? In what does the truth of the metaphor consist? A change of ideas; a change of desires; a change of taste; a change of hope; a change of pursuits. Examine the nature of the Christian religion, and you will at once see that its principles are directly opposed to those of the unregenerate; and that the religion of a man which rejects conversion as to any one of these five points, be it which it may, is a religion directly opposed to that of Jesus Christ.

1. The religion of a man who rejects a change of ideas is a religion directly opposed to that of Jesus Christ. The change of ideas here in question, consists, as already explained, not indeed in the renunciation of reason, but in a persuasion that the best possible use a rational being can make of reason, is to allow it to lead him to God, who is the source of all intelligence. Now, it is demonstrated by the nature of the Christian religion, that without this disposition of mind, no man can be a Christian.

The Christian religion teaches us two sorts of truths, some which lie open to our ideas, and which the mind of man may discover by its own efforts; but which on the coming of Jesus Christ were so beclouded with obscurity, and with innumerable prejudices, as to require energies almost more than human to penetrate them. Such were the doctrines of a providence, the immortality of the soul, a judgment, a future state, and some others. The object of the Christian religion has been to substitute divine authority for that of discussion. You cannot fully demonstrate the doctrine of a providence, because of the obscurity in which it is involved. This doctrine is decided in the gospel: hear the words of Jesus Christ. "The hairs of your head are numbered: God feeds the ravens; a sparrow falls not to the ground without his will." You cannot fully demonstrate the doctrines of the immortality of the soul, and of a future state, because of the darkness in which they are enveloped. Jesus Christ has decided these points. Hear his words: "The wicked shall go away into everlasting fire, but the righteous into life eternal." It is the same with regard to other doctrines. In this respect, it seems quite clear to me, that the principles of the unregenerate are incompatible with the design of the Christian religion. Because its designs on all these points being to supply by authority that of discussion, no man can be a Christian who does not submit to the authority by which they are decided. The temper of a man who will believe nothing, admit nothing, but what can be demonstrated by the efforts of his own mind, is directly opposed to the design of the Christian religion; hence, on this point, a man must be born again before he can enter the kingdom of God: the religion of the unregenerate, and that of the Christian, are not only different, but directly opposed.

The second order of truths revealed by the

Christian religion are altogether above the sphere of the human understanding, and which our reason would never have discovered, though it had been perfectly exempted from error and prejudice. Such are all those that relate to the means God has chosen for the redemption of the human kind. God alone could reveal those, because none but God could know what he had chosen. This is the doctrine of all the sacred authors; it is particularly that of St. Paul, in the second chapter of his first Epistle to the Corinthians. "The wisdom that we preach," he says, "is not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world;" (by the princes of this world I here understand doctors of the first rank, whether they were Rabbins, which in Hebrew means masters, or whether princes imports philosophers,) "but we speak the hidden wisdom of God in a mystery;" that is, *hidden*. Why is this the wisdom of God? Why is it a mystery? Because none but the God who had formed it could have discovered it, and no man could reason out those things by the efforts of his own understanding. The apostle adds, these are the things, "that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard; neither have entered into the heart of man, the things that God hath prepared for them that love him;" that is to say, these are plans of God's sovereign pleasure, in favour of the faithful. Now, the plans which God had formed by his sovereign pleasure, the "things which had not entered into the heart of man, God hath revealed to us by his Spirit; by the Spirit which searcheth the deep things of God," and most impenetrable to man; as the mind of man is conscious of its own designs, and most impenetrable to others. "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him; even so, the things of God knoweth no man save the Spirit of God."

The design of the gospel with regard to truths of the second order has been to substitute authority for reason, to substitute the decisions of Jesus Christ for the natural weakness of man, who is inadequate to discover these things. One cannot therefore be a Christian unless one bow down to divine authority. By consequence, to be a Christian one must be born again, and change our ideas; hence the religion of the unregenerate, and that of a Christian are not only different, but incompatible.

What we have said on the change of ideas we equally affirm with regard to the other changes, in which we have made the nature of regeneration to consist: but the limits of our time, and the importance of the subjects, which remain for discussion, prevent our proving it in all its extent.

2. An unregenerate man follows his own will, and admits no rule of conduct, but that of his passions. He becomes attached to virtue, when it may happen to be in unison with his humour, with his disposition, with his worldly interests. But these principles are wholly incompatible with those of a Christian, who has vowed, on embracing Christianity, to renounce his own will, and to acknowledge no rule of conduct but the laws of Christ; and to become attached to holiness, whether it may

be coincident or revolting to his humour, his disposition, and his temporal interests.

3. An unregenerate man has no taste but for the pleasures of the age. But this principle is incompatible with the principles of our religion, which is designated to purify our taste, and render us alive to pleasures more worthy of the excellence of the soul.

4. An unregenerate man finds his hopes on second causes; on the favour of the great, on the course of the winds, on the fertility of fields, on the prosperity of trade. But these principles are incompatible with the design of our holy religion, which prompts us to found our hopes solely on the Divine favour, and elevate the soul above dependence on all created good.

5. An unregenerate man forms projects of terrestrial happiness. He says, as the worldlings in the 4th Psalm, Who will make "our corn and wine to increase?" Who will augment our revenues? Who will amplify our fortunes? Who will give us the lustre of a name, and the glare of reputation? Who will gratify this mad ambition which absorbs the soul, and prompts us to trample on our species, and look on men who have, in common with ourselves, the same Creator, the same faculties, the same grandeur, and the same baseness, as diminutive worms unworthy of our regards. But these principles are incompatible with our holy religion, whose grand design is to inspire us with the sentiments of confiding in God alone the care of our happiness, how difficult soever the road may appear in which he calls us to walk.

II. We have proved from the nature of our holy religion that to be a Christian, we must be born again; let us now prove it by what is requisite for the happiness of man; let us prove, that God in giving us a religion which appeared so rigorous, has not acted as a tyrant, but as a lenient legislator, and a compassionate Father, whose sole design was to provide for the wants of his creatures. This appears at first insupportable. It seems that the love of God would have shone in the gospel with quite a different lustre had it been his pleasure to exercise over us a sovereignty less despotic; had he left us the uncontrolled disposal of our faculties, and had he been mindful to dispense with those renovations which cost so much to the flesh. I am confident, however, of demonstrating to you, that had God relaxed any part of this pretended rigour, he must have retrenched it from your happiness.

The happiness of man demands that religion should effectuate a change in his ideas in the sense already explained; the happiness of man demands that Jesus Christ himself should condescend to exercise a sovereign control over our reason, and himself decide whatever we ought to believe on the subject of religion. To the proof of this we now proceed.

One of the most dangerous, and at the same time the most cruel, dispositions of the mind, is to revoke in doubt the fundamental truths of religion. Assuredly this is one of the most dangerous, for that doubt plunges us into one abyss after another. The speculative truths of religion are the basis on which the practical are supported. The basis of this practical

truth, that we must detest injustice, is a belief that there is a God who detests it. If you hesitate with regard to the speculative truth, that there is a God who detests injustice, you will hesitate with regard to the practical truth, that we ought to detest injustice.—The foundation of this practical truth, that we ought not to love the world, devolves on the speculative truth, that the friendship of this world draws down the enmity of God. If then you should hesitate with regard to the speculative truth, that the friendship of this world attracts the enmity of God, you would hesitate with regard to the practical truth that we ought not to love the world, Jam. iv. 4.

But it is equally cruel as dangerous, to cherish doubts with regard to the fundamental doctrines of religion. You do not feel the cruelty of this disposition, now that you have a little health, a little strength, and a share of prosperity; you consider the game of life which you play, as the most important subject that can occupy your mind; but when you shall enter into yourselves; when you shall extend your views beyond your senses, and the confined circle of surrounding objects; ah! when you shall arrive at the period in which the world shall present nothing but a scene about to vanish away; Oh! my God! how cruel will those doubts then appear! when you shall be unable to satisfy your mind on those most important inquiries. Am I only a material substance, or is this material substance united to a spiritual substance? Will this spiritual substance to which my body is united be involved in its dissolution, or will it rise above its ruins? Is the religion to which I have adhered, the religion of Jesus Christ, or is it the religion of anti-christ?

But is it possible for one to avoid a disposition so dangerous and cruel when one has no other guide in the theory of religion than one's own ideas? I know that all men have propensities to religion on coming into the world; I know that "the gentiles who have not the law, are a law unto themselves." But after having seriously meditated on the confined limits of my understanding, on the force of my prejudices, on the rashness of my decisions, and on so many other truths which induce me to distrust myself: when after having been profoundly engaged in these reflections, I find myself called upon to determine by my own light on the grand question of religion; when I transport myself into the midst of all those systems to which the imagination of men has given birth; when I find myself called upon to dissipate all those chaoes, to develop all those sophisms, and take a decided part among so many controversies, and learned characters; when I find myself, as before stated, left to determine by my own efforts whether the soul be immortal, whether there be a Providence; and especially when I say to myself, that on the manner in which I shall determine these questions my everlasting happiness or misery depends, that to deceive myself is to destroy myself, and that there can scarcely be a mistake on these grand points which may not be fatal; I frankly avow that I fall under the weight, and that the terror only excited by the magnitude of the task imposed, deprives me of the courage of

undertaking it, and reduces me to an incapability of discharging it.

In this state Jesus Christ extends to me his hand. I find a religion which demonstrates its divine authority by proofs so adapted to my capacity, that a serious attention, aided by a moderate capacity, suffices to perceive its force. I find a religion which guides me to eternal life. I understand this truth which decides on all the propositions, on whose account I had doubts so cruel and dangerous: this truth substitutes, if one may so speak, the Spirit of God for the knowledge of man; it requires that truths so important, which have so great an influence on my happiness, shall not be decided by the wisdom of man, but by the spirit and wisdom of God. Let us acknowledge it, my brethren, let us acknowledge that there is nothing more assortable to the wants of man than a religion formed on this plan; there is nothing we can more desire than the like tribunal; and there is nothing more advantageous than an entire submission to its decisions.

But if the happiness of man demand that religion should require a change of his ideas in the sense we have explained, it equally requires that he should change the objects of his pursuits. What men could wish, as most advantageous, is, that Jesus Christ should condescend to leave to themselves the sole care of their happiness. Two considerations withhold our assent to this notion. The *first* is, that we are not sufficiently aware of our ignorance when we form imaginary schemes of happiness; the *second* is, that we have no idea of the manner in which the Saviour loves, nor in what respects he really loves mankind.

1. Let us acknowledge our ignorance with regard to the schemes of happiness. Do we really know in what true happiness consists? we who do not know ourselves; we who do not know to what extent the faculties of the soul may be improved; we who know not of what operations an intelligent being is capable who has ideas but of two or three substances, and who wants information to know, whether there are ten thousand substances besides those we know; we who have had but perception of a few sensations, and who could not form any sort of notions of an infinity of others; of whose attainment our souls are susceptible? Do we really know in what happiness consists? We, who resemble those clowns who have never gone beyond their village or hamlet, and who affect to judge of politeness, of high life, of courtly airs, of polished manners, of real grandeur, conformably to the ideas formed of them in those hamlets and villages? Do we know in what true happiness consists? We, who have never gone from the little spot of the universe where the Creator placed, but not confined us; we, who have never joined the choirs of angels, of archangels, of cherubim, of seraphim? We, who have never been in the heavenly city of God, in the Jerusalem from above, where the Divinity discovers the most glorious marks of his presence, receives the adorations of the myriads who serve him, and are continually in his presence?—Do we know in what true happiness consists? We, whose taste is spoiled by intercourse with corruptible beings, with the avaricious, who think to be

happy by making their heaps of gold and silver; with the impure, who think that happiness consists in impudence, and in violating the boundaries of modesty; with the vain and haughty, who think that to be happy one must be able to trace a pedigree with kings and princes in the line of our ancestors; and that a connexion with worms of earth, with dust, with those phantoms of grandeur, can make us truly great?—Do we know in what true happiness consists? No, Lord, if thou shouldst this day place my destiny in my own choice; if thou shouldst bid me form for myself whatever kind of happiness I should please; if thou shouldst place before me the whole scale of grandeur and glory, leaving me at full liberty to take whatever portion I might please, I would entreat thee still to let me retain those bonds with which I willingly fettered myself on embracing religion; I would address to thee the most ardent prayers, not to leave my felicity in hands so bad as mine, and that thou alone shouldst be the dispenser of my happiness.

2. But we should especially feel how salutary it is, that Jesus Christ should require us to renounce ourselves with regard to schemes of happiness, if we knew the greatness of his love to men. Yes, my brethren, if we fully knew this love, we should leave all to its decision. Venture, O my soul, on this ocean of love that thy Saviour expands in the gospel; lose thyself in the immensity of the love of God; make vigorous efforts to attain “to its length and breadth, its height and depth, which passeth knowledge.” O think of what thy Redeemer has done for thee. Think, that in the bosom of the Father, enjoying infinity of delights, he thought of thee. Think, that he has come to thee, that he has clothed himself with thy infirmities; that he has placed himself in the breach before the tribunal of his Father; that he has covered thee with his person that the arrows shot by celestial anger might not reach thee, but stick fast in himself alone; think that when enduring those torments which men and demons caused him to suffer, he sustained himself by the thought that his sufferings and death would render a creature happy who to him was unspeakably dear; think, that from the height of glory to which he was exalted after having finished the work the Father had given him to do, he cast his eyes on thee, makes thy salvation his grand concern, and tastes redoubled delights of felicity by the thought, that thou must become a joint-heir with him. Lose thyself in this most delightful, this ravishing thought, and see, see now whether there be any thing hard, any thing difficult, any thing which ought not to transport thee with joy in the conditions which thy Saviour imposes, of sacrificing to him thy imaginary schemes of happiness, and leaving thy condition wholly to his love.

