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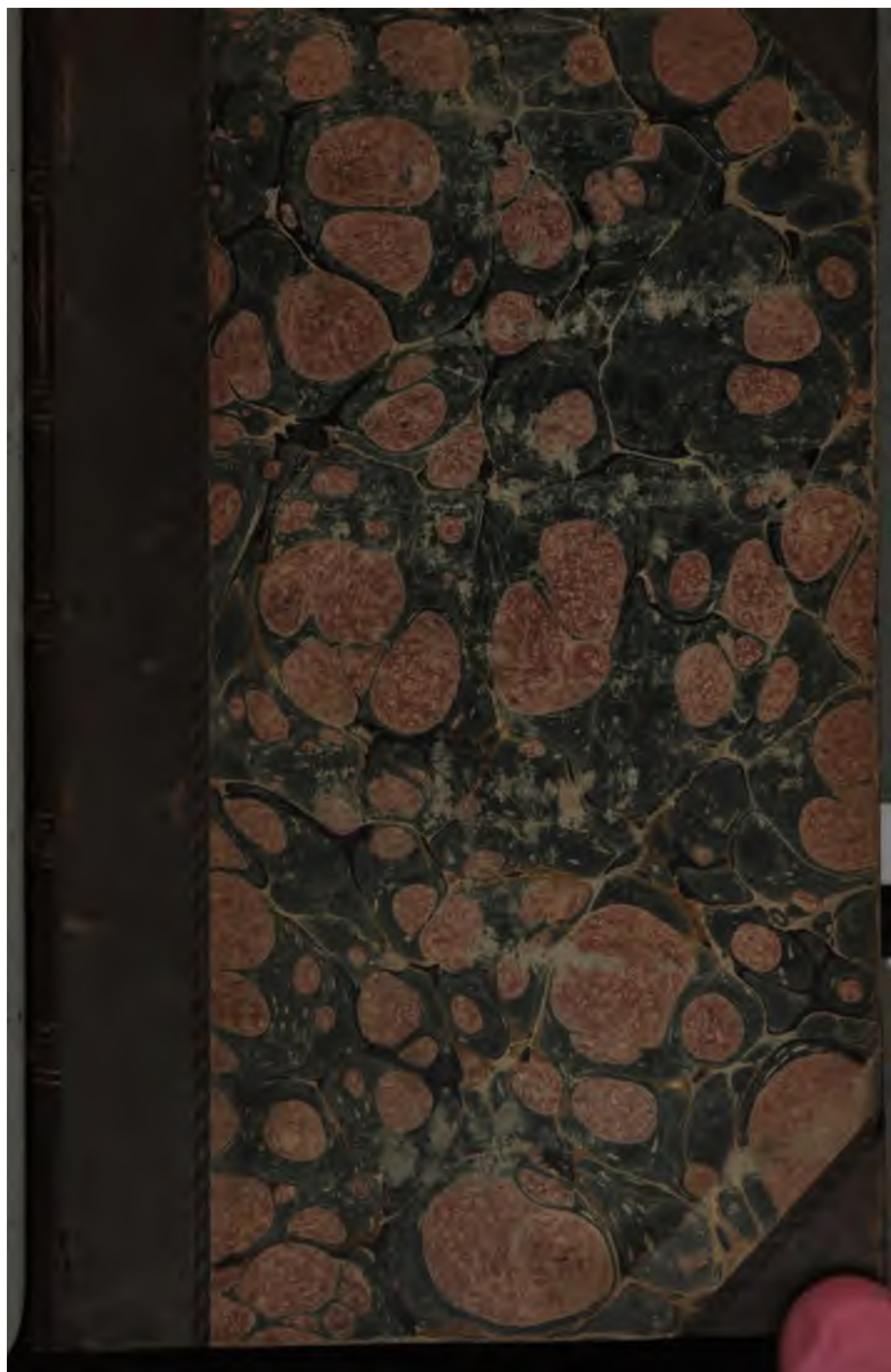
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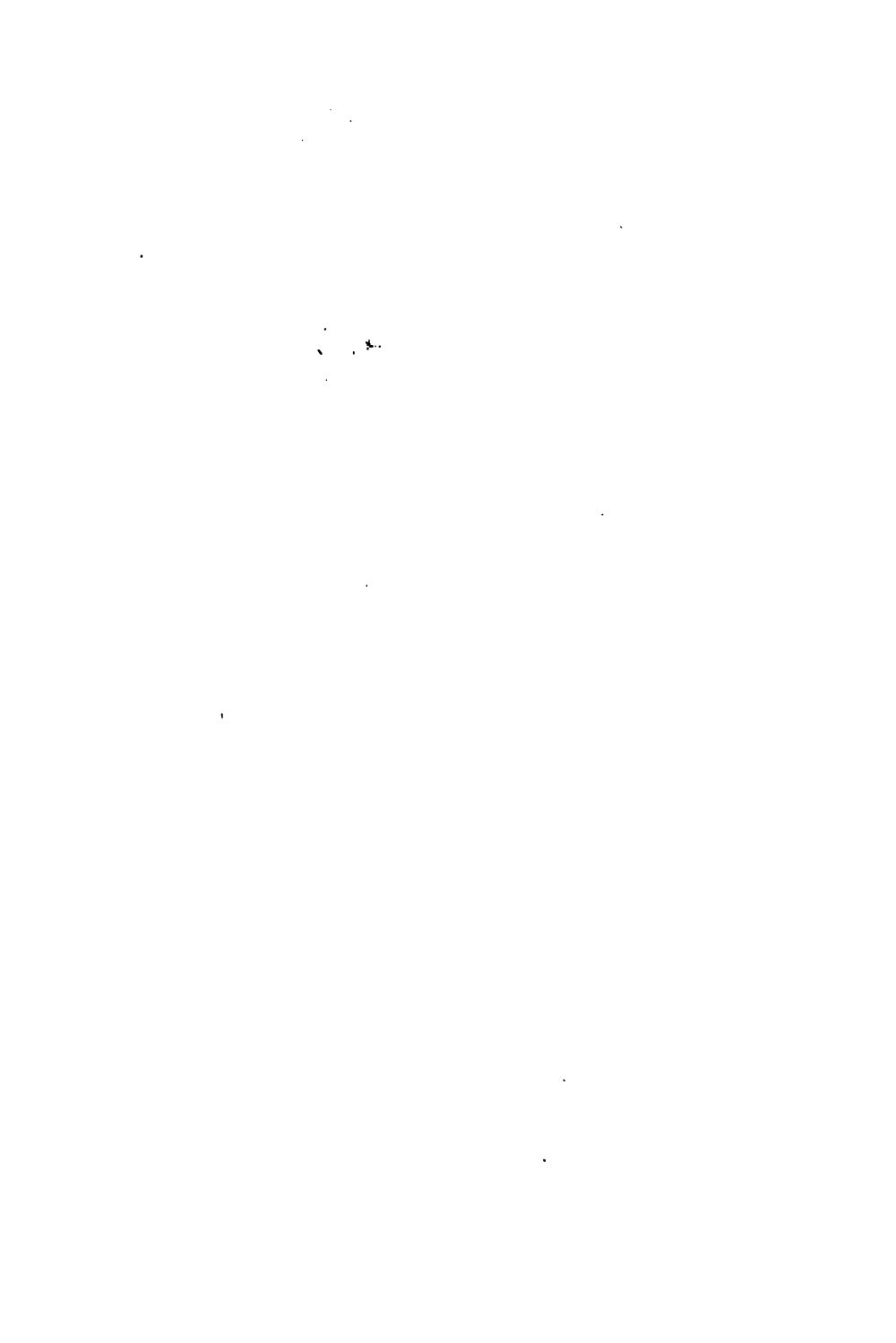
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**S E R M O N S .**



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*1829*  
SERMONS,

PLAIN, BRIEF, AND EXPLANATORY,

ON

THE LORD'S PRAYER,

AND

TEN COMMANDMENTS.

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BY JOHN NANCE, D.D.

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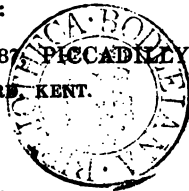
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## P R E F A C E.

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THE following Discourses have been composed in the hope and endeavour to instruct young and teachable, though not entirely uneducated minds, in the duties and doctrines inculcated by our blessed Lord. The writer has been careful to withhold any questionable matter, or subject of deep research. His

aim has been to elucidate and explain, in familiar language, whatever the most admirable summary and pattern of devotion may instil, or the decalogue prescribe.

If he may be allowed to describe his object, in one sentence—it is to show, that the doom we must expect hereafter, will be such as will convince the reprobate as well as the pious, that nothing will excuse the practice of vice, or the boast of infidelity;—that the rewards and chastisements of the Lord will be proportioned to the acts and feelings they will reward or punish;—that, though every secret thought will be brought

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to light, and every fault exposed, yet that a sorer punishment will be inflicted on those who have added blasphemy to licentiousness, and cruelty to crime.



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# SERMONS.

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## INTRODUCTORY SERMON.

ON THE ADVANTAGE OF POSSESSING  
THE ORACLES OF GOD.

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ROMANS iii. 1, 2.

What advantage then hath the Jew, or what profit is there in circumcision? Much every way: chiefly because that unto them was committed the oracles of God.

IN the two former chapters of this Epistle, the apostle had proved successfully that both Jew and Gentile were sinners in the sight of God. In the first, that the Gentile world having been left in darkness, and given up to the guidance of their own corrupt inclinations, had



so far debased themselves as to call down the vengeance of the Almighty. In the second chapter he makes it apparent that, as far as the law of righteousness is concerned, the Jews were in but a little better condition. He tells them that the observance of the ceremonial law was of no avail, unless it were accompanied with the circumcision of the heart. At the commencement of the third chapter he represents a descendant of Israel asking this question, "What advantage then hath the Jew?" To which he replies, "Much every way: chiefly that unto them were committed the oracles of God."

With many of the advantages of the Jews before the coming of our Saviour, we have but little concern. They are at present to be regarded principally because they are closely connected with sacred history, and afford indubitable proofs of every dispensation of God. But the advantage which the apostle



expressly mentions, and chiefly insists on, we share in common with them. We Christians have indeed superseded them in the favour of the Almighty; we have been grafted into their place. To us are now committed the oracles of God; and from us is expected, as we enjoy greater light, a more understanding mind. What was obscurely revealed in the Mosaic dispensation, is fully explained to us; what they beheld as through a glass darkly, we are enabled clearly to see and comprehend.

This may be asserted with greater propriety now than at any former period of the world; for there are few, if there be any, who may not, if they choose it, read that holy book which contains the revealed will of the Almighty. Few there are now, and fewer there will soon be, to whom the righteousness of God is not manifested. It was said by the apostle to be the greatest privilege of the chosen seed, that to them were com-

mitted the oracles of God. We know that they prized them highly; that they were most anxious to teach them their children; that they delighted to talk of them when they sat in their house, and when they walked by the way; that they formed the most delightful subjects of meditation when they lay down and when they rose up. The sacred writings were formed, they were expressly ordained, to have these happy effects. May we not ask why they have lost their influence? why it is that they are not thus used and enjoyed at present? Can it be, that in addition to the law and the prophets which composed the sacred volume during the existence of the Mosaic covenant, there has been added a clearer revelation;—that the oracles of God now declare in express terms, in the clearest language, the glad tidings of salvation;—that the perusal of holy writ demonstrates to all mankind the whole purpose of God, the saving



of mankind by the gospel of Jesus Christ?