Is it then, speaking absolutely, beyond the Divine omnipotence to harmonize our happiness with our concupiscence? If God had testified a greater lenity towards our defects than what he has revealed in the gospel; if he had deigned to receive us into favour with our errors, prejudices, our passions, our caprices; and if after we have indulged during life in the pleasures of the age, he would have con-

ferred upon us the pleasures of eternity reserved for virtue, could he not in this case have made a better provision for the happiness of man? That is to say, that because you have obstinately adhered to your sins, you would have God cease to be just; that is to say, because you have refused to be holy, you would have the Holy One become an accomplice in your crimes; to say all in a word, because you would not change your corrupt nature, you would have him cease to be holy, who is all pure, all holy; I would say, purity and holiness itself. For I do contend, that when the degree of indulgence which God has extended to sinners in the gospel, is fully viewed, he could not have extended it farther, without laying aside his perfections. This is what was understood when we indicated the necessity of regeneration for our third head, as founded on the attributes of God. This part demands our serious attention. I will therefore proceed to considerations of another kind, provided those among you who have formed the habit of thought and reflection, will deign to follow me in this short meditation.

III. The finest idea that we can form of the Divinity; and at the same time, that which is the foundation of the confidence we place in his word, and the assurance with which we rely on his promises, is that of a uniform Being, whose attributes have the exactest harmony, and who is always in perfect accordance with himself. The want of harmony is characteristic of the greatest imperfection in a finite intelligence; that when one of his attributes is opposed to another, or even at variance with itself; when his wisdom fails to second, or rather to support his power, in such sort, that though he has means to collect materials for building a town, yet he may want the talent of arrangement; or, though he may have the wisdom of arrangement, yet he may be destitute of power to collect the materials. It is the same in all like cases. This character of imperfection, inseparable from all created intelligences, is the cause of all our disappointments whenever we have placed our confidence in an arm of flesh. “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. Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm.” Ps. cxlvi. 3, 4; Jer. xvii. 5. Why so? Because we cannot safely trust a being unless he has the harmony of the perfections of which we have spoken, and because this harmony is never found in man. His power may be favourable to you; but his wisdom failing in the support of his power, he may make you miserable by the very means he employs to make you happy. His power also may not act in unison with his wisdom. Though he may today be adequate to your wants, he may not be so to-morrow. This man, this first of men, who lives to-day, may die to-morrow; the breath which animates him, may be gone; he may return to earth, and all his flattering designs to promote your happiness shall vanish away. But this harmony of attributes, which cannot be found in the creatures, may be found in the Creator.

This principle being established, I discover, my brethren, in the perfections of God a new source of reasons for the doctrines already advanced; and I ask, which of the two religions best represents the Divinity as a Being, whose attributes are exactly harmonized, and ever in perfect unison with himself? Is it the religion of the regenerate, or that of the unregenerate?

When is it that the power of God is in perfect accordance with the wisdom of God? It is when his wisdom destines to a certain end, the things proper for that end, which his power has produced. This is the idea of the Divinity every where found in the religion of the regenerate. God has provided in the gospel whatever is requisite to make us holy; light, motives, examples, aids. These are the effects of his power. The things which his power has afforded, so proper to make us holy, he has connected with their destination. God requires that we should be holy; these are the effects of his wisdom. Here is the harmony of his wisdom with his power; while, on the contrary, in the religion of the unregenerate there exists not the smallest trace of harmony between his wisdom and his power. God confers upon us in the gospel every requisite to make us saints: here is an effect of his power: but if he should dispense with our being made holy, what would become of his wisdom?

When is it that the goodness of God accords with his justice? It is when the rights of his justice are not invaded by the effects of his goodness. This is the idea of the Divinity which is given by the religion of the regenerate. God saves sinners; here is the effect of his goodness: but it is on condition of their renouncing sin; here is the right of his justice. See now the harmony of justice and goodness. On the contrary, in the religion of the unregenerate there exists no harmony between goodness and justice. God saves sinners; here is the effect of his goodness: but should he dispense with their being saved from sin, what would become of his justice?

When does the justice of God appear to accord with his goodness? It is when testifying his love of order on one occasion, he evinces no indifference for order on another occasion. This is the idea of the religion of the regenerate! His love of order has appeared in the most striking manner in the satisfaction he has required of the Redeemer. This love is demonstrated by the conditions under which he proposes to rescue the fruits of his passion. On the contrary, in the religion of the unregenerate, there is not the slightest harmony between his justice and his goodness. He requires of the Redeemer a perfect satisfaction. Here is the effect of his love of order. If he put the redeemed in possession of the fruit of his passion, however rebellious their passions, however execrable their purposes, however notorious their ingratitude, where would be his love of order? where would be the harmony of his goodness with his justice?

Let us therefore conclude, that unless God should renounce his perfections, unless he should set one attribute at variance with another, and sometimes the same attribute at variance with itself, he cannot save hardened sinners, without changing his own nature;

without setting one of his perfections against another, and even the same perfection against itself. And if the same perfection of God be at variance with itself, if one perfection be in opposition to another, if God must renounce himself, if the perfect nature of the Divinity be liable to change, as is supposed by the system I now attack, how can we in future repose confidence in his word? How can we venture on his promises? Let a God imperfect and contradictory be once supposed, (and such he is in your system,) let it once be supposed, that he has said you may enter heaven without regeneration, and all faith in his word, and reliance on his promises must for ever cease.

Thus, what we pledged ourselves to prove, we have endeavoured to execute; that to be a Christian, we must be born again. But we fear lest a remark we made in our first discourse, and which was repeated at the beginning of this, should frustrate our expectation. The proposition of our Saviour "ye must be born again," we said, ought to be restricted; that the term ought not to be applied indifferently to all; that it regarded those only whose sins separate them from his table; that one must not confound the change Jesus Christ requires of a man who is not a Christian, but would embrace religion, with that which he requires of a weak Christian who recovers from his defects.

This remark, then, so requisite to illustrate the nature of regeneration, does it not enfeeble, in some of our minds, the necessity of the change we proposed to establish? The evasions of the heart are innumerable, and when the multitude of those Christians is considered to whom "our gospel is hid, because the god of this world hath blinded their mind," I fear lest many nominal Christians should reason in this way: at least, so far as to say, that what we enforce concerning the necessity of regeneration does not concern them. I belong to a Christian congregation, and though some farther reformation must yet be effectuated in my conduct, it is only such as Jesus Christ requires of the weak and wandering Christian; I am not the character which he requires to be born again. My brethren, if I have opened a breach, I must endeavour to heal it; if I have given occasion to false inferences, I must endeavour to correct them; if I have preached the necessity of regeneration in general, I must now preach it in particular, and as applicable to Nicodemus, to whom Jesus Christ spake; and in drawing the character of many of my hearers, and say to them as the Saviour said to Nicodemus, "marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again; Verily, verily, I say unto thee, that except a man be born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

What was the character of Nicodemus? Nicodemus was one of those men who temporize between Christ and the world; whose minds are sufficiently enlightened to know the truth, but who have not a sufficiency of courage to honour it, except it can be done without danger; who would indeed be saved, but who cannot find resolution to make all the sacrifices which salvation requires; who come to Christ, but they come by night; who are Christians in

judgment, but they dare not avow it to the Jews.

What was the idea which Jesus Christ formed of the real state of this ruler in Israel? What duties did he impose upon him? On what conditions did he receive him for a disciple? Did he regard him as already a Christian? Did he require merely the change which subsists in a weak and wavering Christian, or the change indispensable in one who is yet in a carnal state? Did he prescribe the merely superficial change, or require the transformation of a new birth? It is not you, my brethren, but the gospel, which gives the answers to these inquiries. Jesus Christ said to this doctor, to this man, who was a teacher from God, to this man whose mind was enlightened to know the truth, to this man who wished to be saved, who came to him, and who was a Christian in judgment; Jesus Christ said, "Except a man be born again he cannot enter the kingdom of God. Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again."

But why did the Saviour address the ruler in so decided a manner? Because the ruler was a Christian in judgment, and would not be one in conduct; because this man came to him by night, and would not come by day; because this man wished to be saved, and would not make the sacrifices which salvation required; because this man was sufficiently enlightened to know the truth, and had not courage to avow the truth; and to say all in one word, because this man was a servant of God by profession, and at the same time a servant of the world; because such a man, according to the morality of Jesus Christ, cannot be a Christian; I would say, he cannot, conformably to the new covenant, be a member of the Christian church. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again he cannot enter the kingdom of God. Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again. Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things?"

APPLICATION.

Conclude then, my brethren; preach, and make yourselves the application of this discourse: see then to what end you pervert our doctrine, that one must not confound the change Jesus Christ requires in a man who has not yet embraced Christianity, with that he requires of a weak and inconstant believer! But ah! we must not abandon so important a conclusion to the caprice of man; it belongs to us to enforce it; it belongs to us to make its whole evidence, its whole propriety felt as much as is in our power; it belongs to us to unite our whole mind, and strength, and voice, to dissipate, if possible, so many evasions which the most part of us cease not to oppose to the decisions of eternal truth.

First, the whole of what we have said on the necessity of regeneration, has a direct bearing on you, the true disciples of Nicodemus; who, finding yourselves in similar circumstances, adopt a similar conduct; and unable to come to Jesus Christ by day without danger, venture to approach by night; you, whom we know not for the future how to terminate, because of certain feelings of com-

passion we cannot eradicate, and which forbid the refusal of the appellation of brethren; but which a supineness of many years continuance, does not allow us to regard you as Christians. These incessant evasions; those procrastinations of making an open profession of religion; these complicated pretexts; these frivolous excuses; this obstinate resistance of the voice which cries, "Come out of Babylon, my people;" all these dispositions which give you so striking a resemblance to Nicodemus, and which give you so just a title to be called *Nicodemites*, do but too much justify the proposition addressed to the Rabbi, your hero, and your model, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." Verily I say unto you, if you do not abjure so monstrous a system of religion on which you form your conduct, if you continue to confound the communion of light with darkness, and Christ with Belial; if you persist in the wish to drink the cup of Christ, and the cup of devils; if you rally not under the banners of the reformation, and seek places where you may profess Christianity, verily I say unto you, that you cannot enter the kingdom of God; and that so far as you shall resemble Nicodemus, so far will the declaration of Christ affect you as Nicodemus.

But what is it I say, that you are like Nicodemus? Ah! your state is incomparably worse. What do I say, that the words of Christ regard you as they regarded Nicodemus? They regard you in a more serious manner. Nicodemus feared the Jews, but you have nothing to fear from them. Where are the barriers, where are the guards, where are the obstacles which hinder you from emigrating to a land of liberty? Where are the galleys? Where are the dungeons? Where are the fagots reserved for those only who bid defiance to them? Nicodemus neither built houses, nor formed establishments, nor married his children, in a country which his conscience pressed him to abandon: these are modes of conduct which seem reserved to you. Nicodemus had not promised, had not sworn on the august symbols of the body and blood of Christ, that he would decide for the true religion; but many of you have taken this solemn oath, and after having unworthily violated it, you sleep secure in carnal enjoyments. Nicodemus had not been exhorted for ten, for twenty, for thirty years, to come to a decision; but we have announced to you for ten, twenty, or thirty years, in the name of God, that "without are the fearful." "Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.—Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, before this adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, and with his holy angels. If any man shall worship the beast and his image, or receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God; he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone; and the smoke of their torment shall ascend for ever and ever," Matt. x. 33; Mark viii. 38; Rev. xiv. 9—11.

Perhaps you will say, that we dwell too

much on terrific truths? Perhaps you will ask for whom these discourses are intended which can but directly interest such characters as are out of the reach of our voice? For whom are these discourses, do you yet ask? For some of those who hear us, whom God has saved from these calamities, but who hesitate, perhaps, about a relapse. For whom? For this father of a family, who has left his country, but unable to induce his children to follow, he has established them there; and they will curse him, perhaps, to all eternity, for having procured them worldly wealth at the expense of their immortal souls. It is for this father, that he may feel the horror of a crime which cannot be repaired by too many regrets, by too many sighs, by too many tears. For whom? For a very considerable number of ourselves, who have intercourse with those base Christians, to use unremitting efforts, that they may feel their situation, and be delivered from it. For whom? For you, our high and mighty lords, defenders of the faith, nursing fathers of the church, so often importuned by our solicitations, that you still deign to bear them; and that the protection you have extended to those who take refuge in your country, having but their souls for a prey, may encourage those to come hither, who yet remain in an idolatrous country. For whom? For the whole, how many soever we be, that impressed with the greatest of our calamities, we may endeavour to move by ardent prayers the bowels of a compassionate God, and prevail on him to rebuild the ruins of our Jerusalem, and the dust of our sanctuaries, and to restore to us the great number of souls which the persecution, and more so, the love of the world, have rent away. O God! "God of vengeance, a consuming fire, a jealous God: how long wilt thou be angry with the prayers of thy people? Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence; give him no rest till he establish, and make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." O God, though we can indeed resolve to abandon our country for ever, yet we cannot resolve to abandon the soul of our brethren. O God, so long as access to the throne of thy mercy shall be open, we will thither approach to ask for the souls of our brethren; and so long as a single moment of life and strength shall remain, we will raise our suppliant cries, and say, "Behold, O Lord, and consider to whom thou hast done this! Return, O Lord, return to the many thousands of Israel." Shut the pit of the abyss which is ready to swallow up the souls of our brethren. Lam. ii. 20; Numb. x. 36.

But does the proposition of Jesus Christ solely regard the Nicodemites properly so called? Are all those Christians who belong to Christian communions? Among all our hearers, among those who adhere to our worship, who believe our mysteries, and who partake of our sacraments, is there no one to whom we may justly apply the words of the Saviour, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven?" Oh! my brethren, what is the ministry we are commissioned to exercise to-day? What is the gospel which God has this day put into our mouth? I can draw no conclusions

from this discourse, which so naturally occur to my mind as those that a prophet declared to a queen of Israel; I would say, as Ahijah to the wife of Jeroboam, "I am sent to thee with heavy tidings," 1 Kings xiv. 6. And all those tidings are not less true than heavy. I confess my inability to comprehend the facility with which some people apply to themselves the evangelical promises, and arrogate the first place in the kingdom, into which Jesus Christ says, none shall enter without a new birth. Each of the articles in which we have made the nature of this change to consist, supplies us with arguments against this class of people.

To become a Christian, we must have other desires, other hopes, other sentiments, and other pursuits, than those of the world: unless you are born again, you can neither become a member of the church, nor apply to yourselves the promises made to the church. So long as you persist in conserving this conformity to the world, though against the better feelings of your heart, from the sole desire of not rendering the world implacable, or as the gospel says of some, "for fear of the Jews," you are not Christians; and thus the proposition of Jesus Christ is just as much demonstrated with regard to you, as with regard to Nicodemus, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

This last article is worthy of our attention. There are some men, who, if they should follow their inclination, would wholly devote themselves to God, but are deterred from doing so, by I know not what shame, the world is pleased to attach to those who openly declare for virtue. For it must be remarked, that our age is come to that pitch of depravity which attaches a note of infamy on those who openly declare for religion, and thereby exposes them to a kind of persecution. This consideration induces Nicodemus to come to Jesus by night, "for fear of the Jews." Hers also is what hinders a vast number of men from glorifying the truth. Why does this young man affect outwardly to adopt certain airs of gallantry and profaneness, which he detests in his heart? It is "for fear of the Jews." Because it has pleased men of fashion to account those vices in youth a sort of courtly graces: it is because they attach a badge of infamy on a young man, who is chaste and pious, and expose him to a kind of persecution. Why is it in politics that one dares not openly avow, that religion is the best policy, and that the most consummate statesman cannot save his country when pursued by the vengeance of heaven? It is "for fear of the Jews;" it is because we attach a note of infamy, and expose to a kind of persecution, the statesman who does not make every thing depend on the interested maxims of carnal men. Why does this pastor fail to magnify in his sermons the high morality of the gospel? It is "for fear of the Jews;" it is because the world accounted us visionaries, in fact, and persecuted us as disturbers of the public peace, when we confidently enforced the truth. Do you, alas! fear the Jews, like Nicodemus? Then you have need like him to be born again. Do you come to Jesus only by night, like this Rabbi? Then

the proposition of Jesus Christ is as much demonstrated with regard to you, as with regard to him: "Verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

Let us, my dear brethren, laying aside worldly prudence, seriously apply this doctrine; more especially if we are happy enough to know the glory of the gospel, let us never be ashamed to avow it; let us never blush to say, *I am a Christian*. It costs us much, in some situations, I fully agree, to make the avowal: but what matter? He who supported the martyrs on the fagots and piles; he who enabled St. Stephen to say, when the stones were falling on him, "Behold, I see heaven open, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God;" he who made the apostles exult in the midst of the greatest tribulations, saying, "Thanks be to God who hath always caused us to triumph in Jesus Christ:" the same God

will also support us. If in this economy of confusion we are born from above, we shall receive the reward in the great day of universal regeneration; and we shall apply to ourselves the answer of Jesus Christ to St. Peter, when that apostle had asked, "Behold, we have left all, and followed thee, what shall we have therefore?" Jesus said unto them, "Verily, I say unto you, that ye who have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel," Matt. xix. 27, 28. To sit on thrones with Jesus Christ when he shall come in his glory; O! what a motive, my dear brethren! Here is our support constantly to endure the cross, as he endured it. Here is our support to despise reproach, as he despised it. God grant us grace so to do. To him be honour and glory now and for ever. Amen.

SERMONS

OF THE

REV. JAMES SAURIN,

TRANSLATED

BY THE REV. M. A. BURDER.

VOL. II.—52



SERMON XCIX.

THE CONDUCT OF GOD TO MEN, AND OF MEN TO GOD.

EZEK. xviii. 29—32.

Yet saith the house of Israel; the way of the Lord is not equal. O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal? Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord God. Repent and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel! For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God, wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.

‘**RIGHTEOUS** art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee; yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments,’ Jer. xii. 1. Thus did the prophet Jeremiah formerly reconcile the desire, which is naturally formed by an intelligent being, to inquire into the ways of Providence, with the submission due even to its most obscure dispensations. We ought to possess a strong conviction of the infallibility of God, whose judgments are the rule of reason and of truth. This reflection should always be present in our minds, that his wisdom is able to resolve any difficulties which our finite understandings may suggest; and that the doubts which seem to obscure the glory which surrounds him, only serve to augment its splendour; “Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee.”

Nevertheless, we are permitted to pour our cares into the bosom of God, and to seek in the riches of his knowledge for direction, and of his grace for help, to triumph over our corruptions. We may say, “why hast thou formed me thus;” not to place our reason on a level with the Supreme Being, who governs the universe, but to obtain some rays of his light, if he deign to communicate them, or to acquiesce with humility, in the dispensations he is pleased to order. “Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee, yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments!” In the temper of mind here expressed, we have meditated on the words read to you; and in this temper you must listen to the explanation of them. They present to us an inquiry, and a conclusion. An inquiry, “O house of Israel, is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal?” A conclusion, contained in these words, which is the substance of the two preceding verses, “turn yourselves, and live!”

Before we enter upon this subject, it will be necessary to define the expression, conduct, or in the language of the text, “the ways of God, and the ways of the children of Israel.” These terms must be limited to the subject treated of in the chapter from which they are taken. God there declares the line of conduct which he intends to pursue, both with regard to the Israelites and sinners in general. He will indeed act as a Sovereign, but the strictness of

his discipline is moderated by the wisest regulations. “All souls are mine,” he says in the fourth verse of this chapter, “as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine, and I will judge them, not only according to the Sovereign power which I possess over them, but also according to their mode of life. “The soul that sinneth it shall die.” “But if a man be just, and do that which is lawful and right, and have not eaten upon the mountains,” that is, if he has not partaken of the sacrifices, made by the idolatrous nations in the high places; nor eaten of the flesh of the victims sacrificed to their gods. “Neither hath defiled his neighbour’s wife, and hath not oppressed any, but hath restored to the debtor his pledge, hath spoiled none by violence, hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment,” in a word, “He who hath walked in my statutes, and hath kept my judgments to deal truly, he is just; he shall surely live, saith the Lord.”

But as the strict administration of justice, in a lawgiver, far from encouraging virtue, serves sometimes for a pretext to palliate vice, and as no mortal can attain to such a standard of holiness, as to bear a rigorous examination, God declares to sinners that he will pardon them on their sincere repentance, “But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die; all his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done, he shall live. Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God, and not that he should return from his ways and live?” This is what we are to understand by the conduct of God, mentioned in the text, “Are not my ways equal, O house of Israel?” Let us now attend to the conduct of the children of Israel.

We must again refer to the same source for information on this subject, the chapter from which the text is taken. We shall there find that the Israelites, during the time when God governed them as a father and legislator, as well as a sovereign, were bold enough to accuse him of forgetting his characters of father and lawgiver, and only exercising his power as sovereign. They charged him with violating that principle of equity, which is the foundation of all his laws, and which he himself had dictated, contained in Deut. xxiv. 6, and noticed by Amaziah, 2 Kings xiv. 6, in which the judges were forbidden to punish their fathers for the sins of the children, or the children for the sins of the fathers. They pretended that they were the victims of the violation of this law, and expressed this dreadful idea by the proverb, “The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.” These blasphemous thoughts of the conduct of God towards them, influenced not merely their understanding, but regulated the whole course of their lives. They dared to assert that when God thus violated the laws of justice and charity, there was no obligation on them to observe them, and no necessity for repentance when they had broken them. “O house of Israel! are not my ways equal? Therefore

I will judge you, O house of Israel! every one according to his ways, saith the Lord God.

But this view of the subject is still vague and imperfect. To show to its full extent, the truth of this precept, and the justice of the inference, we must enter more minutely into its details, and consider,

First, That the ways of God are the ways of light; those of the house of Israel were ways of obscurity and darkness.

Secondly, The ways of God are ways of justice; those of the house of Israel, were ways of blasphemy and calumny.

Lastly, The ways of God are ways of mercy and compassion; those of the house of Israel were ways of revenge and despair.

From each of these divisions we may draw this exhortation, "Be ye converted, and live." It is true, that while we still bear in mind that these words were originally addressed to the Israelites, we shall be more anxious to apply them to the Christians of the present time, and now propose to consider,

First, That the ways of God are the ways of light; by which I mean, that there is no person educated in the Christian religion, who can be ignorant of the conduct of God towards men, who does not know that he will regulate our future state, according to the manner in which we have fulfilled our duties, and obeyed his commandments here: or the sincerity of our repentance when we have transgressed them, or through the weakness of our nature lost sight of them. He has expressed himself so distinctly on this point, that the most limited capacity may understand, without difficulty, what is his will. He has declared it to men under different dispensations. Some had only the light of nature, to others he gave the law, on others he shed the bright beams of the gospel. He has also employed various means for their instruction. Some he has taught by the light of reason; some by supernatural revelations; some by traditions; some by the ministry of the patriarchs; some by that of the prophets; some by his apostles, and his ministers, their successors in the church. He has also proposed to men different motives; sometimes he has urged the remembrance of past favours; sometimes, the hope of future benefits; sometimes, he terrifies by his threatenings; at others allures, by his gracious promises: at one period he speaks aloud in his judgments, at another by his mercies. But what is the end proposed in all these different dispensations, these various motives? all tend to one grand point, to show us, that there are but these two ways of attaining heaven, by perfect obedience, or by sincere repentance. This is the object of all God's threatenings, promises, mercies, and chastisements; the sum of the predictions of his prophets; the warnings of his ministers; the preaching of his apostles, and the testimony of his saints. This is the lesson taught by the law of nature, revelation, and tradition: and of this none can be ignorant, unless they are wilfully so.

Thus we see that the way of God is equal and well ordered; if he had hidden truths, important to our welfare, beneath the impenetrable darkness of his counsels, if the eternal rules for our conduct were written in hieroglyphics,

whose meaning could only be decyphered by superior minds; and if he had condemned us, because we knew not things, which were placed beyond our reach, we might have remonstrated against so unjust a dispensation; but on the contrary, he has brought his laws to the level of our capacity; he has spoken, explained, and entreated. Is not then the way of God, an enlightened way? Is it not an equal way?

But we shall see, if we consider farther, that the way of the house of Israel is unequal; it is a way of darkness; and I deplore that we are formed on so imperfect a model, for what was the conduct of the house of Israel? Or rather, what is our conduct? Like the Israelites of old, who lost themselves in speculating on the imputations which they pretended were cast on them of the sins of their fathers, we forsake the plain path, and entangle ourselves in the labyrinths of controversy. We are ingenious in raising difficulties, in forming new systems, and above all in agitating useless questions. We inquire, why, if God loves justice, does he permit sin to enter the world? Why if he wishes us to remain virtuous, does he implant in us dispositions opposed to virtue? Why, if our future state of happiness or misery depends on our thoughts, actions, and motives, does he say that he has fixed it from all eternity? Why, if we are weak and feeble when we ought to do good, are we exhorted to strive to conquer this weakness, and surmount this feebleness? Why, if we inherit sin from our ancestors, are we reproached with it, as if it were our own work, and the object of our choice? In this manner we argue, reply, write, dispute, declaim, heap answer upon answer, objection upon objection; volumes multiply to an indefinite extent: and thus we lose in idle speculations, time that might be employed to advantage in action and practice. Hence originate party-distinctions, scholastic disputations, and hatred disguised under the mask of zeal in the cause of religion. From this has proceeded all the persecutions of the church in past ages, and this spirit would still engender persecution, if the wisdom of God did not set bounds to theological zeal. "O house of Israel, are not my ways equal; are not your ways unequal?"

Is not this principle clearly demonstrated? is it not a self-evident conclusion, that all which influences our practice, all which relates to the sentiments of the heart in matters of religion, is infinitely more important than idle speculation and mere profession, an attachment to a form that leaves the mind unimpressed? I acknowledge that there are errors, so great as to be incompatible with the true fear of God; and dogmas of such a nature, that it is impossible to attend to them, without overturning religion altogether. They give an idea of God directly opposed to his perfections. But in this place I do not speak of these misrepresentations and errors, but of the questions started by the house of Israel, and the groundless objections raised among ourselves in the present day; and I affirm, that it is ridiculous to neglect the practical parts of religion, and to be absorbed (to use such an expression,) to waste the capacity of the mind on the study of curious and useless

questions, to the neglect of essential and indispensable duties. God has intimated to us, that these points are of minor importance, when compared with practical duties, by being less explicit in his declarations, less clear in his explanations concerning them. We cannot suppose that a God infinitely wise and good, who delights in the welfare of his creatures, would hide in darkness those precepts, and those truths, which are intimately connected with their salvation, while he threw light on those that have no relation to their present and future happiness or misery.

He has then arranged each in its own place, and given its proper importance to practice, while he has left some scope for speculation: the practical parts of religion must be regarded as the essentials; the speculative parts as mere accessories. A man, who in his spiritual life should neglect the great duties attached to his profession, or sacrifice them to these unimportant researches, is like one, who in the natural life, should neglect to take food, till he had studied its nature, and perfectly understood the effect it would take, and its connexion with the body.