However melancholy it may be deeply to discover the perverseness of the human heart, it will be found, on considerate investigation, that the neglect of the scriptures is owing in a great measure to their plainness, their perspicuity, and their aptness to expose the universal condition of mankind. While the word of God was but partially known, and needed much explanation, it was considered as a treasure: now that its perusal is open to every man, by how many is it neglected; like a rare and beautiful exotic that loses its original value by being naturalized and made easy of purchase. How true is the affirmation, that men thinking themselves wise become fools! Because the Bible is generally distributed, and is in the hands of people of low condition in this life, it is regarded as not worth opening by the haughty, the arrogant, and the vain.

But men of the truest wisdom know that the Bible contains inexhaustible information; that in it are manifested the wonders of the creation,—the true nature of man, as well as the righteousness of God. This admirable quality is peculiar to the holy writings: that, though their end and purpose may be clearly understood by the first perusal, and by those whose minds possess little store of information, yet every one gains instruction by reading them again; and the more the mind of man is cultivated and enriched by true learning, the greater degree of light is poured into it by studying the revelations of God. And there is another advantage the Bible possesses over other books, which I trust has been experienced by many, by most of you, my brethren; and that is, that the oftener it is perused, the more sweet, the more consoling and gratifying does its reading appear. This is effected by more causes than one. In the first place,

the oftener we read, the better we understand it, and also the more fully we comprehend its doctrines; the more pure, the more chaste, the more heavenly, do our own souls and understandings become. It is impossible to be well acquainted with the scripture, and not to taste that the "word of the Lord is precious." Can it be asked then, what advantage hath the Christian?—what profit hath he to whom is manifested the righteousness of God? We might suppose that every one who could read, and who had been baptized in the faith of Jesus Christ, would at once, would eagerly answer the question; would have gratefully and often, when he had been reading the word of God, placed his hand on the sacred volume, and have said, by this I am enabled to say with holy Job, I have on numerous occasions heard of thee, O Lord, by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee.

It is by the study of his revealed word that the promise of our Redeemer is fulfilled to the faithful while on earth, that "they shall see God." And it is in the hope of seeing through this medium the Almighty as He is, that the pious Christian rejects and abhors the perusal of any book which inculcates sentiments discordant with the holy scriptures. No man whose religious principles are steady, who has the love of his Redeemer actually abiding in his heart, will consent to peruse any work which may tend to unsettle his belief in Christ, or render him at all sceptical in the doctrines which the Almighty has graciously revealed. He will shun all intercourse with unbelievers; he will reject every opportunity which may be presented to him of reading any publication in which religion is slightly spoken of—he will avoid it as an accursed thing; he will consider it, as indeed it is, an abomination to the Lord.

I am aware of the manner this advice is received by many at the present day. I know it is frequently said, that by refusing to peruse works on each side of the question, we evince a narrowness of disposition; that we do not give our reason her due exercise; that we are influenced by prejudice, and debar ourselves from every opportunity of expanding our minds. Let us consider for a moment the force of this objection, the tendency of this temptation to distrust the infallible assurance of the Lord. Are we to put his holy word in competition with the sarcastic, the blasphemous objections of the infidel? Has the Bible no greater claim to our attention and our belief than the frothy arguments, the indecent and coarse ridicule of the idle declaimer, who would rob us of our dearest hope, and who does not even pretend to give us any consolation in its stead? But the books written against the scriptures profess to enlarge our ideas,



and to make us wise! Can that increase our knowledge which confines our ideas to this world only?—which excludes the prospect of futurity, and throws a dark and impenetrable cloud over an eternal world, and the glories of which the gospel is described as the dayspring, the morning light, which assuredly precedes a glorious, a happy, and an everlasting day? Whoever considers the truth of revelation questionable, has proceeded further than he may be himself aware in the path of infidelity. He either has not read the holy writings, or has read them with a carnal mind. If he had perused them with the devout attention they deserve, with the meek and humble wish for instruction which becomes a frail and erring mortal while he is receiving the precepts of his Lord; no prejudice, no obstacle to their reception could long remain in his mind.

And when we are directed to shun the perusal of all writings and all con-

versations which either directly or indirectly tend to weaken our faith in revelation, we should remember the strong grounds on which this admonition rests. We should recollect that infidel publications can do us no good : they afford us no comfort ; they cannot console the mind in sorrow ; they can give no relief to our sinking spirits at our last hour ; they render existence discontented and unhappy, and death, which the humble Christian knows is but the gate of eternal life, a continual, an inevitable object of fear. Who that has derived consolation from the gospel, can wish that consolation to be withdrawn ? Who that has ever risen from prayer with his spirits cheered, and his mind glowing with gratitude to his Redeemer, with holy hope in the approval of his God ;— who that has experienced the happy results of obedience, of faith, of holy trust in the Almighty, can wish to be furnished with an excuse to obey him no


longer, to have his faith unsettled, and his reliance on his Saviour weakened or broken down? But the unbeliever, who has been, and ever will be, rendered unhappy and morose since he has discarded the creed of the Saviour of the world, is always ready to draw into the whirlpool in which his own hopes of eternity have been lost, every one who condescends to become his associate. He tells him, as I have before remarked, that liberal opinions best become a rational creature, and that we must try the truth of religious doctrines by the standard of our reason and our own understanding, if we would be wise. A moment's thought will convince us that this standard of belief must be graduated by each man's individual intellect, and if generally observed, would be attended with the most fatal consequences on the temporal as well as eternal condition of man.

Cowardice in Christ's cause renders

the infidel more daring; for the children of the evil one, like their apostate parent, are bold, loud, and clamorous when they think their iniquity will be supported. But resist them and they will flee from you. Let the voice of genuine piety be heard: let its accent accord with the meekness and resolution of our immaculate Master, and it is scarcely credible how soon the clamour of infidelity is stilled. The wicked cannot help respecting those whom they affect to despise: and however low the condition of a sincere Christian may be in this world, let him fervently, yet temperately, avow his belief in his Saviour Christ: let him confess boldly, yet calmly, his hopes of salvation, through his blessed Redeemer, among men, and he will find his unbelieving adversaries slinking away like the old serpent, to whose wiles the arts of infidelity are so often compared in scripture.

The method of reasoning employed

by the infidel is indeed precisely that, which deceived our first mother. The great seducer persuaded her, that the fruit of the tree of knowledge would make her wise. We know the success of his persuasion: she did make the trial. She disobeyed the command of her Maker; her eyes were opened, and she saw and felt the misery which was her desert. We are told to rely on the promises of God, to study his holy word, to reject, as a cunningly devised fable, every publication which contributes to lessen our respect for God's law, and to shake our belief in the doctrines which in the gospel are revealed. When we disobey this command, we feel indeed, as did Eve, that our eyes are opened; but the prospect before us, instead of being, as the Christian's, serene and tranquil and luminous in the distance, is dark and interminable and confused; our minds, our principles become unsettled, and our opinions wild.



We know not what to think, or what to pray for as we ought. We are compelled then to reject serious thoughts, and to abandon the practice of prayer altogether. And what then is our condition? Will not unsteadiness of belief in divine revelation produce distress of thought and various species of mental calamity? It is indeed its natural fruit. Every kind of sin is followed by misery; we know it by the experience of our hearts, by the compunction we feel when we have yielded to temptation; by the remorse, the apprehension, which the dread of God's displeasure produces in the mind, and the awful expectation of future punishment. And even when this dread is not felt, when the conscience is seared, still sinful habits and loose opinions inevitably engender wretchedness. The contemptuous, the presumptuous sinner knows, even in the midst of his wild career, that he is sowing

to the wind, and must reap corruption. That he is debasing his faculties, debauching his mind, defeating the object for which he was sent into the world, rendering his soul unfit for purer joys, and proper only for the society of those accursed spirits, whose doom is misery and despair and darkness for ever. "His delight was in cursing, and it shall happen unto him; he loved not blessing, therefore it shall be far from him."

My brethren, in these times our state is dangerous. In every age of the church the true believer had enemies to encounter, and temptations to withstand; but never was he assailed with such versatile weapons, such insidious ambushes as now. This is the age of reading, the passion and the practice pervades all degrees and classes of men; and books find their way into society, which instil a deadly poison before the

venom is perceived. No man can help being sometimes thus ensnared, but as soon as the craft is detected, it is every Christian's duty to throw aside the publication in which the subtle poison is infused, and immediately to apply the antidote which his Maker has given him. He will then find the advantages of free access to the oracles of God; meditation on the words of eternal life will dissipate every doubt; the promises of his Redeemer will afford consolation to his mind; the daily, the continual use of the prayer, which our Lord has taught us, will assuredly have the effect of strengthening his faith, of elevating his hope in God, and of increasing his charity to men.

If, in perusing the following pages, this object shall be accomplished or accelerated, the writer will have attained the end at which he aimed; and if he shall in any instance perceive the com-



pletion of this endeavour, he will have the comfort of believing that to good purpose have been consulted and studied the oracles of God.

## SERMON I.

OUR FATHER WHICH ART IN HEAVEN.

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MATT. vi. part of ver. 9.

Our Father, which art in Heaven.

ONE of the principal objects which our blessed Saviour had in view, in his instructions while on earth, was to endear religion to men. And this is now the natural effect of a due reception of the gospel. Its doctrines are so pure, that, when recieved, they cannot fail to cleanse and captivate the heart. The design of Christ's advent into this world was so gracious and compassionate, that it must excite thankfulness in every mind

which is not rendered callous by unbelief or debauchery.

So faultless and admirable was our Saviour's conduct on earth, that, though it is a pattern for our imitation, it can never be equalled by the most perfect of mankind. And his instructions, not only open and enlarge our mental faculties, but they make even the most simple acquainted with truths more awful, with glories more illustrious, than unassisted reason can conceive, or the deepest research, the most indefatigable study of human powers, could discover or understand,

Various, and often sublime were the ideas which wise men of old entertained of the nature of the Deity. Amidst the corrupt and polluting rites with which the false gods of the heathens were worshipped in different generations, there have arisen men of superior intellect, who have shrunk from their defiling worship, and have looked for a purer, a

more exalted and more benevolent God, than was to be found in Pagan temples, or than the most extensive mythology offered to their view. They were aware that the Maker of this world must be omnipotent, just, and good, free from every vindictive and unholy attribute; and as every thing is made on earth for the use, comfort, and convenience of man, they were convinced that the Creator must be benevolent, compassionate, and kind. In compliance with this natural sentiment, some were induced to address their supreme Deity as the "Father of the gods and men." But who ever comprised in his belief the holy, the thankful, the confident persuasion which burns in the heart of the Christian, when he piously addresses his Creator in the words which the Son of the highest has taught him to employ, and when he commences his supplication for protection, mercy, and forgiveness,

by pronouncing, "Our Father, which art in Heaven"?

The knowledge that whatever benefits we receive, whatever good we enjoy, proceeds from our heavenly Father, excites in the mind of the devout worshipper a feeling of gratitude and holy hope, which gives serenity to his mind, and strength to his devotion. Our earthly parents are of the same passions as ourselves; they are subject to frailties, prejudices, and mistakes, though we are bound to obey and honour them. But our Father which is in Heaven, is liable to no error, no prejudice or misconception; he hates nothing He has made. Even when we transgress his commands, he delights not in the death of the wicked, but would rather that the sinner should be converted and live. He is influenced by no vindictive feeling. When He punishes, it is in accordance with infinite justice; and

even the guilty must own, the condemned will confess, that they have excluded themselves from the portion he has promised to his obedient and affectionate children. The love of God is the first and great command; and it is so, because we cannot pray to Him in the way our Lord has taught us, without feeling for Him a filial and dutiful affection; without confessing that, though His power, His providence, and bounty are daily exercised on earth; yet that His glory and majesty are more illustriously manifested in Heaven.