Besides, if we allow the desire of penetrating into hidden things to be in itself praise-worthy, and we make a considerable progress in the knowledge of them, we shall still understand them but imperfectly, and be guilty of great rashness in pushing our researches beyond a certain limit. Here appears an important difference between a person of an exalted mind, and one of a meaner capacity. A mean capacity is easily overcome by what are called the great difficulties in religion; the mysteries of the decrees of God; his eternity and his omnipresence. On the other hand, a superior mind feels that all these difficulties carry their solution with them; when he meditates on abstruse subjects, he does it with the full conviction that he can never perfectly understand them, and he stops when he has pursued them to a certain length. I here recollect a remarkable passage in the fourth Book of Esdras. The author there represents himself as raising the same objections and difficulties respecting the conduct of God towards his people, and desiring an angel to explain them to him. The angel satisfies him by relating the following ingenious fable:

I went into a forest into a plain, and the trees took counsel, and said, Come, let us go and make war against the sea, that it may depart away before us, and that we may make us more woods. The floods of the sea also in like manner took counsel, and said, Come, let us go up and subdue the woods of the plain, that there also we may make us another country. The thought of the wood was in vain, for the fire came and consumed it. The thought of the floods of the sea came likewise to nought, for the sand stood up and stopped them. If thou wert judge now betwixt these two, whom wouldst thou begin to justify? or whom wouldst thou condemn? I answered and said, Verily it is a foolish thought that they both have devised, for the ground is given unto the wood, and the sea also hath his place to bear his floods. Then answered he me, and said, Thou hast

given a right judgment, but why judgest thou not thyself also. For like as the ground is given unto the wood, and the sea unto his floods, even so they that dwell upon the earth may understand nothing but that which is upon the earth; and he that dwelleth upon the heavens may only understand the things that are above the height of the heavens.

Let us apply this fable to ourselves; let us forsake this unequal way, and embrace an equal way; let us quit the paths of darkness, and walk in the brilliant paths of light; and let not our inability to understand certain abstruse parts of religion, prevent us from acquiescing in plain truth, that we must be converted, if we would live. "Turn ye, and live."

Secondly. The ways of God are the ways of justice; those of the house of Israel were ways of calumny and blasphemy. Here we recur to the proverb, which we find at the beginning of the chapter from which the text is taken, and which gave the chief occasion for the words that we are explaining; "Our fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." The meaning of this proverb is obvious; the Jews therein intimate that God punishes posterity for the sins of their ancestors; that they were actually suffering at that time, for crimes committed by their fathers, in which they had no share. This proverb was very common among them. The Jews taken captive with Jehoiachim used it in Babylon: those who remained in Judea employed it also. And while Ezekiel expostulated with the former, in the words of the text, Jeremiah addressed a similar warning to the latter, in the xxxist chapter of his prophecies. It is difficult to trace the origin of so odious an idea. There are, however, some passages of Scripture from which it must have been inferred. God had declared not only that he was a jealous God, but that he would "visit the sins of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generations;" and had justified in several instances this idea that he had given of himself. When Moses had addressed to him that fervent prayer contained in the xxxiid chapter of Exodus, by which this lawgiver averted the punishments due to the Israelites for the idolatry of the golden calf, God answered, "In the day when I visit, I will visit their sin upon them." From this expression the Jews thought, that if God extended his pardon to those who were guilty of this idolatry, he would reserve his vengeance for a future period, and throw the sin and punishment of it on posterity. In the works of one of the Jewish writers there is this remarkable passage, "There is affliction thou art suffering at this time, O Israel! that is not increased by the idolatry of the golden calf."

The holy Scriptures furnish numerous instances, in which we see the children sharing the punishment due to the crimes of their parents. In some cases we even see the punishments fall on the children, while the fathers were altogether exempt from suffering. The family of Achan were included in the judgment of their father. The descendants of Saul were punished for his perfidy towards the Gibeonites. The child born to David, by Bath

sheba, died a premature death, to expiate a crime of adultery, for which he could not be held responsible.

But the most remarkable circumstance in the subject now under consideration, is, that the two great divisions of the Jews, that of the ten tribes, and that of the kingdom of Judah, are sometimes represented as the penalty due to crimes committed by men who had ceased to live before they happened. Hear what the prophet Ahijah said to the wife of Jeroboam, "Go tell Jeroboam, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, forasmuch as I exalted thee from among the people, and made thee prince over my people Israel, and rent the kingdom away from the house of David, and gave it thee, and yet thou hast not been as my servant David. Therefore, behold I will bring evil upon the house of Jeroboam; him that dieth of Jeroboam in the city, shall the dogs eat, and him that dieth in the field, shall the fowls of the air eat, and he shall give Israel up because of the sins of Jeroboam."

This relates to the captivity of the ten tribes; and we find the same judgments pronounced against the kingdom of Judah. "Because Manasseh, king of Judah, hath done these abominations, and hath done wickedly above all that the Amorites did, which were before him, and hath made Judah also to sin with his idols, therefore, thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I am bringing such evil upon Jerusalem, and Judah, and I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria," 2 Kings xxi. 11—13. Thus there seemed to be some foundation for the proverb, "The Fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge."

But this reproach was in itself a spot of guilt; and in this second point of view the way of God is equal, and the way of Israel unequal: that the way of God is a way of justice, and that of the house of Israel a way of blasphemy and calumny.

It is not necessary in this place to discuss the abstruse and difficult doctrine of original sin. We are accused by some theologians of not entering at sufficient length on this subject, and of keeping it enveloped in obscurity; but if we attempted to contradict the false and pedantic ideas, and to correct the mistakes prevalent, we should find ourselves involved in difficulties, and should probably render little service to the cause we undertook to advocate. We are well convinced that means would not be wanting to justify religion from any apparent contradictions, but we leave this task to other hands; we are not here to treat of original sin, our concern is with the line of conduct that God pursued with regard to the people to whom the prophet was speaking; and in this view the way of the Israelites was a way of calumny and blasphemy, in opposition to the way of God, which was one of justice and equity.

1. Admitting that our understanding is not sufficiently illuminated, to comprehend how God can, consistently with justice, punish posterity for crimes committed by their forefathers, are we on that account to accuse him of iniquity? Because we do not understand the motives which influence the Divine dispensations, shall we take upon ourselves to condemn them?

Because we cannot reconcile the doctrine of imputed crime, with the rewards offered as incentives to virtue, should we renounce the practice of virtue? Let us examine ourselves, my brethren, let us inquire what are our thoughts of God, whether they are consistent with the humility we ought to possess; let us defend our sentiments with more modesty, and recollect, that the best solution of the difficulties in religion and Providence, is a conviction, and confession, that we are weak and shortsighted, that our capacity is limited, and we are mistaken.

2. We should consider the import of the declarations against which the house of Israel so insolently rebelled. When God declared that for the sin of Manasseh, he would in after ages bring destruction on Jerusalem, did he say, that the subjects should be involved in everlasting misery for the crimes of their king? I candidly acknowledge, my brethren, that this appears severe; and, at first view, unjust. If one commit a crime fifty years ago, and for this crime, his son shall be condemned to eternal torments while he escapes unpunished, I own that, whatever is my idea of Divine omniscience and omnipresence, as well as of the weakness of my own understanding, I could hardly persuade myself to regard as a transcript of the Divine will, a book in which such a doctrine was held out, unreservedly and without restrictions. But to put the case in a different light, we will suppose that a king committed a crime, and that his posterity shall at a future period suffer some temporal chastisement; in this we see no shadow of injustice; the difference between this, and the first mentioned case, is wide. God can make no amends to man whom he shuts up in eternal misery, but he can amply compensate the trouble endured by him, who is involved in the temporal calamities of a rebellious people. A nation may be compared to the human body; it has its seasons of youth, manhood, and old age. God may visit in old age the sins committed in youth. If he in mercy spared his people during the first years of their rebellion, he is obliged by his justice, to punish them severely, when their posterity, far from repairing the crimes of their ancestors, become partisans in them.

There is one evil which naturally and unavoidably results from this law, that if among this guilty nation, there be an individual, who abhors from his heart, and abstains in practice from their wickedness, he will perish with them; but such a one God will abundantly repay. The same stroke which brings destruction on the guilty, shall crown the righteous with glory; in his life it will draw him off from temporal things, by depriving him of the object of his wishes, but it will render him more meet for eternal joy. The same stroke which precipitates the wicked into the deepest recesses of infernal torments, will open the gates of heaven to the just, and admit him to an eternity of bliss. God expressly declared to the Israelites, that although he commonly punished the children for the sins of their fathers, thus visiting them on the third and fourth generations, he would not do so in their case. If the condemnation pronounced, on account of the sin of Manasseh, appeared un-

justly severe, he revoked it in their favour; he declared to them that he would forget the sins of their king, and all their idolatry, and act toward them as if this wicked monarch had promoted instead of endeavoured to destroy religion and virtue. He might have thus addressed them: "You complain of my conduct in punishing the children for the sin of their fathers, you charge it with injustice; I will punish your sin by acting differently towards you. I will judge you according to your ways. In those days they shall say no more, "The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge. But every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge," Jer. xxxi. 29, 30; "and to him that hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel; hath not defiled his neighbour's wife; neither hath oppressed any; hath not withholden the pledge; neither hath spoiled by violence; but hath given his bread to the poor, and covered the naked with a garment. But again. The soul that sinneth, it shall die; the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father; neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him," Ezek. xviii. 15. 20.

But was it just, was it reasonable, that a nation guilty not only of sins, but of crimes of the blackest dye, and the most aggravated nature, a people chargeable with, and actually committing at that time, all the abominations with which God reproached their forefathers, and who, according to the language of Jesus Christ, "filled up the measure of their fathers," Matt. xxiii. 32; given to idolatry, lasciviousness, and covetousness, forgetful of God, and who neglected his worship; was it reasonable, I inquire, that a people of this description should seek so anxiously, should spend their time in making fruitless researches into the history of former generations, for the causes of the punishments they endured? Was there not sufficient reason in their own sinful and guilty conduct, for the infliction of scourges still more dreadful? How did they dare, who, to recall the language of their own proverb, had the sour grape still between their teeth, and far from loathing and abhorring it, made it their delight, to say, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge?" Put the case to your consideration, my brethren, in another form; let us suppose we ourselves in inquiring the causes of the Divine judgments which fall continually on us, were to look back to the first ages of this nation, to examine the characters and conduct of our first conquerors, by what unjust and cruel means they attained the object of their ambition; with what sinister views they framed our constitution; how many widows and orphans they oppressed; how they polluted the holy places, and profaned the sanctuaries; how insensible they were to the sufferings of the church; how all their plans were formed without regarding the prosperity of religion; how worldly was their policy; how they persecuted the ministers and servants of God, who boldly and zealously reprov'd their crimes? And were to trace back to them as did the

Jews, the severe dispensations of God, we should then be involved in the same guilty and blasphemous conduct as they were.

But do we suppose we should be gainers, if God were to forget the crimes of our fathers, and to judge every one according to his own works? My brethren, let the blind and misguided heathens say, *Delicta majorum immeritus lues, Romane*. O ye innocent Romans, ye must expiate the sins of your ancestors. Far from supposing that the house of Israel were suffering for the sins of their fathers, let us remember the words of Jeremiah, and apply them not only to the children of Israel, but view them as pointing to us also. "And it shall come to pass, when thou shalt show this people all these words, and they shall say unto thee, Wherefore hath the Lord pronounced all this great evil against us, or what is our iniquity, or what is our sin, that we have committed against the Lord our God? Then shalt thou say unto them, because your fathers have forsaken me, saith the Lord, and have walked after other gods, and have served them, and have worshipped them, and have not kept my law, and ye have done worse than your fathers; for behold ye walk every one after the imagination of his evil heart, therefore will I cast you out of this land into a land that ye know not, neither ye nor your fathers, and there shall ye serve other gods day and night, where I will not show you favour."

3. We observed in the former part of this discourse, that the ways of God were ways of mercy and kindness, and those of the Israelites, were on the contrary, ways of malignity and despair.

This will lead us, in concluding this discourse, more closely to consider and meditate upon these delightful and consolatory words in our text, "Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart, and a new spirit; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God, wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye."

The Israelites carried their fury and despair to so great a length, that when the prophets denounced upon them the judgments of God, they drew the inference, that they were condemned without hope of mercy. They regarded the Divinity as a cruel and unjust Being, who delighted to overwhelm them with misfortunes, instead of considering him in his true character, as a merciful and gracious God, who called them to repentance by his threatenings, and who declared to them, that in the riches of his mercy there was yet a way open to salvation; they rejected all the offers of his grace as deceitful words, and thought any acts of humiliation or repentance that they could attempt, to avert the divine anger, very unlikely to produce any effects on decrees already become irrevocable.

There are in the sacred volume two passages, that point remarkably to this subject. The first that I shall notice, is in the eighteenth chapter of Jeremiah; God after having humbled the people by the predictions of their approaching desolation, again proposed to them means to avert its dreadful consequences. He desired

the prophet to suppose himself placed in the workshop of a potter, who having broken a vessel that he had formed of clay, moulded it into another form, thus of the same clay making a new vessel. God himself interpreted this figure. "O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel. At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them," Jer. xviii. 6—8. Jeremiah instantly showed this vision to the Israelites, and explained to them its application. But this misguided people, far from accepting the Divine offer, and clinging to the only hope left for them, answered, in the twelfth verse of the same chapter: "There is no hope, but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart." The other passage referred to, is in the prophecies of Ezekiel, who thus addresses the Israelites in the words of Jehovah himself. "Thus ye speak, saying: 'If our transgressions and our sins, be upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live?'" Ezek. xxxiii. 10. These were the blasphemous expressions that they dared to utter against the Divine Majesty. God is always jealous of his glory, but particularly so of his mercy, which forms the brightest part of his perfection, and shone forth with the greatest lustre throughout his dealings with this people. Let us, my brethren, apply these instructions to ourselves; it often happens among us, that sinners become confirmed in their impotence by despair of pardon; or, in other words, despair of pardon serves for a pretext to continue in their sin; or, in the words of the prophet, "to do the imagination of their evil heart." But when we view the Divine dispensations, either towards us, as a nation, or individually, through the mercies of God, we shall find no foundation for the supposition, "that there is no hope left for us, for the attainment of everlasting life." It is true, that God has sent his ministers to denounce his judgments upon this nation; it is true, that they have sometimes represented it as at the point of ruin, and that they were authorized to say so. "The end is come upon my people of Israel, I will not again pass by them any more," Amos viii. 2. "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be destroyed," Jonah iii. 4. 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 shalt thou 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," Jer. xv. 1. We have seen part of these predictions accomplished in ages that are past, therefore we have every reason to suppose they will receive a full accomplishment. But let us inquire, what was the object God had in view, in all these dispensations? What was the end

proposed by these judgments? All tend to the same conclusion. God sought for the just, for those who still remained faithful to him, or, rather he sought those penitent and humble sinners who, by their tears, their repentance, and return to God, obtained mercy, and averted the stroke of his justice. Thus we see, that God is full of compassion, as well as mercy; he showed his tenderness towards us as much, when he sent a mortality among our cattle, as when he preserved their life; when he sent floods of water over the country, as when he made it fruitful; when he shipwrecked our vessels, as when he filled their sails with a favourable wind and brought them safe into port.

His loving-kindness is visible when he gives us over to our enemies, as well as when he crowns us with victory; when he delivers our possessions into the hands of others, as much as when he increases our wealth; when he sends national calamities as when he gives us prosperity. His favours, his judgments, all call upon us to repent, to be converted, that we may enjoy everlasting felicity. O highly-favoured, beloved nation, if while his wrath was hot against thee, he still opened so many cities of refuge, when he was ready to overwhelm thee with his judgments, what is his favour now, he is loading thee with benefits. O highly-favoured nation, if God so powerfully protected thee during the years of thy rebellion, whilst thou wast lukewarm in his service, and living in the habitual neglect of his sabbaths, whilst thou wast harbouring in thy bosom his bitterest enemies and forgetting all his holy laws, in the dissipations of the world, how would he act towards thee if thou became grateful and sensible of his goodness? How would he distinguish thee with his mercy, if, amidst the rebellious spirit of the age, thou wast the open and declared friend of religion, and openly defended it from the attacks of its inveterate foes? if thou makest his sabbaths thy delight, attend diligently on his worship with fervour, devotion, humility, zeal, and all those feelings of self-abasement, which become human beings when approaching the throne of their Creator, to pay their adoration, and to praise him for their existence and happiness?

What I have here remarked as applied to the nation is suitable also to every individual composing it; none has any reason to say, there is no hope, how shall we live? There is, I acknowledge, among us a class of sinners, who appear to have exhausted the stores of the Divine mercy, and seem to have reason for inquiring, how shall we live? We would answer this question by another, Why will ye die? I would still oppose the mercy of my God to their terror and unbelief: yes, to the most guilty I would repeat this offer; let him, with all his objections, and as well as he is able, with all the reasons he has for despairing of pardon, let him look back on a life stained by the commission of crimes, and let him search into all the poisoned sources of despair, for any thing to justify this proposition; there is no hope, how shall we live? I will throw open to his view all the treasures of God's mercy, which will cure all his wounds, if he will resort to them; I will display the depths of the

loving-kindness of the Lord, which will give life to his soul; and, I will oppose to all the objections that his fears may suggest, "Why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

Perhaps ye may say, there is no hope, how then can we live? we have offended a God who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. A God in whose sight the heavens are not pure; a God in whose awful presence even the seraphim hide their faces with their wings. But why will ye die, O house of Israel? This God, although holy, is not inexorable, at the same time that he enforces the strictest observance of his orders, he pities those who stray from them; he knows of what we are made, he knows that we are weak, and unable to keep ourselves from falling.

There is no hope, how shall we live? we have engaged ourselves as servants to sin and iniquity, and "the wages of sin is death," Rom. vi. 23. And according to this, if God remain just, the sinner must die. But why will ye die, O house of Israel, justice is satisfied, Jesus Christ "was made sin for us," 2 Cor. v. 21. He took upon himself the burden of our sins, and the punishment due to them. If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, 1 John, ii. 1. "If God be for us, who shall be against us; he that spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things; who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth."

But it is sometimes said, "There is no hope, how can we live?" The sins we have committed, do not come under the description of human frailties. They were sins committed malignantly, and the influence of the worst passions, with the most inveterate hatred, impurity, adultery, injustice, and crimes of the blackest die. "But why will ye die, O house of Israel?" There is a fountain of life open for the house of David. The same God who exhorts you in the words of the text, to make you a new heart and a new spirit, promises to give you one. There is nothing can oppose these powerful operations of the Holy Spirit, and nothing can hinder him from acting upon us, and he will effectually assist us, if we ask him in sincerity, and humbly yield ourselves to his direction and influence.

But again, "There is no hope, how shall we live?" We have lived so long in our sins, it is too late for repentance. Too late did you say; those who now say it is too late, have often replied to our serious exhortations and earnest entreaties, it is too soon; "But why will ye die, O house of Israel?" It can never be too late to be converted, if you are really desirous of salvation. The irrevocable sentence yet remains unpronounced. At all events it is not yet executed—the day of grace still remains—the treasures of God's mercy are still open—his loving-kindness and long-suffering still remains the same; "Behold now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation," 2 Cor. vi. 2.

But, my brethren, do not suppose that the only security you have on this important point is the mortal voice, which now proclaims these consolatory truths. Listen while I declare

who is our authority, and whence we derive our commission. Our warrant is the Holy One of Israel, and in confirmation of his promises, we have not only his word, but his oath. St. Paul says, "Men verily swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is an end of all strife," Heb. vi. 6; but "God, because he could swear by no greater, sware by himself (ver. 13,) when he made his promise to Abraham." And he has confirmed with an oath the solemn truths that we have just been preaching to you. He sware the most sacred oath, he sware by himself, in the twenty-third chapter of the prophecies of Ezekiel, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye, from your evil way, for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

Oh! how delightful must be the service of so merciful a God, what a motive have we for energetic exertions for the conversion of men, when we have such a security for its success. How must they be infatuated, who rush into the abyss of despair, when their Judge himself has declared, that he is willing to pardon our guilt. But how blind must they be, who, on the other hand, do not find abundant reason for love and gratitude towards him who has made us such rich offers of grace, and who are not willing to devote themselves to his service. Let us then, my brethren, let us say in the words of the psalmist, "O Lord, there is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared," Ps. cxxx. 4. "I will hear what God the Lord will speak; for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints, but let them not turn again to folly," Ps. lxxxv. 8. May God grant to us this pardon, and to him be all honour and glory, both now and ever. Amen.

SERMON C.

THE ADDRESS OF CHRIST TO JOHN AND MARY.

JOHN xix. 26, 27.

Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son. Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother; and from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.

"I AM become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children," Ps. lxxix. 9. "My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore, and my kinsmen stand afar off," Ps. xxxviii. 11. The prophets who predicted the coming of the Messiah, introduce him to our notice, uttering the foregoing language of complaint, in which is depicted one of the bitterest circumstances of his life of sorrow; and this affecting lamentation, we find fully justified, when we view our Divine Lord and Saviour, surrounded by an unfeeling crowd, nailed to his cross, enduring all the agonies of his

dreadful sentence, and deserted by his disciples; abandoned by the very persons, who had solemnly pledged themselves to serve him faithfully, even to death. This added a poignancy to every pain he felt, and pointed every thorn. For whatever may be the acuteness of the torments we suffer, they become comparatively light when shared and softened by friendship. How delightful is the affectionate sympathy of a kind father, into whose bosom we can pour our grief, or of an affectionate mother, who wipes away every tear.

But, my brethren, if the Saviour of the world felt so acutely this desertion of his disciples, and those for whom he had shown such a lively interest, he felt still more the presence of his near relations, and even in the moments of death, manifested a tender concern for their welfare. We now hear language from him quite opposite to that put into his mouth by the prophet. We hear him now saying, "I am acknowledged by my brethren, and recognised by my mother's children. They who love me stand round me, and my friends pity my sore." And experience shows us, that how difficult soever to bear, how appalling soever to the mind, may be the preparations for death, how agonizing the thoughts of a patient who perceives the countenance of his physician change, a preacher announce to him the approach of his last hour, or a cold sweat, the precursor of death, spread itself over his whole body, there is still a more heart-rending pang which he feels when bidding adieu to the objects of his affectionate solicitude and care. In perusing the history of those who have suffered martyrdom, we see many who have borne with courage and firmness the view of the executioners about to take away their lives, the stake to which they were shortly to be bound, and even of the flames ready to devour them, and put an end to their mortal existence in the most excruciating torments, whose constancy has yielded in the presence, and sunk under the embraces, of those who were dear to them.

Jesus Christ is presented to our view this day, my brethren, as called to suffer such a trial. He saw standing at the foot of the cross, Mary his mother, overwhelmed with the most violent grief that the imagination can depict, called to witness the most cruel spectacle that could be presented to mortal eyes, borne down, and almost sinking under the weight of her accumulated sorrows. The same sword which transixed the soul of this heart-broken mother, and those of St. John and the other Mary's, pierced our blessed Lord also. He felt his own grief as well as theirs, thus, suffering the agony of a double crucifixion, and dying a double death. Let me entreat you, my brethren, to give me your most earnest attention, and, when we have ascertained the exact import of our text, to consider seriously the instruction which, from the uncertainty of life, our fate may soon, perhaps, furnish to those around us; or, should they first receive the summons from the king of terrors, the lesson which they will then furnish to us. We will consider,

1. The conflict which was passing in the minds of Mary and St. John, while eye-witnesses of the death of Christ.

2. The conflict, or rather the triumph of our Lord himself, while expiring in their sight. The first suggested by these words in our text, "now there stood by the cross of Jesus, his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene." The next we find in the following words, "When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciples standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son. Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother; and from that hour the disciple took her unto his own home."

O ye lofty speculations, which aspire to the most impenetrable secrets of science! Ye soarings of the imagination, which rise high as the heavens, and descend into the deepest recesses of knowledge, in quest of sublime and abstract ideas! I do not to-day call on you for assistance; it is to the emotions of nature, the sentiments of the soul, the powerful sympathies of the heart, that I appeal in this discourse, they will furnish the best commentary on our text: and that heart, which is under such an influence, can best understand the conflict to which we all approach, with the rapid flight of time. And happy will he be, who having received grace rightly to apply to himself this subject, shall come off triumphant.

First. Let us consider the import of the words contained in our text. There are few circumstances, in the whole of the sacred Scriptures, or perhaps, we might say, in any history, sacred or profane, which are related in a manner so simple and intelligible, and consequently so little susceptible of contradiction, as that now under consideration. The sight of the soldiers ready to seize the person of the Redeemer, the infuriated Jews, the decision of Pontius Pilate, the view of the cross; all these objects struck consternation into the minds of the apostles, and they thought at first more of their own safety, than of the great peril in which their Divine Master stood; and either from motives of prudence or cowardice, they abandoned Christ in the moment of danger, from which they had neither the courage nor presence of mind to attempt to rescue him. But the three Marys, either impelled by the ardour of their affection to surmount the greatest obstacles, or sheltered by their sex from the fear of the Jews, remained with him, throughout all this awful scene; and, as far as they were permitted by the fury of the soldiers, they received from the mouth of our Lord his dying injunctions.

Perhaps the rest of the disciples, ashamed of their former conduct, and following the suggestions of love to their suffering Lord, which had given way to timidity, and fear for their own security, now might come back to seek him whom they had so shamefully deserted. This we gather from the words of another evangelist, who says, "that all his acquaintance stood afar off beholding these things," Luke xxiii. 49. But wherever the rest were, we know that St. John, who was always distinguished for his love to the Redeemer, who had witnessed his agony in the garden, who had followed him into the court of Caiaphas, was near him with the women. Christ, who was sufficiently elevated on the cross, to be able to see all those who were assembled to witness his death, but

not so much above them as to be unable to distinguish their persons, and to be heard by them, was struck on beholding his mother, and the group which surrounded her. He considered, that as Joseph was dead, Mary had lost her only protector, and might suffer all the miseries of want, and thinking that St. John, from whom he was even now receiving marks of friendship, would not refuse his last request, to him he committed the care of his mother; it was indeed a precious charge. He wishing the apostle to fulfil towards her the various duties of husband and son, therefore said, "This is from henceforth to be thy mother," and to Mary, "Behold thy son." St. John faithfully observed this commission, and inviolably adhered to it, and from that time Mary had no home but his. This, my brethren, seems to be the general import of the affecting narrative under consideration; on which the following questions are sometimes started.

Why is Mary, the sister of the Virgin, and mother of James and Joseph, called the wife of Cleophas?

Some have said that Cleophas was her father, others say, with a greater appearance of probability, that he was her husband; why then was her son James called the son of Alpheus? it has been supposed that she was twice married, and that her first husband, whose name was Alpheus, was the father of James; and the second, Cleophas, the one mentioned here. But the prevailing opinion is, that the Syriac or Hebrew word in the original, may be rendered with equal propriety, Cleophas or Alpheus, so that it is not difficult to perceive that the Alpheus mentioned by St. Luke, is the same whom St. John has named Cleophas.

Again, Who is this other Mary, surnamed Magdalene, probably from her birth-place, Magdala, either the town of that name, near Capernaum, on the borders of the sea of Tiberias, or another place of the same name, on the other side. She is commonly supposed to be the same out of whom went seven devils.—Some have inquired whether she is the same Mary who is mentioned in the 11th chapter of St. John, whose brother Christ raised from the dead, on whom, and on her family, he had wrought so many miracles, and who was nearly related to him. But these are questions which do not concern us, and which we have no means of deciding.