How lamentable is the consciousness that every man has felt a reluctance to cherish this holy affection. Even though he may have been brought up in pious habits, who that has arrived at man's estate, has not experienced that his mind is weaned from the purest object of love, the love of his Father in Heaven? The pleasures, the anxieties, and the conversation of the world, com-

bine to wear off religious impressions. Things temporal seem of superior importance; and in the endeavour to acquire, to retain, and to enjoy these, our Father is forgotten.

The baseness of this neglect and forgetfulness cannot be fully apparent, unless we bear in mind the divine character of Him whom we thus ungratefully neglect, and suffer the impression to rest upon our memories. The prayer, which I trust we daily use, reminds us of the nature of Him who claims our adoration, who requires our obedience, and who most condescendingly asks for our love. We acknowledge Him as "Our Father," the Father of us all. He has created us; He has called us into this world, which he made for our use, for our comfort, for our enjoyment, if we would enjoy it innocently. He has given us a body so admirably formed and constituted as to be itself a wonder; an object of admiration to all who ever

examine or consider its complicated faculties. He has given us a soul capable of reason, of judgment, of exquisite perception. He has not confined its existence to this world alone, but has promised to receive it into the realms of everlasting happiness; if we do not render it unfit to be admitted into that seat of purity, where His immediate presence imparts delight, which we are not now capable of conceiving, but of which we are perpetually reminded, when we address "Our Father, which is in Heaven."

Few, who suffer their minds to dwell on holy subjects, whose attention is not entirely engrossed by this lower world, and the perishable objects that now occupy and corrupt the heart, have failed to perceive and acknowledge, that the direction to address the Almighty, in the endearing terms which are applicable to our earthly parents, is at once their privilege and their most lasting



joy. No calamity, no loss on this side the grave, can deprive us of it. Indeed, the lower we are in this world, if our minds are pious, pure, and thankful, the nearer we approach to the character of God's children. His only begotten Son had not where to lay his head. The comforts, the honours, the good things of this life were denied him. There cannot be therefore a greater error, or one of a more mischievous tendency, than the supposition, that those, who do not meet with success in life, are disregarded by God. They are the lowly, who are called the children of "Our Father which is in Heaven." And when we meet with disappointments, when afflictions oppress us, we should turn our eyes to our Father's house; we should look forward to our last, our eternal home, where the Father of us all has provided comforts and joys for those that love Him.

St. John has told us, God is love.

This assertion is confirmed by the Almighty's dealings with mankind. No man can look back upon his past life, and not remember instances of kindness, of compassion, of forbearance, of deserved punishment, that he could not have expected from his earthly parents. His corrections too have been paternal. "He has not been extreme to mark what we have done amiss." If He had, who could abide it? Yet though we perpetually err, and often wilfully offend Him, still does he permit us to call Him "Our Father;" still does he allow us to send up our petitions from earth, which we have polluted by our sins, to His throne of purity, "which is in Heaven." How vast and transcendent is the favour and goodness of God! What can have produced this condescension? What stops the course of justice? What withholds punishment when impending over the sinner's head? Why are any of us still in the land of the living, and in the

place of hope? Is it that we have been strictly obedient servants? Is it that we have employed our talents in God's service? Is it that we are sedulously attentive to our heavenly Father's voice? Is it that we delight in being called, and in practising the duties of his children?—Take not your conviction from me, my brethren. Consult your own hearts. Let your consciences tell you, whether you can worthily, and with holy confidence, address Him who made, who has blessed; and who continually preserves you, by the title of "Our Father." Let us ask ourselves, if we can be said to be sincere in our love of God; if we do not suffer pious affections to influence our practice, and to bias the conduct of our lives? Is it not pleasing to converse with those we love? And should we ever neglect our devotions to God, if we really loved Him? Should we not delight in spreading the glory of our beneficent Father among men? Should we not feel plea-



sure in holy intercourse with him? Should we omit to thank him for his continual blessings, and ascribe to Him perpetually honour and glory, and be ever anxious to celebrate his praise? Does not the reproof, which He spake by the prophet, strike your ear? "If I be a Father, where is mine honour?"

By our utmost exertions we cannot honour Him sufficiently; and how often, how universally is that pittance of honour and due homage, which we can pay, ungratefully withheld, and stubbornly denied Him? How frequently do we provoke him to discard us, to regard us more as rebels, than to cherish us as his children. Why, let me ask again, is his goodness continued to us? Why is not deserved punishment inflicted? Is there any latent good quality in the heart, which balances our presumption? Alas! *that* is corrupt and polluted, not only by nature, by original sin, but ten times more by our own consent, and choice,

and inclination. Is it on account of any service we have done to God, or any essential benefit we have bestowed on his creatures? No, we have been unprofitable servants; we have not done even what it was our duty to do; we have debased the image of God in which he created us; we have rendered our bodies instruments of sin; we have made our souls the servants of iniquity.

How dare we then call ourselves the children of God? How can we venture to supplicate the Holy One, by addressing Him as "Our Father, which art in Heaven?" My brethren, have we no one to speak in our behalf? Have we no intercessor there? Yes: there sits on the right hand of our Father, a Mediator who never pleads in vain. "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." He is the propitiation for our sins. We are, if we neglect not so great salvation, children of the Father, and joint heirs with Christ.

Did not lamentable experience force upon us the confession, it would seem incredible that any one should neglect the salvation of Christ. His merits alone can avert the Eternal's wrath; by His atoning blood are our sins washed away; through faith in Him, by obedience to Him only can we call *His* Father, "Our Father, which is in heaven." It is a privilege peculiar to the disciples of Christ. We are not allowed thus to address the Almighty merely because he created us. He is our Father, as the Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; he is the great link of relationship between our Maker and ourselves; he is the vine, we are the branches. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, (said our blessed Lord Himself,) except ye abide in me; "For without me ye can do nothing."

These are truths which should press upon the mind, while we are asking our

Father for our daily bread. We should have no confidence in ourselves. We should be humble in our Father's sight. We should consider ourselves as sinners, and therefore deserving punishment: as cowardly rebels, and therefore fit to be expelled from God's presence; as having no merit, no plea for pardon of our own. We must hope for forgiveness through the mediation of another; through the intercession of Him, whose merits were made perfect by suffering. And whose sufferings were occasioned by sin, by crimes which *we* have perpetrated, by guilt which we still incur, and from the merited consequences of which His immaculate body was bruised to save us.

None but those who admit this scriptural doctrine, can with propriety call the Almighty their Father. "For," says the inspired Apostle "ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."

This it is that inspires us with confidence, with purity, with assurance of acceptance before the Almighty's throne. This it is, that when we have erred, brings us back to our Father's house. What expectation could we have entertained of admission and of pardon, if our Saviour had not said, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden with your sins, and I will give you rest?" What claim have we to call the Almighty, "Our Father," but as the disciples of Christ? He taught his disciples to pray, and to say, "Our Father, which art in heaven." And if we refuse to be taught by him in other matters, if we forfeit the character of his disciples, if we obey not his precepts in the conduct of our lives, that we call God our Father will avail us nothing. Our presumption will only aggravate our guilt; our neglect and disobedience will not be forgotten at the last great day; we shall bitterly remember too the mockery of



our lips, when we confessed the Son of God to be unto us “ both a sacrifice for sin, and also an example of godly life.”

How incumbent then is it on us, my brethren, to pray to our Heavenly Father, while He allows us to call Him by this endearing name. How constantly should we arise and go to Him, whenever our conscience suggests to us, that we have ever strayed from his paths? How obedient should we be to his precepts? How penitent for our crimes? When we know also, that “like as a father pitieth his own children, even so is the Lord merciful unto them that fear Him.” When we have our Redeemer’s promise, that He will say, to the faithful and the penitent, to his meek and imploring disciples, “ Come ye blessed of my Father inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the beginning of the world.”

That we may hear these transporting

words, pronounced as applicable to ourselves, may God of his infinite mercy grant through Jesus Christ our Lord.

## SERMON II.

HALLOWED BE THY NAME.

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**MATTHEW vi. 9.**

Hallowed be Thy name.

**WHATEVER** is become familiar to us by constant habit is too often slightly regarded. The daily repetition of prescribed and urgent duties, which ought to impress on our minds a sense of their necessity, serves to render us forgetful of their importance, negligent in their practice, and inattentive to their use. This remark, I fear, is applicable to the duty of prayer in general. But it is more especially striking with respect to that which our blessed Lord has taught

us. Men learn it when their faculties are incapable of comprehending its meaning; they repeat it all their lives without due consideration, and leave this world with the supposition, that a bare compliance with the custom of repeating it, is sufficient to entitle them to the rewards which await, and are promised to, the disciples of Christ. Nothing therefore can be more important than a clear understanding of that for which we pray. The petitions contained in this sacred form relate to our Maker and ourselves. We cannot supplicate the Lord with propriety without praising Him: without acknowledging his power, without honouring Him in our hearts, and wishing to extend his glory on earth, in the conduct of our lives. Immediately after addressing Him, therefore, and acknowledging His Omnipotence, we declare that it is the wish of our hearts that His worship may be universal, His dignity manifested, and His majesty and service

held sacred among men. This is plainly asserted in the expression, Hallowed be Thy name.

Though the word *name* here may be said to be put for the Divinity himself, whose nature and attributes are infinitely separated from the creatures that inhabit this earth, and cannot be duly contemplated without being hallowed, without producing in the mind a deep sense of solemnity and awe ; yet if we confine the term to its usual acceptation, we shall find that we have daily need to express our wish, that the Almighty's name may be hallowed. The slight and negligent use of which is the first step towards the sin which is mentioned with expressions of the greatest detestation in Scripture, that of blasphemy : a sin which is rarely, if ever committed, while any sense of the goodness, the power, the compassion of the Almighty, rests upon the mind of man.

There are few, I believe, (except those that are flagitiously wicked, and have

thrown off every restraint of godliness,) who suffer a day and a night to pass without feeling the influence (though this, alas! may be but transient) which the use of the Lord's prayer has a tendency to create in the mind. And nothing more convinces the thoughtful of the waywardness of our nature, than the experience we have of our negligence, and the disrespect we show to the name of God. Did we reflect with seriousness on the power of our Creator; did we entertain a grateful sense of what our Redeemer has done and suffered for us; did we confess and feel the necessity of a guide to our paths, and a comforter in our need: is it possible that His holy name would be profaned? that the name of God would be irreverently exchanged in common conversation, and even used in moments of vicious excess? though I think the latter case less surprising than the other. For in the open and unchecked commission of guilt, the mind

is given up to the dominion of vile affections. It may be said to be led captive by Satan at his will. But to make use of the name of the Holy One in familiar discourse, and when our thoughts are in a tranquil state, proves that we have not a proper sense of the majesty of the divine nature, and the humiliated condition of our own. If men had not lost their innocence, the name of God would no doubt often have occurred in their conversation. But then it would have been hallowed. The bounty of the Almighty would have afforded a theme of continual gratitude, of endless and most pleasing praise.

But how is it too frequently used among ourselves? Is it hallowed? Is it not mixed with subjects which, when called to our recollection at the last day, will fill us with shame? And if it be not blended with vicious language, does not the familiar use of it tend to wear off the proper sense of the holiness of

the Supreme Being? Is it not, in short, a direct violation of the divine command, **Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain?**

We openly disobey this command, we act in absolute contradiction to the words of the prayer we should daily use, whenever we introduce the name of God into common discourse. To take God's name in vain, is not so much to swear falsely by it; for this sin is so atrocious, that it is but seldom perpetrated, as the rendering the name of the Almighty less holy, less revered, less hallowed among men. And how can we bring this dishonour upon Him more easily, than by invoking Him, or mentioning his holy name, at times, and joined with such subjects as manifestly corrupt the heart, render us negligent of our salvation, and forgetful of the immortal concerns of our souls.

Whenever we mention the name of God with irreverence, we render less




effectual every future prayer. We cannot say with propriety, or with confidence, "hallowed be thy name," when we are conscious of having profaned it. Can we utter this supplication without shuddering! when we are aware, that any trifling accident, any ebullition of temper, or even any thing which may excite surprise, will call forth exclamations, in which the name of God will be uttered without any hallowed feeling; perhaps in mockery, in anger, or in an accent of scorn?

In many things, says the Apostle, we offend all. But surely no offence is repeated so frequently, few sins are so little regarded, as that which we pray against in the words of the text. "Hallowed be thy name" is the constant prayer of every professed Christian. And yet who can say that he has always hallowed God's name as he ought? Did we truly hallow it, we should feel, and we should express, reverence for God's

laws, his house and ordinances. That we have transgressed God's laws, we confess as often as we assemble in his temple. Our public services begin with a confession of this lamented fact. And the little respect that is paid to the place where God's worship is performed, affords a melancholy proof, what a small degree of reverence is afforded Him in our hearts. When we enter the houses of our superiors on earth, we willingly show our respect to them by humiliating behaviour, and by complying with the usages of our country in indicating respect. But how often do we see men entering God's house, without any indication of reverence, with the same easy unconcern, or more probably, with an affectation of the same indifference, as they would enter an edifice built for purposes of barter, or of vain amusement. Is this behaviour consistent with the reverence due to the Almighty? Is this the way we hallow and reverence his name?

This is the place, saith the Lord, "where mine honour dwelleth." And he who cherishes a zeal for God's honour in his heart, will express veneration for the places in which His honour is celebrated, and His worship is publicly performed.

I have good hope, that there are many, who are perfectly convinced of the propriety of proving by their outward behaviour, their inward reverence to God, and every thing belonging to Him. But it is certain, that looseness of manner, as well as a false liberality of opinion, is a prevailing foible of the times. To what this general laxity of respect to things sacred may lead, it is not difficult to foresee. The wicked and the impious not only encourage and support each other, but their confidence is much strengthened, their exertions in the devil's service are greatly confirmed and animated by the concessions of those, who profess to advocate the cause of godliness. Weakness in support of the honour of God is



the worst species of cowardliness. It betrays not only a want of faith, and a virtual denial of our Saviour, but it may produce guilt in future generations. When the manners and conversation most prevalent in society are infected with profaneness, or are adverse to those expressions of piety, by which we most evidently and constantly hallow God's holy name, it requires a power, more than is found on earth, to extirpate worldly and wicked sentiments, and to bring men back to the fold of their God.

It cannot be dissembled, that when an occasion offers, which may impel us to express our zeal for the honour of God, we must expect to meet not only with opposition but contempt. "The world will love its own." And our accustomed indication of love for our blessed Redeemer, or an unlooked-for demonstration of our conviction of the superiority of the precepts of the Almighty over the fancies and perverseness of men, will by many be con-

sidered as the effect of bigotry, or superstition; or hypocrisy, or personal pride; and we shall in many cases be stigmatized with the accusation of harbouring sentiments which our souls abhor, but which we shall in vain, it is probable, disclaim. This is one of those trials, which every Christian must endure, if he be determined to prefer the service of his divine Master to the approbation of the world. It is, doubtless, our duty, "as much as lieth in us, to live peaceably with all men;" but there is a peace preferable to this social affection. I mean the peace of conscience, which must always be disturbed, if we see the honour of God violated with apparent indifference. The blessed Son of the Highest left the mansions of eternal peace and bliss, and encountered scorn, ignominy, and death for us. And shall we, especially those, who have sworn to defend His cause, and have devoted our lives to his service, timorously forbear to

express our feelings of holy zeal, when we see his dignity impaired, his temple profaned, or his name insulted? Wide, I trust, is the difference between a fierce and a fiery bigot, who wishes ill to his neighbour, and harbours malice in his heart against him, because he may be of a different persuasion; and a zealous advocate in the cause of God, a faithful disciple of his Son, who is anxious to vindicate His honour, and to hallow his holy name.

It should not be forgotten too that when we hallow the name of God, we hallow our own souls, we sanctify the Lord God in our hearts, we imperceptibly increase our reverence for the Holy One; and render our souls more fit to be partakers with the saints in light. When we leave this world, we hope to go to a better. What will be our employment there? The celebration of God's glory—the full and continual expression of gratitude to our Redeemer—the delight

of partaking in his glorified nature—of hallowing his holy name. Can we expect to inherit these blessings, to be admitted into heaven, to join the song of angels, when we in this world join the wicked in expressions of impiety, in showing disrespect to the Almighty, in heaping dishonour on his name? Here we have our choice.—We are free agents, we may either glorify God with the faculties he has given us, or employ them in the service of his enemy. But remember, as a man soweth, so must he reap, “and that with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” Immediately after this declaration, the apostle adds: “For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed.” It is a false shame; it is a weak compliance with the usages of a sinful world; it is the fear of the ridicule of ungodly men, that prevails so frequently in rendering the name of God less hallowed than it ought to be. We

are afraid of being thought too devout, too much impressed with the fear of God—too anxious to express our thankfulness and our love for our crucified Saviour, and therefore we do not at all times hallow his name.

My brethren, what wickedness is this, what base dissimulation! what mean servility to an ensnaring foe! How dare we join in the petitions of the faithful, and say, "Hallowed be thy name," when our own conversation, our own conduct, and our manners, contribute to render men less anxious to express a deep and holy sense of the majesty, the power, the bounty of Almighty God? We know not the extent of the sins we commit, because we take pains to hide them from our consciences; but at that day when we must give an account of all our words and actions, the repetition of the prayer which is adverse to our practice, will swell the accusations against us. It will not be enough to say, Lord, Lord,



we daily used the prayer which thou thyself hast taught us: it will be replied, Did you regulate your conduct by the principles which it breathes? The professed disciples of Jesus Christ have been taught the prayer which is particularly called His, to instruct them in their duty, to show them the way in which they ought to walk, to teach them how to pray and how to live, to point out to them their real wants, and on what conditions they will be supplied. Let us not deceive ourselves. Let us obey the wise man's advice,—“ My son, before thou prayest prepare thyself, and be not as one that tempteth the Lord.” And still more incumbent on us is it, to beware lest we commit again the sins for which we have formerly asked forgiveness, that we be not in the habit of practising those vices against which our prayers were meant to guard us. If we be, how shall we avoid the imputation that our prayer is

turned into sin? Against all relapse into wickedness no remedy is so effectual as an habitual and abiding sense and recollection of the mercies of God, of the love of Christ Jesus, of the price which has been paid for the salvation of our souls. This will make us obedient and willing servants of our Heavenly Master: this will render our duty pleasant to us: this will excite us to exclaim in every condition of human life, in the hour of trial and temptation, with sincerity of heart, and with our latest breath,—“Hallowed be thy name.”

## SERMON III.

## THY KINGDOM COME.

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MATT. vi. 10.

Thy kingdom come.

VARIOUS have been the interpretations and conceptions to which this short petition in the Lord's prayer has given rise. And as no doctrine or precept of our blessed Lord has been unassailed or contradicted by ungodly men, so have some pretended that this clause is inapplicable, and improper to be used, since the religion of Christ has been established, and since the last revelation from God, which can be expected or received, has been delivered to mankind.

This is a cavil evidently engendered by unbelief: it has been propagated by a wish to render the use of this inimitable prayer less prevalent, less efficacious, and less consoling, than by the pious, the penitent, and the simple, it has been ever found to be. When the words are taken in their plain and primitive sense; when the petition is compared (as we are taught to compare things spiritual) with other supplications and hopes of a spiritual nature, nothing in it will appear inapplicable to our present condition, and the prospect it affords to the eye of the sincere Christian will be found bright and clear.

That the kingdom of God exists not now on earth in its full extent and vigour, the most ordinary map must convince us, the most cursory observer must be aware. A large proportion of the globe is possessed by professed infidels, by the enemies and despisers of the Christian name. Have we not reason then

to pray for the extension of God's kingdom? A still larger proportion of those who call themselves Christians are regardless of the precepts of their Saviour, negligent of their salvation, and opposers, instead of defenders, of the kingdom of God's own Son. Have we not reason then to pray that his kingdom may be victorious, that the pure doctrine of the gospel may be everywhere received and practised, that the religion of our Redeemer may universally and actually prevail.

The scripture gives us reason to believe that the earth shall in time be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as universally as the waters cover the sea. To complete the prophecy and to extend the kingdom of God throughout the world, has been the wish of pious men in all ages, and by various methods is now, we trust, accomplishing. The only method by which we are taught and encouraged to advance the kingdom of God in countries

which now lie without its happy pale, is the preaching of the gospel, the great object of which is to soften the heart of man; an object which, however important in this life, and necessary to the attainment of eternal happiness, has been always found to fail, when attempted by other means than the reception of Christianity. Some have indeed pretended that unbelieving nations are to be civilized and rendered polished before they can be expected to be converted to Christianity. But this notion betrays a lamentable ignorance of Christian truth. It was the poor, the ignorant, and the lowly, whom Christ, while on earth, condescended to call. When men are wise in their own conceits, they are least capable of receiving the pure precepts of the gospel: this is declared in almost every page of scripture. The more constantly we read, and the more deeply we meditate on the sacred volume, the more firmly are

we convinced that "the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God." This is proved by the state of society in nations professing themselves Christians : they who are wise in their own eyes, always entertain notions adverse to the truths of revelation. The doctrine of Christ crucified, and the humbleness of mind to which it leads, is as much foolishness to the conceited sophist now as it was to the learned Greek.

If the extension of God's kingdom were to be advanced only by the opulent and the powerful, as it must be if its propagation in distant parts were only meant by this petition, the practice which the Lord's prayer would teach us would be confined to very few. But, God be thanked, there are none that profess the Christian name who may not join in its supplications with propriety ; there are none, who are actually Christ's disciples, who cannot with sincerity and zealous confidence proclaim,

“Thy kingdom come.” For the kingdom of God is not of this world; it is altogether of a spiritual nature. The throne of the Almighty, which is visible to us now, is established in the believer’s heart. God reigns in the minds of his intelligent creatures; and he, who affords not this seat of empire to the Almighty, is a rebel to Him. He has no pretensions to ask any thing from God; the Almighty is not his king nor his master. God, says the scripture, dwells with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit; but without contrition, without faith and repentance, the mind of man will not be inhabited by a pure and holy spirit. When therefore we say, “Thy kingdom come,” at times when our minds are in an impure and unholy state, we ask for that which cannot be accomplished; for the kingdom, the dominion, the influence of the Holy One, is incompatible with the prevalence of sin, or pride, or any guilty passion.