These, and many other inquiries, may be not improperly started, and pursued to a certain length, provided they are proposed, not as points of importance in themselves, but as all that concerns the history of our Saviour's life and death should be deemed interesting to us. But after all, as I remarked before, there is no event in the sacred volume narrated in a manner so simple, so intelligible, and on that account so little open to contradiction, as that now under consideration. But, my brethren, it is scarcely credible, that superstition has been more than usually busy in fabricating misrepresentations on this subject. Superstition has multiplied the minute details of this afflictive event, and has given a more particular account than our evangelist. Some pretend to have ascertained the exact distance between Christ and the spectators of his crucifix-

ion, to have measured it, and found it fifteen cubits. They say, that even the lapse of seventeen centuries does not prevent their clearly discerning even now, the spot where St. John and the three Marys stood. They maintain, that there are still remaining vestiges, which they show to those who visit the Holy Land, and which they call the way of bitterness. For, my brethren, what do not they see, who view things through the medium of superstition, and do they not find in every object, nourishment for their chimerical and false devotion, which amply repays them for all the fatigues and difficulties they may have undergone. Is there any event so trifling, any recital so simple, any place mentioned in sacred history, so obscure as not to be traced by them? The house of Joachim, father of the virgin, the room in which she was born, the stone on which she sat when the angel saluted her, the place where our Saviour was born, the seat on which she received the wise men from the east, the grotto where she suckled our Lord, the fig-tree that he cursed, and which up to this time, produced no fruit, the place where he stood when Mary said, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died;" where he composed the Prayer still distinguished by his name. The dungeon where he was shut up when they led him before Pilate; the arch through which Pilate showed him to the people; the street in which he was scourged; the spot in which Judas betrayed him with a kiss; the room in which he instituted the holy sacrament; the room in which he appeared to his disciples, the doors being shut; the form of his left foot, which was made on the rock when he ascended into heaven; the pedestal of the column on which the cock crowed; the place where Judas hung himself; the apartment in which the apostles were when they received the gift of the Holy Ghost; the place in which they composed the Creed; the abode of the wicked rich man; the door through which the angel led St. Peter out of prison; the fountain where Philip was baptized; and many other places, which are all separately shown, and regarded with veneration.

But even this is not all, they pretend, that the afflictions of the Virgin overpowered her, and she fainted away and fell to the ground. Cardinal Cagison says, that they formerly kept a festival in the church, called, "The feast of the fainting," in memory of this event. And if any one inquires into the history of this fainting, the reply they receive is from the works of a visionary, who published eight volumes of his speculations, and whom the popes canonized by the title of St. Brigitte, or the seraphic cardinal Bonaventura, whose letter is so carefully preserved at Lyons, or one named Mallonius, and other authors of this sort, who lived in the fifteenth century. But still this is trifling, compared with the signification which superstition has attached to the words, "Woman, behold thy son." "Behold thy mother." They include, according to the opinions of the doctors of the Romish Church, the greatest mysteries of religion, they afford the strongest proof of the powerful protection which the Virgin affords to the church, and the religious worship due to her from the church. St. John, they say, represents, in this place, all the faith-

ful. Christ put in his person the whole human race under the government and protection of Mary. "Woman, behold thy son," or in other words, I delegate to thee, all the power and authority, that my divinity and quality of Mediator give me over the church; from henceforth, be thou its firmest pillar, its strongest support and defence; be to its children a light to lighten their darkness, be their counsellor in all difficulties, in persecution itself, their guide in all their wanderings, their consolation in trouble, and life to them even in the last agonies of expiring nature. In the words, "Behold thy mother," he says, Mortals attend, while I point out to you the most worthy object of your worship and humble adoration; here you behold the fountain of all my favours, and it is through her alone that you can hope to attain to my glory. Cease then to weep for my death, regret no longer my absence from you, I compensate for it all, by leaving Mary with you. In accordance with this opinion, the Virgin is addressed as "the help of the weak, the tower of David, the arch of the holy alliance, the door of heaven, the queen of the apostles, confessors, and martyrs, the coadjutrix with God in the work of salvation;" and these titles are given, not in the writings of individuals, for which they were personally responsible, but in the public offices and services of the church.

We see solemn vows paid to her in all ages. Among many thousands of them was that of Louis XIII., who consecrated to her service, his person and kingdom, by an inviolable oath. From this source spring all the blasphemies of those who have dared to maintain, that the Virgin created all the universe; that her influence with God, is almost equal to authority and sovereign power; that she approaches the throne of Christ, not in quality of a servant, but as his equal; as a goddess; that all in heaven, even God himself, acknowledge her sway and submit to her power; that the authority of Christ is founded on justice; that of the Virgin on love. They argue, that if the foolish virgins had called on her, instead of God, and had substituted the invocation of her name, for the words, "Lord, Lord," the doors of heaven would have been opened to them. In the psalter of St. Bonaventura, the name of Mary has been substituted for that of God, in all the psalms of David, and to her are ascribed all the names, perfections, worship, and works of the Deity, and all the passages cited by the apostles from the Old Testament, to prove the Divinity of Christ, are likewise applied to the Virgin. We find also the following prayer, "O Virgin, exercise your parental authority over your Son. Who can understand, O blessed and holy mother, the extent of your mercy. Who can comprehend the height, the breadth, or the depth, of it. It extends itself even to the day of judgment, it is wide as the universe, it reaches up to the heavens, and descends to the deepest abyss. It is your presence that forms the joy of heaven, your absence the torments of hell; by your counsel the new Jerusalem is edified and sanctified. Intelligent beings all pray to you; some to be delivered from the torments of hell, others, who have attained eternal happiness, for an increase of their felicity. To

your power, angels themselves bow, and these behold fresh sources of pleasure; the just implore a share in your righteousness, the guilty look to you for pardon."

Some persons have had the courage to protest against these erroneous doctrines, even among the Catholics, and to desist from the worship of the virgin. "O my God," cried feebly, one of their most celebrated preachers, "is it necessary, in this age, so strenuously to defend the homage that the Christian world pays to the Holy Virgin. Must it fall to my lot to fight against the false scruples of those who fear to praise thee, and dare to complain of the honour given to thy name. But notwithstanding the enterprises formed by the enemies of religion to destroy thy worship; through all these ages it still remains. O blessed Virgin, never shall the gates of hell prevail against the zeal of real Christians." Alas, how many persons feed on this unsubstantial food. What a deplorable example of prejudice and bad education. How do those minds deserve pity, which are enveloped in the veil of superstition, and blinded to prevent them from discerning the truth. It is thus, my brethren, that the enemy of our salvation suits his attacks to the dispositions of every man. Does he wish to deceive those lofty spirits, who would lead captive to their will, even the oracles of God, instead of submitting themselves to them, those rebellious souls who bring down the most sublime mysteries of religion to the level of their own capacity? To them he represents the doctrine of the divinity of our glorious Redeemer as confused and contradictory, persuading them, that this wonderful and incomprehensible mixture of grandeur and misery, of glory and ignominy, of divinity and humanity, is at variance with all common and received ideas; he thereby persuades them to refuse obedience and worship to him, whom even the angels obey, in whose presence every knee shall bow, both of things in heaven and of things on the earth; or is his concern with those weak minds who are led astray by every appearance of wonder, any thing new? To them he represents, that many creatures partake of the glory of God; he persuades them to worship together with God, beings of an inferior order. Thus some refuse to pay any homage to God at all, while others adore him in a wrong and ineffectual way; thus he succeeds too well in his wicked plans for the ruin of mankind.

But praised be God, we need not fear the inroads of superstition in our time: the only feelings that it is likely to excite in our minds, are those of pity and indignation. O church of Rome, if thou wouldst re-establish thy sway amongst us; arm afresh thy inquisition, equip thy galleys, light up again thy fires, prepare new tortures, open thy dismal dungeons, erect more gibbets, and devise more cruel martyrdoms. With such arguments as these, thou mayest perhaps, prevail on some feeble professors of our reformed religion, through the influence of fear, to become thy proselytes; but all thy reasonings, thy specious tales, and false arguments, only serve to sap the foundations of an old building even now in ruins.

Superstition has also invented numerous

histories, well known to be entirely fabulous, which have been added to that given by St. John of the Virgin. The evangelist relates, that from that hour the disciple took her unto his own home; and we find, both after the death of our blessed Lord, and after his resurrection, that she continued with the apostles constant in prayer and praises; after this we lose, in the sacred writings, all farther trace of the life of this holy woman; and we find nothing which could serve for the materials of a complete history of her life and death. The books written in the first century are also silent on this subject, and do not present any thing to fill up the void in the sacred writings. A letter from the council held at Ephesus in the fifth century, affords some very slight grounds for supposing that she might be buried in that city; and one who lived a considerable time before that period, acknowledges his ignorance on this subject. He says, that he cannot be sure whether she is really dead, or whether she received the gift of immortality, and remained alive at that time; whether she suffered martyrdom, or terminated her life by a natural and easy death; no one knows any thing of her latter end. So general a silence, unanimously preserved at a time when particulars relative to the death of the Virgin might have been so easily procured, should teach succeeding ages to beware of speaking positively on this subject. But when an author is so infatuated, as to be intent on endeavouring to fix the particulars of events, in themselves quite uncertain and unimportant, what difficulties does he find too great to overcome, what obstacles of sufficient magnitude to arrest his progress. Thus, we see in succeeding ages, that men have even thought they could trace the features of the Virgin, which they pretend to have seen delineated by St. Luke, in a picture drawn for an empress who supposed she had found her tomb; they have also detailed the slightest circumstances of her life and death. To give a shadow of plausibility to these impositions, they have attributed them to persons of celebrity, from whose names they might derive popularity. Of this nature was a work published in the second century, entitled, "The Life and Death of the Blessed Virgin," and placed among the apocryphal books. And as all these histories had no other foundation than the imaginations of their authors, we perceive a diversity of opinions, similar to the diversity of the persons, from the fertility of whose inventions they sprung. Some maintain that the holy Virgin suffered martyrdom; others that she followed St. John to Ephesus, where she died at a very advanced age; others assert that after her death she arose from the grave: but others have carried their theories still farther, and pretended that she was taken up to heaven in a chariot of fire, as was Elias. But we will turn from the consideration of this subject, and employ the rest of our time in considering the two principal branches of our subject.

I. The conflict passing in the minds of those who behold the last moments of those who are dear to them.

II. The conflict, or rather the triumph, of those who thus expire.

1. The case of Mary exemplifies the conflicting emotions that agitate the souls of those who surround the dying pillow of their dearest relatives. Nature, reason, and religion, all must lend their aid to support their trembling courage. And let me inquire, who is there among you, my brethren, who sufficiently feels the force of the demonstration of which his proposition is susceptible. If any of you have concentrated your principal care, your warmest affections, on one object, on one favourite child, to whom you have looked for consolation in trouble, whom you have regarded as the honour of your house, to whose filial tenderness you have trusted for the support of your declining years; to the feelings of such a one I appeal, to picture to his mind a scene which baffles all attempts at description. Let him put himself in the place of Mary, and view in the death of our Saviour, that of his beloved child: he will still form but an imperfect idea of the mental agonies which Mary was suffering. She beheld her Son, whose birth was miraculously announced to her by an angel; that Son, on whose appearance the armies of heaven sung with triumphant joy; that Son, whose abode on earth was a distinguished course of mercy, charity, and compassion; she saw him, whose abode on earth crowned it with blessings, ready to quit it for ever. She anticipated the frightful and dreary solitude in which she was so soon to be plunged; she viewed herself forsaken and deserted by all, deprived of the dearest object of her affection: the rest of the world appeared to her a blank, as if she remained alone, the only inhabitant of this spacious globe. And in what manner is she about to lose her beloved Son? He dies a death, he suffers a martyrdom of unexampled agony. She sees those hands, which had so often dispensed blessings, cured diseases, fed the hungry, clothed the naked, and wrought so many miracles, pierced with nails. She beheld those lips, on which dwelt grace and beauty, and from which had flowed the accents of mercy, scandalized by the impurities of the furious Jews. That royal head, which the crown of the universe would become, torn and lacerated with thorns; that arm destined to wield the sceptre of the world, bearing a reed in mockery. She saw the temple of her God; that temple which had been distinguished as the peculiar abode of the divinity, which had been blessed with peculiar manifestations of his wisdom, his glory, his justice, and his mercy, and all those perfections which belong to the Supreme Being, falling beneath the attacks of the impious multitude. She heard the voice of the children of Edom, crying, "Down with it, down with it!" and levelling the dwelling of the Most High with the ground. Then she beheld the full accomplishment of that saying, of which she could not formerly perceive the meaning: "A sword shall pierce through thine own soul also," Luke ii. 35. Again, she was denied the sad consolation of approaching this her beloved Son, to comfort him, and to receive his last breath. O ye, his murderers, allow her at least to embrace him once more; let her shed her tears by his side, and bid him a final farewell; let her stop the blood which has begun to flow in large drops, and consumes

the remainder of his nearly exhausted strength. O let her approach this expiring Prince, and pour a healing balm into its wounds. But no; she is forced to yield to the violence of those who surround her; the thick darkness obliges her to depart, all the care and tenderness that she could show to our Lord, all her tears are useless. Holy woman, if "all generations shall call thee blessed," Luke i. 48, "because thou wast the mother of thy glorious King and Redeemer," shall not endless ages commiserate thy grief, when destined to behold him suffering so shameful and agonizing a death.