They who are swayed by any thing worldly are the servants of the prince of this world ; and let it be remembered, that he will never willingly resign his empire ; and that those, who have obeyed him in this world, he will assuredly claim as his subjects in the next. “ Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation : ” whenever, therefore, we act contrary to the precepts of our Saviour : whenever by our words, our actions, or seeming approbation, we encourage others to sin, we contribute to lessen the bounds of God’s kingdom ; we do what in us lies to counteract his power, withstand his sacred influence, and render his name and authority less feared and less revered among men. Can any who are thus employed repeat the prayer in which are contained the words of the text, without mockery, without deceiving their own hearts, or attempting to deceive Him to whom all hearts are open and from whom no

secrets are hid? Can we say with truth and sincerity, "Thy kingdom come," when we are the servants of other masters? when we yield to temptations which we know are sinful? when we harbour passions which war against our souls? *Whose* kingdom do we set up in our hearts, *whom* do we willingly serve, when we indulge in vicious practices, when we entertain unholy sentiments, when we neglect our duty towards Him whose kingdom none shall enter, whose glory none shall see, but those of a meek and gentle spirit, of a pure and contrite heart? When we commit sin, are we not the servants of sin? When impurity is pleasant to us, do we not obey an impure spirit? Can we expect to enter the kingdom of God, when pride, or malice, or envy, or any unholy passion abides and rules in our minds? Too often, alas! will evil thoughts intrude; too often are the most cautious thrown off their guard; too

often have all of us cause to lament that our actions and conversation do not always correspond with our prayers. And it is this backsliding that renders it necessary for us to have recourse to prayer daily, lest evil habits should have dominion over us; lest we should be forgetful of the Christian's dearest hope; lest we should lose sight of the promise of our Lord,—that his true and faithful disciples shall at length be admitted into the kingdom of Heaven.

Nothing surely can be more consoling than such a promise. Nothing contributes more to purity of life than a continual dependence on it. The prospects of its accomplishment, the certainty that the kingdom of God will at length come, is so enchanting, that it is not wonderful that they who had seen the Lord or his apostles, should expect his kingdom to be near. Centuries of forgetfulness, of corruption, of loosened faith, had not then made men negligent of the Saviour's

admonition, "Take heed, watch and pray, for ye know not when the time is." Most of those who had embraced Christianity were so deeply impressed with the importance of its doctrines, with the expectations of scenes in which their immortal and never changing souls must be involved, that it required a quietness of soul and a perfect resignation to the divine will, that most men want, to be divested of the general anxiety, the eager inquiry concerning the establishment of the kingdom of God.

When this most important event takes place, Christ will come again as a judge and an avenger. His honour will be vindicated: his glory will be manifested: Sin will be finally punished, and the heart of every man exposed. No wonder that the question has been everywhere asked, "When shall this time be?" since it interests every man that ever lived upon earth. Wisely, however, are times

and seasons hid from us; for if we knew the exact time when the kingdom of God will come, all other events, all other circumstances would sink into the shade. And the desire of this knowledge is lost when we reflect, that the day of our death is, to all of us, the last day; the last day we have it in our power to prove our faith in Christ; the last day we can act as free agents; the last day of our probation. And lamentable is the reflection, that the manners and usages of the world contribute, naturally and purposely tend to make the day when the Lord calls us hence, come upon us as a thief in the night. For when the Lord warns us by disease, by natural decay, by infirmity, or by any unforeseen event, is it not consonant with the practice of the world to strive to lessen the effect which God's judgments ought to make upon our hearts? Our friends are said to comfort us, when they dispel the apprehension of our last day;

when they succeed in rendering us forgetful of the instability of earthly hopes, the certainty, the near approach of that time when all worldly comforts must for ever close. "Miserable comforters are ye all," said Job; and so also should we say if our mouths were not stopped by death. For can we call that comfort, which prevents us from profiting by the knowledge, that in the same condition that the soul is when it quits its tenement of clay, in the same it must arise when the kingdom of God is indeed come?

And since the scripture speaks of the kingdom of God in terms to which worldly scenes have no reference or similitude, should we not inquire diligently into the extent of the supplication when we pray, "Thy kingdom come"? and if we shall find that when this desirable object is attained, we must part with any thing that now gives us pleasure, we may be sure there is some-

thing wrong in our desires and in our conduct of life. Where are we taught to pray for the continuance of delicious gratifications? What space can we think will be left in the kingdom of God for the indulgence of vanity, for the now expected homage of inferiors, for the pride and voluptuousness of the rich? The kingdom of God allows of no privileges but that of a nearer approach to our Heavenly Father's presence; and this will be regulated by the fitness for the enjoyment of this honour, which it is our business, and ought to be our constant employment, to acquire in this life. Did men really believe that their doom to all eternity will be fixed by the state of their souls, by unerring justice, and by the manner in which spiritual privileges have been enjoyed; by the success and earnestness with which temptations have been avoided, and by the eagerness and sincerity of their endeavours to obtain divine assistance,

to which, in time of spiritual danger they have had recourse, should we find men, should we ourselves be, so negligent and often so ignorant of the real condition of the soul? No. If we really sought the kingdom of God, we should not be eagerly desirous of any inferior object. And yet when is it that the glories of the next world are not considered as remote and uncertain acquisitions? Do not many regard their eternal inheritance as unworthy their pursuit? Are we not "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God?" How dare we then pray to our Heavenly Father that his kingdom may come, when we prize not his benefits? when the second coming of his Son to restore the kingdom to the true Israelites would make such a change in our condition as we must look for with alarm, instead of holy hope? To pray to God to hasten or bestow what we dare not hope for, is to render our supplications worse



than nugatory ; it is deceiving ourselves ; it is rendering our prayers a mere matter of form ; it is using the language of the pious without harbouring or feeling any pious principle in the heart. To say to our heavenly Father, " Thy kingdom come," when we have no desire, no relish for the joys which that kingdom imparts, is hypocrisy, of which we shall bitterly repent at the last day. Yet this is so common and so little regarded, that we have all at times need to be questioned much in the same way that Philip interrogated the Ethiopian : " Understandest thou for what thou prayest ?" Whose kingdom do you wish to come ? Under whose protection would you abide ? To whom do you look for every blessing ? And what grounds have you to hope that your petitions will succeed ? My brethren, is it not the kingdom of Christ that we eagerly hope for ? Is it not His protection we seek ? Do we not " look

unto Jesus" for all our happiness? Have we not his sacred promise that our prayers will be accepted, unless we "ask amiss"? Will not these questions be answered in the affirmative by every sincere disciple of Christ? And what will be the fate of others when his kingdom shall indeed come? The answer is too terrible to be contemplated. Let us rather reflect on the condition of those who have reasonable grounds of hope. They shall enter a kingdom where their Redeemer reigns in glory: where his benignant countenance shall shed on them the rays of happiness and continual approval: where every thing that can occasion distress or misery will be forgotten: where "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for former things are passed away."

And let us remember now, that the forgetfulness of sin and sorrow, and the passing away of deserved punishments,

is effected by the sacrifice of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ : that we have it now in our power to render his merits our own by faith and repentance : that He invites us to come to Him, to throw off all ungodly habits, to cease from filthy conversation, to resist and avoid every impure and evil thought. If we are really desirous of salvation, we must be watchful over our minds. If we keep his commandments, we shall find that we truly and progressively love God, and our neighbour as our ourselves : we shall continually endeavour to advance Christ's kingdom on earth : we shall strive to purify ourselves even as He is pure, that when He shall appear again with power and great glory, we may be made like unto him in his eternal and glorious kingdom ; where with Thee, O Father, and Thee, O Holy Ghost, He liveth and reigneth, ever one God, world without end.

## SERMON IV.

THY WILL BE DONE IN EARTH AS IT IS  
IN HEAVEN.

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MATT. vi. 10.

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

WE are told by an inspired apostle, that “we know not what we should pray for as we ought.” It is incumbent on us, therefore, to use and follow the pattern which has been compassionately afforded us. In all our desires we are taught to submit to the will of God, not with sullen obedience, as an act of duty which is unpleasant to us, and which we comply with because we are conscious

that we have no power of resistance, or because we shall incur punishment by opposition; but our obedience should proceed from a willing and a grateful heart. When our minds are rightly disposed, we constantly feel anxious, that the affairs of this world may be conducted so as to please our heavenly Father; we have no desires that can clash with his will; we wish our lives to be emblems of that happy, holy, and eternal existence, which the angels now enjoy, and which we hope to attain in the kingdom of Heaven. To these wishes we are led, when we pray with heart and mind in the words of the text, "Thy will be done in earth as it is in Heaven."

We must be sure that no one can effectually resist the will of God; and that it is of His mercy that our lives are prolonged a moment after we have ever disobeyed Him. But we are placed here in a state of trial. We have God's will

announced to us. No one can pretend ignorance of it; and we are left to our choice, whether we will comply with it or not. We know too that all sin, and the smallest approach to sin, is offensive to our heavenly Father. When therefore we harbour any sinful desires in our minds, we cannot without hypocrisy join in supplication in the words of the text. To pray that God's will may be done in earth, and to act contrary to it, is the sure method of excluding ourselves from the kingdom of Heaven. To obey and execute God's will constitutes the happiness of the inhabitants of that blissful abode. Nor is the happiness of Heaven ever so clearly represented on earth, as when men unite to perform the commands and designs of their Creator. "The counsels of God will stand; I will," saith He, "do all my pleasure." And he permits men to follow their perverse inclinations now, that His sovereign justice, His hatred of iniquity, may be

fully manifested hereafter. The pious, the meek-hearted, the righteous will indeed adore God, and be anxious to pay respect to his name, his house and all that attaches to his worship, in the conduct of their lives. But it is in their hearts, that he reigns supreme, and this profession of the heart is indicated and proved by their anxiety to do the will of their Father "in earth as it is in Heaven."

It must be confessed, that if the knowledge of the will of God were of difficult attainment, this service would be hard. But who is there in a Christian land, who will say, I would serve the Lord, if I knew how; I would do the will of my Heavenly Father, if his will were clearly explained? My brethren, His word is so pure, His will so plain, that he "may run, that readeth it." It is because we close our eyes and will not see; because we shut our ears, and will not hear, that we are ever ignorant

of our heavenly Father's will. And it is by perversely indulging the vicious propensities of our hearts, that we understand not the need we have of a Saviour. Many there are, who give themselves little or no trouble about their souls. They think it a sufficient confession of Christ, that they deny not the truth and efficacy of the gospel. If they outwardly profess themselves Christians, they imagine they shall be saved as well as others. Immersed in the cares or pleasures of this life, they flatter themselves it will be time enough to consider and prepare for the next, when every thing in this world is fading before them. It is not too much to affirm, that these have never enquired, never have been desirous to ascertain, what is the will of their "Father which is in heaven." Can it be his will, that our minds should be engrossed with worldly vanities? Can it be his will, that we should never reflect on things that are eternal? That the fate



of our never-dying souls should be disregarded? That his beloved Son should have been sent into this world, preached repentance to men, by his death have atoned for sin, and been crucified in vain? For in vain has He done and endured these things, if they, who call themselves his disciples, follow their own corrupt wills, and live as unregenerate men have ever lived, in obedience to their own passions, to those "lusts," as the apostle calls them, "that war against the soul."

No less fatal than impious is the thought, that because sin is not punished instantly in this life, the Almighty will not hereafter visit it with indignation. We know that God's will is not done on earth; if it were, the pious, the obedient, and the faithful, would seldom wish to change this world for a better. A day of judgment would not be necessary; the designs of the worldly would not be overthrown. Have we

not reason to ask ourselves every hour; am I doing God's will? Does not an affirmative reply from our conscience give us encouragement, and the purest pleasure? Does not a negative answer fill us with alarm? Let no man frame excuses, and say he is not in circumstances to do the will of God. Every man has his own duties assigned him. He has talents for which he must give account. All have duties which they are called upon to perform. We do God's will as acceptably when we exercise the virtues of patience, contentment and resignation, as when we are employed in the offices of active life. It is incumbent indeed on every one, not only to love his neighbour, but to benefit the community by actual exertion. But in many conditions of life these exertions must be necessarily confined. Where this is the case, we should comfort ourselves with the reflection, that it is God's will, that it should be so; that we have

less to answer for, and that by praying for and meekly entertaining the peace of God, we are resigned to his will on earth, and humbly hope, we shall join the communion of saints in more gloriously fulfilling it in Heaven.

On those indeed who enjoy this world's good, or whose stations enable them to give a bias and direction to temporal affairs, rests a heavier responsibility. When they pray that God's will may "be done in earth," they should be watchful and circumspect, lest any part of their conduct be opposed to it. And this too should be the object of enquiry, whatever be his station, of every pious man,—Am I performing God's will? or am I a slothful, unwilling servant to the best of masters? Am I cleansing my own heart? or am I, as far as my limited influence can extend, contributing to harden and pollute those of other men? The heart of no man can be perfectly cleansed but by the inspiration of God's

**Holy Spirit.** But it is our duty, it is the express command of God, that we should pray for his assistance, and He has promised, that when we ask faithfully, we shall receive. No one can do God's will without his aid. The natural man is rebellious, perverse, and sinful. God's will is a burden to him. Its performance is contrary to his nature. In other words, the will of man is averse from that of God. This it is that renders this world and the kingdom of God so dissimilar. To do God's will in Heaven is the highest delight: to the carnal man on earth it seems a bondage, though the faithful and the penitent know and confess it to be perfect freedom. But this happy assurance we cannot experience till we are free from sin, or at least free from any permanent desire of indulging it. For while we continue in the flesh, we are, and shall be, beset by its attractions. We are tempted by objects and by enemies of

which we may not be ourselves aware. It is God's will we should be tried. He has placed us here to endure a state of probation. We know it to be his will that we should be tempted. We know that we cannot fulfil his will unless we resist temptation. But it is not by the resistance of temptation only that we perform the will of God. It is by rendering our souls fit to appear in his presence, by maintaining godliness, by expressing our gratitude to our Redeemer, and by encouraging piety and the influence of religion among men.

A very slight scrutiny of our lives and consciences, will serve to show us whether we refrain from sin on worldly motives; or whether we "do the will of God from the heart." If we are anxious to obey the commands of our heavenly Father, we shall use all the means, and embrace all the opportunities afforded us, of studying, of clearly knowing, and steadfastly following them. God's word will

be precious to us. No day will pass without reading the book in which His will is revealed to us. No morning will dawn upon the earth, without witnessing our prayers to our heavenly Father for his assistance, his preservation and guidance. No evening will close over us without committing ourselves to His guardianship during the perils of the night, and without beseeching Him to bring us in safety to the beginning of another day. This practice will not only have the effect of bringing down blessings on us, but will keep our minds in such a state, as will render sin distasteful to us; will enable us to avoid spiritual dangers, and will give such a tinge and savour to our conversation, as may have the happiest influence in bringing others to do God's will; to reclaim them from evil courses, and to glorify "our Father which is in Heaven." It is God's will that his Son's name should be glorified. He glorified it on earth; and we never

comply with God's will more implicitly, than when we glorify it again. If we be healthful and happy, it is to God we should return continual thanks; if we be afflicted, it is on Christ's bosom we should recline; we should cast all our care upon Him. We are assured that all things work together for good to those that love the Lord. We know that it is God's will that his faithful servants should be blessed, and that though his will may be opposed, and seemingly defeated by sinners, and the prince of sinners, here upon earth, yet that the sincere Christian will witness, will partake in, will eternally enjoy, the fulfilment of the Almighty's gracious purpose in Heaven. To a reflecting mind nothing is more clear, than that it is the will of God, that his creatures should be happy; but this will amounts not to a positive decree. Evil angels were permitted to tempt man: and since the fall their influence has been increased; not

only by their experience how men may be most successfully assailed, but by the inclination of man's own heart. When therefore, we pray that God's will may be done, we beseech the Lord, that the natural bias of our own minds may be thwarted—that the desires most pleasant to the natural man may be opposed—that our worldly schemes may be often defeated—that our appetites may be crushed—that a cross may be given us, which, like our Saviour, we may be ordered to bear.

When we are carried down the stream of time in a smooth and almost imperceptible course, we have reason to fear, that we are not performing God's will, that we are becoming negligent of our salvation. For it is certain, that those who are mentioned in scripture, as having practised most acceptably the will of God on earth, performed it through manifold temptations. No character in holy writ is held up to our admiration, or set forth as a pattern to us, which



passed through life in quiet repose, or listless inaction. We are sent to act our part in life. We are to be rewarded according to our works. Those who work not in God's cause, will be assigned the same portion as the servant in the parable, who buried his talent and hid his Lord's money in a napkin. It is not sufficient, that we cease to do evil, we must learn to do well; and though our course of action should be circumscribed, yet all may let their light shine before men by the purity of their manners and conversation. We may perform God's will by attendance on his service—we may execute his commands by showing the Lord's death at the altar. This He has expressly enjoined on all who look up to Him for forgiveness and redemption. I beseech those who are in the constant habit of neglecting this solemn rite, this positive command of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, to consider deeply, to ask their own con-

sciences, whether they can worthily and consistently pray that God's will may be done in earth as it is in heaven. No inhabitant of that blessed place ever refuses or neglects to obey the Almighty's will. And can we hope to be admitted there, if, while a choice is left us, while we remain as free agents on earth, we decline the invitation, and disobey the command of our Saviour and our Judge? I implore you to weigh this matter in your minds; I am averse to menace any with the terrors of the Lord; I would, rather win and persuade them by the gentleness of Christ. It is His will that the preachers of his word should be listened to with complacency, and regarded with favour by their auditors: and when they would awaken men from their spiritual slumber, it is more consistent with the practice of our compassionate Redeemer while on earth, to rouse them by the small still voice of Christian kindness, than to startle them by the Al-

mighty's thunder. The threatenings of the Lord must indeed sometimes be used, but I am persuaded that I am addressing those on whose minds gentler language will make as deep impression.

Let me then beseech you to learn God's will, by the study of his holy word; by devout attendance on God's house, and by partaking of the rites, ordinances, and sacraments which He has appointed. Let me beseech you too, to pray for his aid, in the performance of this duty by private and habitual devotion. By this practice, by this pious and necessary conduct, you will clearly discern God's will. When doubts are started by the unbeliever, though you may not be able instantly to refute them, yet they will make no bad or fixed impression; if with sincerity of heart, and with meekness of understanding, you follow the example of the early converts of our faith, and say, " Lord, I believe,

help thou mine unbelief." When temptations assault you, you will remember that it has been always God's will that his faithful servants should be tried ; you will have recourse to prayer, and doubt not, that God will deliver you from temptation ; and when the perishable things which now so much engage your attention shall be receding from you ; when your departure approaches, and you lie at your last gasp, how cheering will be the reflection, that your resignation to God's will is no new feeling in the soul, but is perfected within you, and your latest breath will pass from you in the habitual and holy prayer, " Thy will be done in earth as it is in Heaven."

## SERMON V.

GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD.

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MATTHEW vi. 5.

Give us this day our daily bread.

THE former petitions of our Lord's prayer relate to the attributes of the Almighty: we confess his power, we acknowledge his protection, we pray to be able to understand, and to practise our duties to Him. In the words of the text, we beg a continual supply of our wants. We may not have considered perhaps so deeply, or so frequently, as we ought, the humiliating, though highly proper avowal, which this short petition involves. The comforts, the conveni-

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ences, the necessaries of our lives, are called "our daily bread:" they are to be received as a gift; the acquirement, the enjoyment, the continuance of them, depend not on us. Whatever we possess honestly is God's gift; and whatever He has bountifully bestowed, He can as easily take away. I speak not here of riches: I know that they are generally, in scripture, represented as a snare; and the undue acquirement of them as an occupation that vitiates and debases the mind. I am confining my remarks to those blessings which our Lord has taught us to ask, and which he describes as "our daily bread." Whatever with a clear conscience we cannot ask of God, it would be improper for us to suppose that He is inclined to bestow. While we limit our desires to the supply of those comforts which are required in the station of life in which the Lord has been pleased to place us; and if we daily pray for them, and use the honest means

which He has placed in our power to obtain them, we need not fear their loss: or if they do abandon us, we may be sure it is for our spiritual and eternal good.

These sentiments naturally rise in the mind, while we are asking for “our daily bread.” The petition leads us to contemplate the superintending providence of “our Father which is in Heaven”—of that Almighty Being whose mercy is over all his works. And our blessed Lord, while he conversed with men, alludes to the care which supplies food for the beasts of the field, and the birds of the air, as an argument against despair, or undue despondence in distress. “Behold the fowls of the air; they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, yet your Heavenly Father feedeth them;—are not ye much better than they?” This is one of those sacred declarations, in which, we in this distant age, are as much concerned as

were the apostles themselves. The Almighty has not withdrawn his providence. If he had, the world at this hour would have been a waste. Every individual of every successive generation, needs and receives a continual supply of "daily bread." Not only the air we breathe, the food that sustains, and the raiment that covers us, are derived from the Giver of all good; but the multiplied perils we escape, the continual dangers to which we are exposed, are warded off by His parental care. When this ceases, "we die and are turned again to our dust." This is apparent, not only from the various methods by which men leave this transitory world, but also by the instances of preservation, which every one must be young indeed not to have experienced, and highly ungrateful if he has ever forgotten. This life presents one continued series of mercy, of patience, of beneficence on the part of God; and on our parts, of forgetfulness, in-



gratitude, impatience, and but too often even of positive crime, which if the pity, the love of "our Father" were not infinite, would induce Him to leave us to ourselves. Do we ever imagine, what would be our condition if He did so leave us? Have we never considered how fearfully, how wonderfully we are made? And how surprising it is, that the human frame should last so long, when so little disorders it, and we see so many sinking prematurely to decay?