But I mentioned also that reason and faith led the holy Virgin into a conflict of a different nature. How could a human understanding, even with the aid of reason and religion, pierce the thick veil that covered the divinity of our Saviour, at the time of his crucifixion. If the mystery of the cross surpasses and startles our finite imaginations now, when it is announced to us by a preacher, who gives us the infallible word of God as security whereon to rest our belief, what must have been its effect on the minds of those who beheld Christ suffering by the hand of murderers, chosen of God for this purpose. Every circumstance of his passion, had indeed been exactly foretold by the prophets of old and the close accordance, the great harmony, that was visible between the prophecies, and their accomplishment, ought to have carried conviction to the minds of all who attentively consider the subject. The presumption certainly was strong, that he who so well fulfilled the humiliatory and painful part of the prophecies concerning him, would likewise verify those parts that referred to his exaltation and glorious triumph. But the spectators of the death of Jesus, saw only his degradation; his glory was yet to come; death had now seized his victim, and his resurrection was to them uncertain; the predictions of his humiliation were fulfilled, but they had not seen the accomplishment of those concerning his exaltation. This Jesus whom we now behold ready to expire, the thread of whose life is almost spun out, and who will only come down from the cross to be laid in the tomb, and to go into the lower regions of the earth, can this, I ask, be the promised Messiah, who will "ascend on high, and lead captivity captive, and receive gifts for men?" Ps. lxxviii. 18. Can this same Jesus, that we see wearing a crown of thorns upon his head, with a reed in his hand, addressed by the insulting titles, "Jesus of Nazareth, king of the Jews," John xix. 19, be the Messiah of whom God says, "I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion. Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thy inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession?" Ps. ii. 6. 8. Is he whom I see insulted, despised, and lightly esteemed, is he the Messiah, called by the prophets, "Wonderful, Counsellor, Prince of peace, the everlasting Father!" Isa. ix. 6. This Jesus, who now is nailed to an ignominious cross, is he the Messiah, the Lord to whom God said, "Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thy enemies thy footstool. The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion; rule thou in the midst of thy enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power,

in the beauties of holiness; from the womb of the morning thou hast the dew of thy youth?" Ps. cii. 1—3.

I know not, my brethren, what were the feelings of these holy women, and this beloved disciple, at this trying period; what rays of comfort were afforded to them, to lighten their mental darkness; nor what assistance was granted them in this conflict. But I know, that the cross of Christ is a stumbling-block to the Jew, and to the Greek, foolishness. I know that the Jewish nation had, in all ages, fixed their attention on the glory of the Messiah, and forgot his previous humiliation; and I know that even the disciples of Christ, trembled at the name of the cross. St. Peter hearing his divine Master speak of his approaching death, said "Be it far from thee, Lord, this shall not be unto thee," Matt. xvi. 22; and when Christ spoke to them of a future resurrection, they questioned one with another, what the rising from the dead should mean, Mark ix. 10. Christ rebuked them, saying, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken," Luke xxiv. 25. The women came to the disciples to tell them, that they had been eye-witnesses of his resurrection; but their information seemed more like the day-dreams of a confused imagination, than the result of cool deliberation, or unprejudiced judgment. Thomas, especially, notwithstanding the testimony of these same women, and that of the rest of the apostles, replied to those who said they had seen the Lord, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe," John xx. 25. Thus, although we are disposed to think very highly of the virtue and constancy of these holy witnesses of the crucifixion of our Lord, we dare not propose them as models for your imitation; although we have a strong conviction, that they did not fall under the attacks of the enemies of salvation, yet we dare not affirm, that they entirely triumphed over them; and in discoursing upon their conflicts, we dare not enter fully on the subject of their victory. But not so, when we look to our blessed and adorable Redeemer; if we place Christ before your eyes, we give you a perfect model: you shall see him struggling, and you shall also see him more than conqueror; we shall speak less of his struggle, than of his conquest: "And Jesus seeing his mother, and the disciple standing by whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son. Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother; and from that hour that disciple took her to his own home."

We are to remark in this place, First, the presence of mind, that showed itself through all the sufferings of Christ; no man was ever placed in circumstances so likely to destroy this feeling, as was our blessed Lord at this time. My brethren, when we have lived as men generally do, without thought or reflection, except of the things and affairs of this transitory world; and paid no attention to that future day of judgment, which is so fast approaching, and when our eternal destiny will be determined; when we behold the coming

of death, and have made no preparation for it, never fixed our thoughts on religious subjects, nor acted agreeably to the dictates of conscience; have not restored our ill-gotten wealth; if we have slandered our neighbour; have made no reparation; have never learned what is the end of our existence, nor what is death; can we view the approach of the king of terrors, under these circumstances, without emotion? will our minds be filled with confused ideas, and overpowered with the multiplicity of concerns; and having so many objects pressing on them, be prevented from attending to any.

But if we have, on the contrary, been, during the whole course of our life, considering our latter end, and following the example of our blessed Saviour; have always been diligent to do the work of the Lord, and have never lost sight of that awful period, to which we approach rapidly but insensibly; if such has been our conduct through life, we may meet death with calmness. When the Christian on his death-bed, beholds around him a weeping family, near relations and intimate friends full of grief, he still is calm, he retains his self-possession through a scene so affecting. Death to him is not a strange object, he views it without alarm, and employs the moments that yet remain, in administering consolation to his friends, instructing or comforting his family, or in the exercise of religion. And this tranquillity of soul is perhaps one of the best characteristics of a happy death, and yields greater satisfaction than more triumphant expressions, for which there is less solid foundation. I have seen men in whose minds the approach of death excites emotions that partake more of the turbulence of frenzy, than of zeal; they heap Scripture upon Scripture, and prayer upon prayer, and from not having thought soon enough of their last moments, they can now think only of them, and can neither see, nor hear, nor think, of any thing else. How different were the last moments of Christ; in the midst of all his agony, he still distinguished from the crowd of spectators his mother; he saw her, and pitied her, and recommended her to the care of his beloved disciple. Woman, behold thy Son, Son, behold thy mother.

We see, secondly, the tenderness and compassion of our Lord. There is a certain disposition in some, that partakes more of ferocity, than piety; that possesses none of the amiable properties of true religion. On pretence of being Christians, they cease to be men: as they must one day quit the world, they will form no connexions in it. Being occupied with the concerns of the soul, they forget the care of this life, and the concerns of it.

The piety of Christ was not incompatible with the innocent cares and concerns of life, he contributed largely to the pleasure of those with whom he associated, he behaved towards them with kindness, mildness, and condescension. He changed water into wine, at the marriage in Cana; he multiplied the loaves and fishes in the desert, to afford subsistence to those who followed him; he partook of the

feasts to which he was invited, and sanctified them with his heavenly conversation.

This compassionate kindness shone most conspicuous in the period referred to by the evangelist in the words of our text, the weighty cares of his soul, which he was on the point of yielding into the arms of his Father, did not make him neglect his temporal concerns, he thought of his mother's grief, he procured her a comforter of her poverty, and gave her a maintenance.

But, my brethren, the example of Christ is worthy not only of praise, but of imitation. The same religion, which directs our thoughts to a future state, and to the hour of death, teaches us rightly to perform our duties in the present life. A Christian before he dies, will regulate his affairs, make his will, exhort his family, direct the education of his children, recommend to them proper tutors and guardians, and declare what are his dying requests. But unhappy are they, who on their death-bed are wholly taken up with such cares; religion, while she directs us to give them a portion of our attention, forbids their having it all. Look to the example of Christ, who seeing his mother and the disciple whom he loved, said to his mother, Behold thy Son, and to the disciple, Behold thy mother.

But how was Mary provided for, now she was under the protection of St. John; what was the prospect that she had before her: he was poor; it is true, that he was disposed faithfully to fulfil the trust reposed in him by his adorable master; and that poverty and misfortune, so fatal to common friendships, only served to animate his. But what assistance or protection could she hope for from an apostle devoted to his ministry, and treading in the footsteps of his crucified master. It was, my brethren, but a poor hope, a feeble consolation, for his mother to cling to; but here again we see the triumph of Christ, which he gained over those fears, which so often disturb the bed of death. We see in the last moments of our Lord, none of those suspicions, none of those bitter cares, that so often enpoison the peace of the dying; that criminal distrust of God, which offends him at a time, when by prayer and praise we ought to conciliate his favour. Christ displayed on this, as on other points, a perfect confidence in the great Disposer of all events. But Christ triumphed again in another way, in which we should endeavour to imitate him. Do you say what will become of my children, or my family? Do you think that you were the only person to whose care God could confide them, or that if he calls you away, he will have no resource left for their subsistence? Do you think that the manifold wisdom of God, can raise them up no other protector? Do you think that if the paternal character excites in you such tender emotions, that he who is the Father of all, does not feel them also? Do you imagine that he who pardons all your sins, cleanses you from your guilt, snatches you from destruction, invites you to glory, will disdain to supply food and clothing, to those who survive you? No, he will not: had they for their sole resource, a man in such a sphere of life as was St. John,

they would never be reduced to want. "When my father and my mother forsake me," said the psalmist, "the Lord taketh me up," Ps. xxvii. 10. Let us also say, if I leave my father and mother in their old age, or my children in their infancy, the Lord will protect them. They will find a shelter under the wings of the Lord, and he will be their defence.

Again, let us admire the firmness and self-possession of our Lord: while beholding those objects that were most likely to shake it, Christ was possessed of a tender heart. We have already noticed this, and will now consider the principal circumstances in his life, that will justify this assertion. To this end, view him going from town to town, from province to province, doing good; see him discoursing familiarly with his disciples when he showed them a heart full of loving-kindness. Behold him shedding tears over Jerusalem, and pronouncing these affecting words, an everlasting memorial of his compassion, "If thou hadst known, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes," Luke xix. 42. Behold him again, a short time before his death, occupied with care for his beloved disciples, who were to remain on the earth, and addressing to his Heavenly Father that affecting prayer for them recorded in John xvii. with the feelings of a soul full of the tenderest emotions. Jesus was exemplary in the several relations of a friend, of a master, and of a son. While he beheld around his cross only those whose malice delighted to witness his agony and aggravate his sufferings, he turned his thoughts from earth, to that eternal world into which he was about to enter. But what was the effect produced on his mind, by the sight of Mary, of whom it is expressly said in Scripture, that he loved her. What did he feel when he beheld the disciple whom he had distinguished by his peculiar friendship; and that other Mary in whose favour he had wrought such great miracles, "Ah, remove these beloved objects far from me, take away every tie that binds my departing soul to earth, your presence inflicts a sharper pain than the nails which pierce my hands; the sight of you is more insupportable than that of my murderers." Is this the language of our Lord? No: far otherwise; Christ remains firm, his courage is unabated. He was armed with almighty power, and he entered this dreadful conflict with the full assu-

rance of victory, and final triumph. After the first emotions of nature have subsided, when he had glanced at the objects around him, he rose superior to the things of this world, he knew that death puts a period to all sublunary connexions; that the titles of parent, friend, and son, are only vain names, when we come to the last hour. He no longer recognised his relations according to the flesh, he was going to form a new relationship in heaven, to merge all earthly ties in the countless families of glorified saints, of whom he is the head. He appeared to know no longer that Mary who had borne him, giving her no more the title of mother, but said, Woman, behold thy son.

O, why cannot I communicate a portion of this intrepid firmness of soul to those who compose this congregation; O that we may every one on the bed of death feel some of its influence, and be enabled to exclaim, Come ye spectators of my agonies, draw near ye to whom nature has bound me by the closest ties, by the cords of love and friendship. Approach my friends, my children, that I may bid you a final farewell: come receive the last pledges of my affection, let me, for the last time, fold you in my paternal embrace, and cover you with my tears of affection; but do not suppose, that I would now draw tighter the cords which are so soon to be broken; think not that I would unite myself to you still closer at the time when God warns me that I must leave you for ever. I know you no longer; I know not father, mother, or children, but those who exist in the realms of glory, with whom I am about to form eternal relationship, which will absorb all my temporal connexions.

Thus the opposite extremities of virtue seemed to meet in the death of our Saviour as in a common centre, the perfections of the Godhead, holiness, compassion, constancy, pierced through the thick veil which shrouded his grandeur, his glory, his power, and his majesty. O, ye witnesses of his death, if his humiliation caused you to doubt his Godhead, his greatness of soul must have fully proved it. Behold the tombs open, the dead arise, all nature convulsed, bears witness to the dying Saviour; the graces that shone forth in his death are proofs of his noble origin, and his divine nature; such was the death of Jesus Christ; may such be our end. "Let me die the death of the righteous and let my last end be like his." Amen. Num. xxiii. 10.

THE END.