The expression, "give us this day our daily bread," not only implies the acknowledgement that we know not what shall be on the morrow; and a confession that it is wrong to assert, or suppose that "to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant;" but it reminds us also, that we should ask daily for what we daily want. "We are led to prayer by our wants." Our spiritual wants call for God's assistance every moment we remain in this state of

trial; and our temporal wants cannot be supplied without his continual providence. No man who thinks at all, and who is not divested of all religious feeling, will deny that our Creator has been bountiful to all men. But this sentiment is too general to affect properly the Christian's heart. We ought to be sensible that the Almighty has been, and is always, compassionate towards ourselves. We ought to feel and confess in our daily prayers, that we have not been dealt with according to our sins; that we are continually receiving blessings which are all undeserved, too often unsolicited, and of which we frequently know not the value till they have been for a time withheld from us. Which of us daily appreciates the value of health till he has been deprived of it? Who, on the bed of sickness, does not wish for blessings which he has unconsciously enjoyed, which have been perpetually bestowed on him, but which he

has been in the habit of regarding with indifference and slight? It is a very common expression among us, that health is the first blessing of life. Do we daily pray for its continuance? Do we thank the bestower of it as we ought? Not only ought we to ask our consciences this question while in health, but when sickness attacks us, we should be sure that it is God's visitation; that it is a warning to remind us how frail we are: that we are always at death's door, and that it is owing to God's preservation, which has been daily exercised, that we have not, ere now, dropt into the grave, which is indeed continually yawning to receive us. It requires not a long experience of this life, nor a very retentive memory, to be reminded that of the number of those, with whom we lived not many years ago, few remain; and in those friends who are spared, we discern evident marks of the wasting hand of time—of

the certainty that this world will not long be their abode. How often, and how negligently do we speak of our friends and neighbours breaking apace. We acknowledge that it can be of small consequence, as far as regards them, what may be the state of the world a few years hence ; but we forget that the same assertion is applicable to ourselves—that we are fast hastening to the land where all things are forgotten ; or, if remembrance lasts, the more manifest will be our folly, in having been so anxious with respect to things in their nature perishable, and which, but a very short time can be in our possession. How much wiser is it to provide our bread daily, and daily ask it of the Lord—to be employed chiefly in the search of the one thing needful ; to lay up a treasure in Heaven, than to be “ cumbered about many things ;” to have our treasure in earth, to fancy we have goods laid up for many years, when it is pos-

sible, and not unlikely, that the summoning angel may announce to us, "This night thy soul is required of thee." How true is it, that we know not what a day may bring forth: and how careful should we be, even when we are making provision for our children, that we do nothing, that we attempt to acquire nothing which we dare not ask daily from God. Honest industry God rewards; and when we enjoy his blessings with thankful hearts, he regards us with approbation. But when we seek this world's good by unworthy means, its acquirement will be found "a curse and not a blessing." "Give us this day our daily bread," is a petition which, though it may be uttered by the lips, never proceeds from the heart of the proud and pampered sinner. Careful should we be, then, not to attempt to obtain any thing for which we cannot venture to pray; which we have reason to apprehend is not God's gift, and the

preservation of which we cannot make the object of our daily supplication. The Almighty is the giver of every good and perfect gift: but nothing is really good which does not lead our hearts to God, which is not received with thanksgiving. Nothing is perfect which does not stimulate us to attain eternal perfection. Our souls were created principally for the enjoyment of another world: here they are subject to sorrow, distress, sin, and temptation. But in that which will endure for ever, their condition will be fixed. No wants will there be felt; there no bread need be supplied. Here we are taught to ask daily for what we daily need. There all prayer will rise into thanksgiving. At the prospect of this blessedness every pious heart bounds: to every true disciple of Jesus Christ, the glories of the next world afford the most pleasing, as well as the most proper, subject for contemplation. They are pleasing, because

he knows they will never fade, and that they have been purchased for him, and promised to him, by his compassionate Redeemer. They are most proper to be contemplated, as by neglect they may be forfeited; they may be irreparably lost, they may form the subject of never-ceasing lamentation. These, then, are the most proper objects of pursuit. But the joys of this world are ephemeral, they are objects of desire but for a day; and that day is but of uncertain duration.

When we pray, too, that God would "give us our daily bread," we ask not so much for what may be acquired, as that what we now possess may be preserved; that we may continue to enjoy what the Almighty has already vouchsafed to bestow. This is a necessary supplication, too often forgotten by us all. We long for what we have not; but neglect the use of comforts, and forget to return thanks for mercies which we have al-

ready received, because we have enjoyed day by day our daily bread; we think not of Him, by whom continual gifts are bestowed; because we have not fallen, we think no dangers are near. And when we avoid those which have confessedly approached us, we are more apt to attribute our escape to chance, or our own precaution, than to that all-seeing and all-powerful Being, whose wisdom, whose vigilance, and whose care are over all his works. The scriptures tell us, that all things are ordered by the wise providence of God; and *that* man lays up the best treasure for himself, who daily asks of his bountiful and unwearied benefactor, "those things which are requisite and necessary as well for the body as the soul." He who does this constantly, and at the same time renders thanks for the great benefits which he has received at the Almighty's hands, whatever be his outward condi-



tion in this world, is undoubtedly rich towards God.

This sentiment, this assurance, is in a high degree consoling. But it also makes us ashamed of having deserved so little of God's parental care. Let me ask you, my brethren, can you with confidence say every evening when you retire to repose,—“ I will lay me down in peace and take my rest, for it is thou Lord only that makest me dwell in safety.” If you do not and cannot repeat these words of scripture with sincerity, what obstacle do you find in your minds? Is it unbelief? No; you all believe in the existence of God's providence. You all know, that in Him we live, and breathe, and have our being: you all allow that He is your continual preserver, that He sustains you day by day with your daily bread. But when the words I have quoted are reluctantly expressed, the unwillingness arises from

a secret misgiving of conscience, a latent persuasion in the soul, that we are unworthy of his perpetual guardianship, that we have no claim on his protection, for we have been negligent of his law. Is this all? Is the neglect of moral duties the only ground we have of apprehension, the only cause of our pungent, though too often transient remorse? Are not our slumbers sometimes disturbed, or retarded by the consciousness of our ingratitude to Him, who spent his nights in watching and in prayer, that we might enjoy happiness for ever? Who had not where to lay his head, that we might repose on Abraham's bosom? Who endured sufferings without example, that we might have peace?

We should remember that "man lives not by bread alone; but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." This is the true bread; this is the sustenance which supports the soul; and for this we are instructed daily to

pray: we are to pray that God's holy word may be rightly explained to us ;-- that we may have leisure and inclination to study it. That we may delight in its perusal, and benefit by its instruction. That the Lord may "open our eyes, that we may see the wondrous things of his law." And we are to remember too with sorrow, regret, and shame, that this spiritual bread is naturally distasteful to us. That we ourselves have so much corrupted our senses, as to lose our relish for the pure and holy delights, which, even in this world, our Heavenly Father would bestow on us, and which we pray, if we pray with our understanding, may be eternally our own. The purifying influence of the Holy Spirit should therefore be daily asked for. It is this of which we stand in the greatest need ; for this alone can render us capable of relishing the bread of God. This will make us thirst after that living water, which our Lord spoke of in his

conversation with the woman of Samaria, and which he describes as “ a well of water, springing up into everlasting life.” Nothing, indeed, was more common with our blessed Lord, than to speak of spiritual blessings under the type of temporal benefits, conveniences, and necessities. Bread and water are necessary for our existence here; so also is the bread of heaven necessary in our passage to that blissful abode. Have we not then occasion daily to pray for it? Should we not confess our need of it? Should any thing supersede our desire and appetite for it in our minds? If we ask not for a due supply of it, we shall find ourselves unprovided in our pilgrimage through life; we shall feel ourselves day by day more estranged from holiness, we shall be alienated from the love of Christ; we shall live without God in the world. Those unhappy people, who have ever given up any pious habit, will confess this to be the case. And we shall find, if we neglect to ask

and strengthened by his blessings, let daily for our spiritual food, that our appetite for it will grow weak; that we shall be desirous only of those loose gratifications which pollute the soul, which render the pure waters of life insipid, and which, at last, produce disease and eternal perdition.

If, then, any of you, my brethren, have neglected to pray daily for the necessaries which support life, both temporal and eternal, let me exhort you with the affectionate earnestness of him whose duty it is to warn you of the danger you incur, and to watch for the safety of your souls: let me intreat you to suffer no day to pass without confessing your need of the bounty, the mercy, the protection of your God. The scriptures tell us we are all, in his sight, frail, and poor, and naked. Let us beseech Him to give us the true riches; let us not wait to beg his assistance till our misery begins, but while our senses are perfect, and our minds are cheered

us thank him from our hearts ; let us, with the confidence of them who know that they have their Redeemer for their advocate, ask of God to give us day by day our daily bread. Let us ask " nothing doubting," but rather let us rest assured that we shall be continually defended and comforted by his mighty aid in all dangers and adversities, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

## SERMON VI.

AND FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS.

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MATT. VI. 12.

And forgive us our debts.

No responsibility can be conceived more awful than that of him, whose duty it is to explain and inculcate the will and word of Almighty God to his fellow-mortals. This duty is a debt, the payment of which cannot be shunned with impunity, and the measure and extent of which no man, perhaps, can fully estimate; though every one owing it must necessarily dread the time when it is to be finally cancelled. This is a consideration, my brethren, with which, com-

paratively, you have little concern. But from the obligation of the debts mentioned in the text, no one is exempt; and no one can better employ his time, or the abilities which God has given him, than in considering what is due by him to his Almighty Father. From this consideration, however, men naturally revolt; for a moment's reflection convinces them that the duties which they owe, and which have not been paid, amount to a debt which no exertion of their own can liquidate. Surely this assertion needs no explanation. Every one must confess that to his Creator he owes obedience, to his Redeemer gratitude and love, to his guide and protector the feeling and cherishing of every pious and holy affection. To say that we entertain these sentiments while our lives, our manners, and our voluntary thoughts are contrary to purity and holiness, is falsehood which no worldly wisdom can palliate, is hypocrisy that



can deceive no one but ourselves, is presumptuous confidence which has pushed thousands over the verge of perdition.

The purest motive to obedience is the wish to cancel in some measure, though it must always be in a small degree, the debt of gratitude which we owe to our Redeemer. What is due from us to Him on the score of thankfulness, forms a debt so vast and infinite, that every one of us must confess our inability, and say, with the servant in the parable, Lord, I have not to pay. But what we have we ought not to withhold; and the most acceptable return which we can make, is the offering of a contrite and thankful spirit. This is in every man's power; this can be given when we possess no worldly good: and it is a sacrifice with which no worldly good ought to interfere. The more we are blessed indeed, the more impelled, and the more willing ought we to be, to return what we are able to our almighty and un-

wearied Benefactor. And if we are not so disposed, the fault is in ourselves; and on ourselves, too, rests the responsibility. We are not to judge our neighbours; we are to pay our own debts; we are to pray for God's forgiveness of them. Do we not owe to the Lord ten thousand talents? We shall be compelled to confess, for no subterfuge can evade the conviction, that we owe to Him our life, our preservation, our subsistence, the use and perfection of our senses, every comfort we possess, and our station in a Christian land. To Him we owe the mercies of redemption, the unspeakable gift of a Saviour, and the knowledge of his will. To Him we owe the aids of his Holy Spirit, who would, if we would let Him, help every infirmity, guide us through every trouble, and comfort us in every distress. To His mercy it is owing that we are not now moaning among the lost. That this must be our condition at last, if we neg-

lect the salvation of the gospel, if in word or practice we desert Christ, and refuse to follow His precepts, no one will deny, whose senses are not infatuated, whose mind is not inflated with the good things of this world, or who loves darkness rather than light, because his deeds or his thoughts are evil.

We are too apt to forget, that if strict justice were exercised towards us, we should be punished for every offence; that God is for ever watching us, and that if punishment had not been delayed we should not have been in the land of the living. We should remember that we have no means of atoning for offences, and that even when we are sorry for our past sins, we have no claim on the forgiveness of the Almighty. When we offend against the laws of man, it is not sufficient that we promise to do so no more: the ends of justice are not answered till the penalty of the law is suffered. And even in minor cases, in

actions of debt or trespass, NO MAN IS reckoned unjust if he says to another, "pay me that thou owest."