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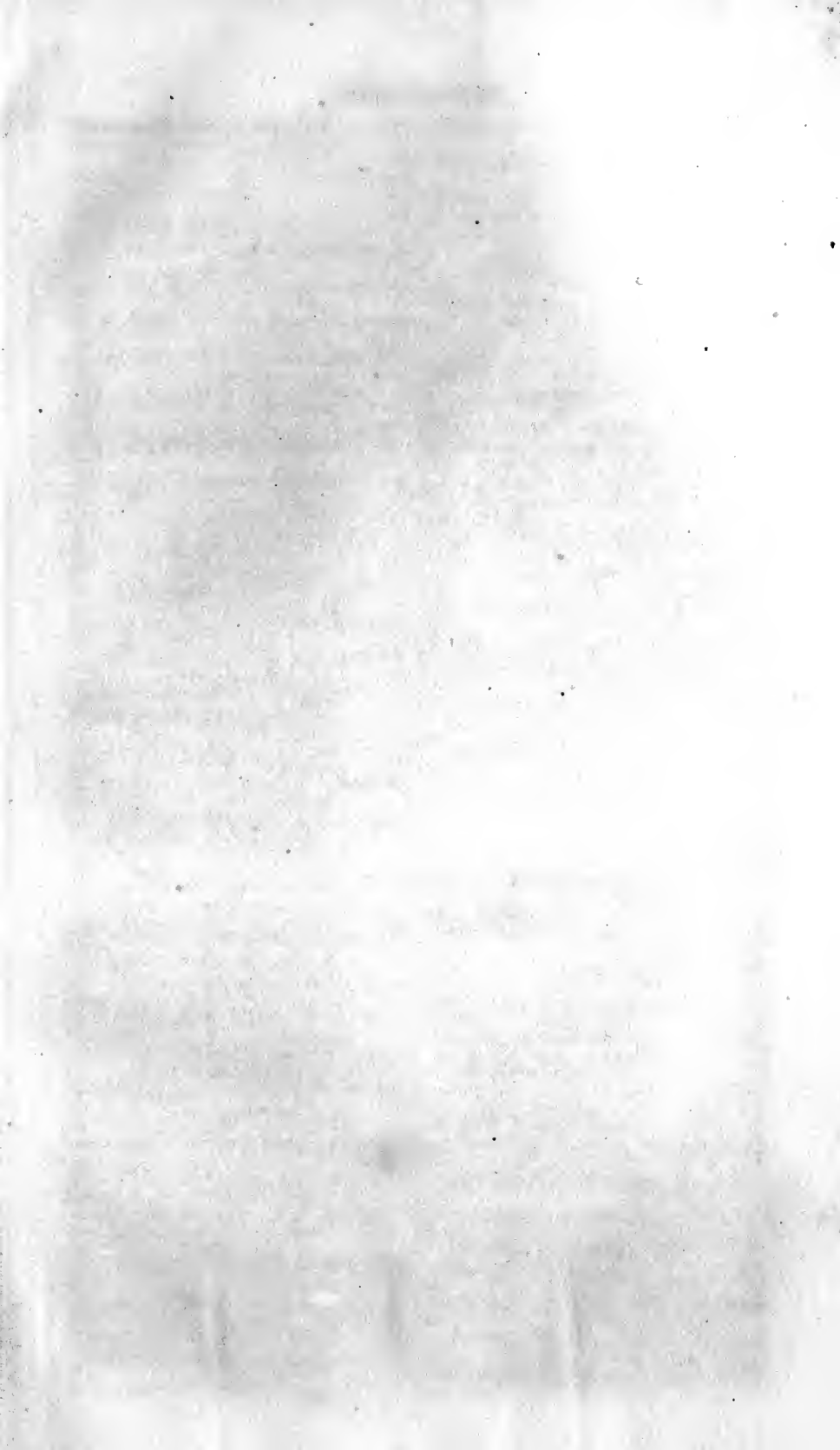
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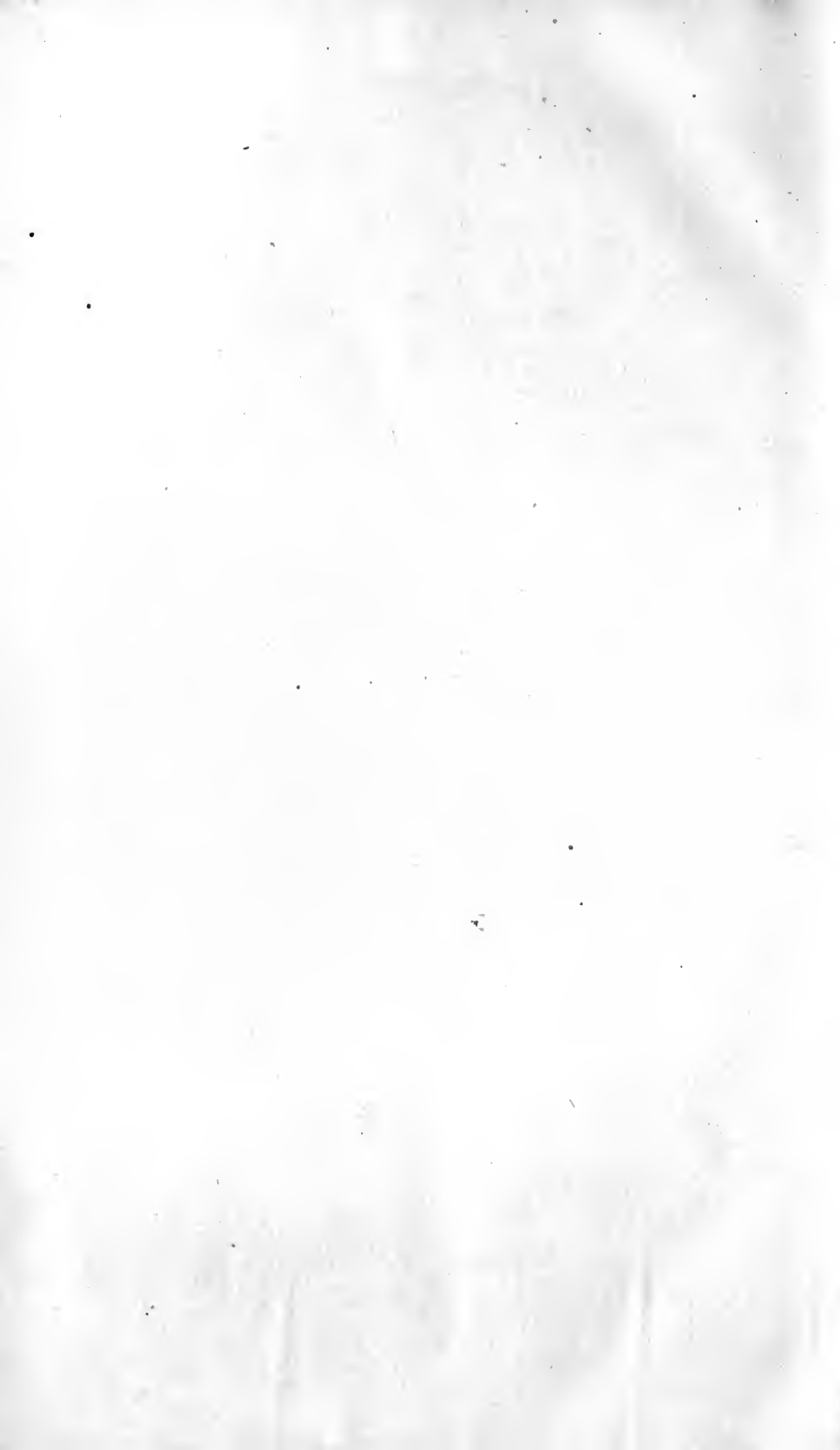
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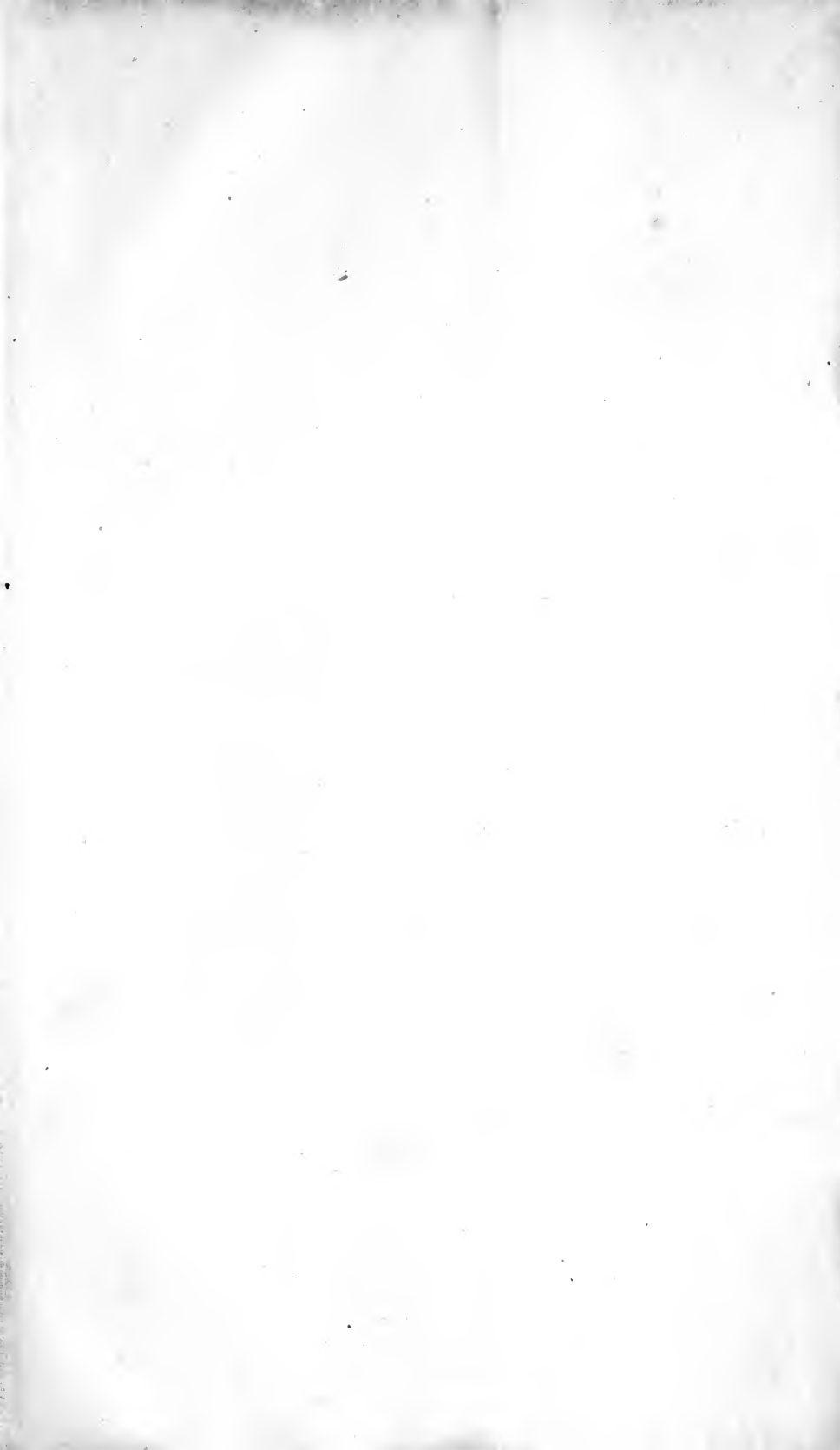


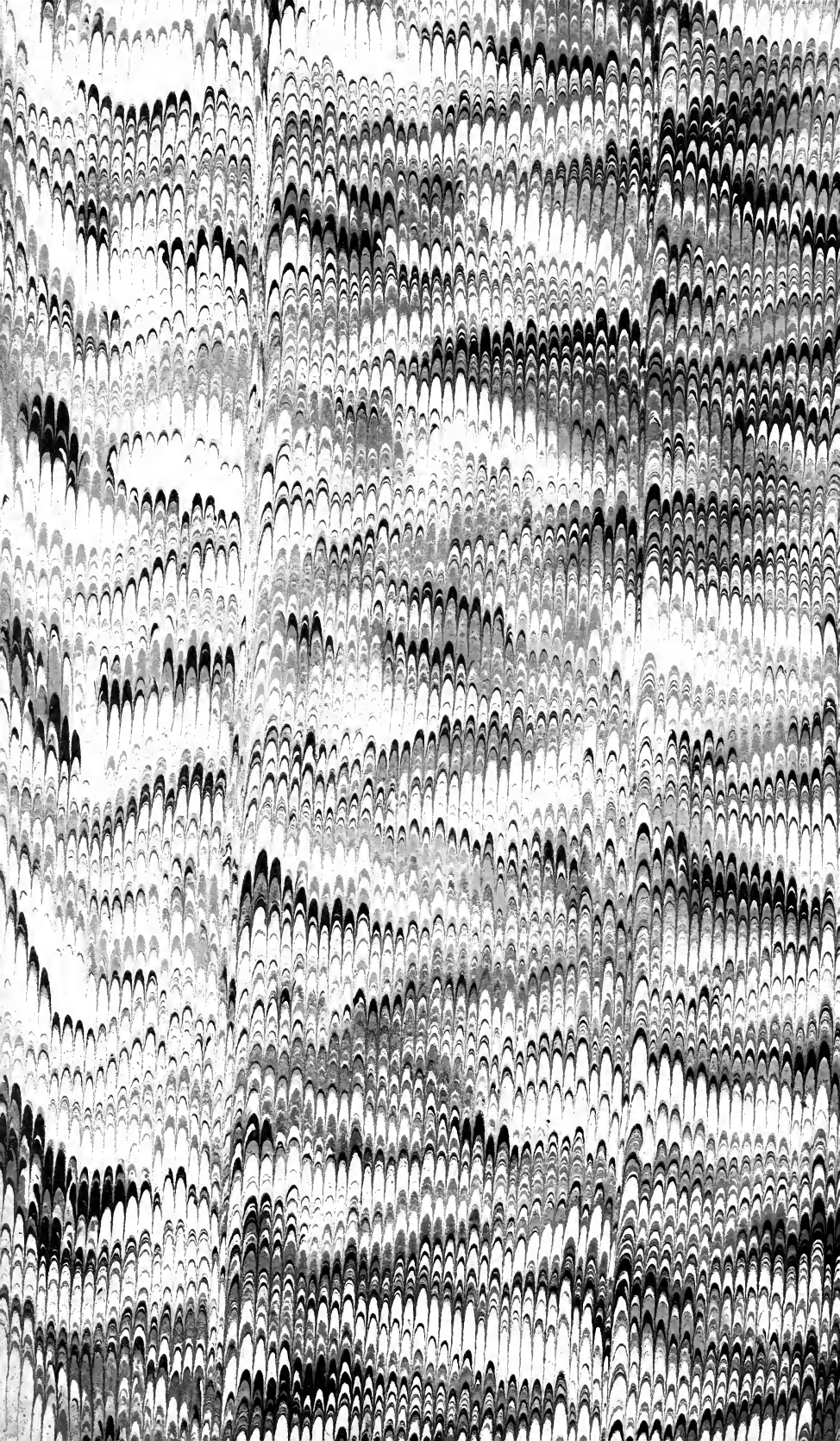












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