With respect to our holy Redeemer, we all owe a debt which cannot be cancelled. Christ has become a surety for us; He has taken our sins, the payment of our debts upon Himself; He has blotted out the hand writing that was against us, nailing it to his cross. It was an ancient practice to cancel bonds by driving a nail into them; and the print of the nails that pierced his sacred hands, must be impressed on the hand-writing that the great accuser will produce against us at the great day, or we shall find that the eternal covenant between God and man will be put in force against us; the debt of ten thousand talents will be demanded; the penalty will be enforced. There is only one way of payment, and that is, "looking unto Jesus." In his sacred person, in the immaculate sacrifice of his holy body on the tree, an

ample atonement, a full propitiation was made for the sins and debts of the repentant world. The sincere Christian will turn his eyes swimming with gratitude and religious hope to the cross of his Saviour; and while his life lasts, will endeavour to work out his salvation, and in some degree, his debts to Him, by a willing compliance with his commands.

Let us ask ourselves, my brethren, whether we actually do this? Are we even anxious to know what his commands are? Do we not sometimes try to avoid their recollection? Do we not amuse our thoughts by fancying that we comply with them, when our practice is adverse to his will; when our thoughts are occupied on subjects to which God's law is opposed? The first and great command which He has given us, and to which strict obedience is due, is to love Him with all our heart, and mind, and strength. This is a debt to the payment of which every Christian must allow

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himself liable, and which he will most voluntarily pay. And yet it requires but little self-examination to convince us that the love of other things is more cherished by our souls, and more apparent in our conduct. It is more substantial, and more practically engages our attention. Did we really love God above all things, what would be so precious to us as His word? What more delightful than his praise? What more frequent or unbroken than the practice of piety and devotion? When the heart is warmed with the love of God, it naturally breaks out into utterance of thanksgiving. And yet when things succeed according to our wishes, sometimes even beyond our hopes, do we not rather ascribe success to any thing rather than the love and blessing of the Almighty? Do we promptly bless His holy name for his continual preservation of us? In distress do we look up to Him for help, and own we have merited all we suffer?

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This is due from sinful man to Almighty God. But what debt is more just, than the confession that to our Lord Jesus Christ we owe the hope and the means of reconciliation to our offended Father? The success of our prayers depends not only on the matter they contain, but also on the manner in which we offer them. The forgiveness of our sins is promised for the sake of Him who has paid the penalty awarded to them. Our acceptance with God, and the future holiness of our lives, result from his mercy, and from the assistance which the Holy Spirit will afford us, for the sake of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Should we live ten times the space allotted man, and should our whole lives be passed in devotional exercise, in the practice of holiness, and in the search of the hidden mercies of Christ, we should not be able to ascertain the extent and the value of the debt we owe to Him. His condescension in leaving the glory

which He had with the Father before the world was ; His compassionate goodness in standing in the sinner's place, in suffering in our stead, in making atonement to divine justice for the guilt of rebellious, apostate, ungrateful man ; His meek and voluntary endurance on earth, and His pitying forbearance of punishment since He has ascended into heaven ; His long-suffering patience towards ourselves, form a debt of gratitude which we can never pay ;—eternity cannot cancel it. Ever new, and ever more and more delightful must be the celebration of our Redeemer's mercies in heaven. Can it be tedious to those who truly love Him on earth ? Alas ! with what confusion does it fill us to confess that at times it is revolting ! Revolting to man who has been himself redeemed ! To angels, to every uncorrupted spirit, this would seem incredible. Yet is it not true ? Does not sin render piety distasteful to us ? Have



we never preferred the service of our passions to that of our Saviour? We must confess we have: we know we have thus trespassed against Him: we are all of us far gone in trespasses and sins: we not only do not pay the debt of gratitude we owe, but we are for ever sinning, for ever incurring guilt, for ever in need of pardon. To him who does not confess this, the Lord's prayer is inapplicable. Our Lord Jesus Christ has, however, taught his disciples to use it daily. He was, and is fully aware of the infirmity of man; He is acquainted with our frailties:—why should we not say, He witnesses our sins? since “no man lives that sinneth not.” Even if we could keep ourselves free from transgressions that pollute the soul and render it unfit for heaven, yet our sins of omission incur guilt, for which we must render a strict account, and for which no merit, no worthiness of our own, can claim or deserve a pardon. We cannot,

I think, better ascertain the condition of our souls, than by examining the state of our hearts, and the course of our thoughts; and by enquiring of our consciences, whether we are fit for a residence among pure spirits; whether our intercourse with immaculate beings would be free, easy, and unrestrained; and whether heavenly subjects are familiar to us, or whether we should not feel ourselves strangers amidst the company on high. In heaven we should be admitted to sights and glories that now far surpass our sense and comprehension; we should be the companions of angels. They would have much to tell us: should we not have as much to tell them? Would not God's dealings with us on earth form a fund of conversation inexhaustible? Would not His mercies towards us, His kindness in converting our souls, His compassion in leading us to repentance, His mercy in the forgiveness of our sins, His condescending

goodness in our redemption ; would not, in a word, our salvation through Christ Jesus form a theme at which angels must wonder, and the host of the blessed applaud? That God has forgiven us our debts, our trespasses, our sins, must fill our souls with gratitude ; and the means by which this stupendous act of mercy was effected, will be in heaven the subject of unceasing praise. We pray to God to forgive us :—why? What should induce Him to pardon our numerous, our secret offences, our rebellious and presumptuous sins? Must not justice be satisfied? Is it not an impeachment of God's holiness, to suppose that any of His attributes should fail, in condescension to bold, sinful, and apostate man? Shall a creature transgress against his Maker, and shall he not suffer punishment? Shall man sin, and shall he not die? If extinction of life were the only consequence of guilt, the penalty would be but small. It is not

an adequate punishment for a life of sin. It might be considered rather an escape from chastisement, than a due recompense of guilt. But "after death cometh the judgment." Then it is, that a just doom is to be awarded us; then it is, that our trespasses must be forgiven, and that our debts must be paid. But no entreaty, no supplication will then avail us: our peace with God must be made on earth: here it is we must work out our salvation: while our probation lasts, we are assured of assistance on humbly asking for it: and while we pray on earth, Jesus Christ has promised to be our advocate in heaven. He intercedes for us with the Father; His merits, his death and sufferings, form the only acceptable sacrifice, the only due atonement for our sins. It is by Him that our debts have been paid. But before we can make His merits ours, we must present our bodies a living sacrifice to Christ; our hearts must be devoted to

Him; our lives must be conducted according to the pattern which He has set us, and our prayers conform to that which He has taught us; our practice must correspond in some measure with the holiness so conspicuous in Him. He prayed, though He had no sins to confess, no trespasses to palliate, no debt of his own to pay. The debt was ours; the guilt attached to man, the punishment was endured by the Lord Jesus Christ. During the course of our past lives, our sins have been numerous, our trespasses perpetual; yet still we hope that our accumulated guilt will be forgiven us;—and, blessed be God, we have reason thus to hope. If we continually confess, and are penitent for our faults, God's mercy shines upon us. Sins of infirmity God, through Christ, will pardon. The danger is, lest we continue to sin that grace may abound; lest impunity may blind us, and render us forgetful of the enormity of our of-

fences; lest our prayers degenerate into form; lest we pray to God with our lips, while our hearts are far from Him. And while we pray daily, that our trespasses may be forgiven, we must resolve to sin no more. Our resolutions, though they may be (alas! how often are they?) frail, yet they must be sincere: and this they cannot be, while we retain a love of sin in our hearts. If we expect forgiveness, we must strive to be pure. Our earliest supplication should be, "Make me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." Till this be effected, we cannot pray in the spirit or in the manner of Christ; nor can we worthily ask any favour from God. What can be so great a favour as the forgiveness of our sins; as acceptance at the Almighty's throne; as the blessed hope that our guilt has been washed away?

It is the privilege of a Christian to know that there is a method by which

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his debts to his Creator may be paid, his trespasses forgiven, and his salvation sealed. And that is by faith in Jesus Christ; by earnest solicitation for his grace; by hearty and sincere prayers, through His intercession, for peace and for pardon. Daily has our heavenly Master taught us thus to pray, continually to be cautious lest we sin, perpetually to feel contrite and thankful. If we obey His instructions we know we shall be heard, we know we shall be assisted, we know we shall be accepted when we say, Lord, "forgive us our trespasses."

## SERMON VII.

## AS WE FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS.

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MATT. vi. part of v. 12.

As we forgive our debtors.

THE word here translated debtor undeniably means any one who is either obliged to make reparation, or is amenable to punishment; and is therefore aptly expressed by the term which is in general use,—he that has trespassed against us. In the course of our passage through this world, we must meet with many who come under this description. There is scarcely any one with whom a man has maintained an intercourse of



long standing, whom he has not found, or whom he has not fancied he has found, to have in some way or other "trespassed against" him. Corrupted by sin, and rendered stubborn by pride, by resentment, by the ebullition of feelings, which though opposite to every virtue that Christianity inculcates, are yet harboured and boasted of by all who suffer their opinions and the course of their thoughts, to be tinged by the maxims and principles of the world; our nature is continually prompting us to return, and to avenge injuries and offences which are often imaginary, and are always inferior to those which we have ourselves committed against our Almighty Father. If we were all to follow the bent of this inclination, mankind would be engaged in continual warfare. And few need be told that the passion of revenge, when aroused and cherished in the heart, is an obstacle to mental peace. It suffers no gentle

affection, no happy or pious feeling to remain in the mind; it governs the whole man, renders him forgetful of God, and an enemy to his fellow-creatures.

The experience of every one must have taught him, that there is no surer source of unhappiness, than to perpetuate controversy. That he who lives at enmity with his neighbours, never can enjoy credit or tranquillity. That as the beginning of strife is as one who letteth out water, no man can be more usefully employed than in closing the floodgates of dispute. How little do we now regard subjects, which in the former parts of our lives seemed of infinite importance. And how deeply shall we hereafter regret, that our tempers have been ruffled, that our minds have been occupied by an eager interest in things temporal; and that those of eternal moment have escaped our contemplation, and been hidden from our sight? And when

the certainty of our departure out of life, together with our not knowing how soon it may arrive, is pressed upon our attention, the consequence, the event that must follow, cannot surely escape our minds. After death cometh the judgment. And with what judgment we judge our neighbours now, shall we, said our Judge himself, be judged. Can any one read, and really believe this declaration, and yet yield to that fiery vehemence of temper, which, if its effects were as violent as its nature is inflammable, would set society in a blaze? We may be angry, but it must be for a very short time, if we sin not. And the occasions which excite anger, are for the most part connected with criminal desires, with passions by which our nature is debased, and with which we must part before we can enter into the mansions of the blessed.

We read indeed of some instances in the Bible of holy men, who have been

angry, and yet have incurred no blame. Moses was angry when he came down from the mount and saw the Israelites worshipping a golden calf. And so was Samuel when he discovered that Saul had transgressed the express command of the Most High. But on these and other occasions when religious men felt anger rise in their minds, their feelings were roused by the indignity offered to God. It was zeal for his honour, not the affront offered to themselves, that made them angry. And when we hear our Redeemer blasphemed, or the house and ordinances of God insulted, we cannot avoid being angry. But how soon in a pious mind does this passion give place to a gentler feeling? How soon does pity for the offender's ignorance, or lost condition, surpass and supersede the angry storm? If it be virtuous thus to yield to mild affections, when we are ruffled for the sake of our Creator's injured honour, how much

more incumbent on us is it to forgive the offences which may have been committed against ourselves? Most of the affronts we receive, are produced by the improper use we make of God's blessings, or the haughtiness, with which their possession has inspired us.

But even when men trespass against us, without any offence or fault of our own, forgiveness, speedy and sincere forgiveness, is our duty, and reconciliation should be our aim. For when we feel resentment, or a wish to punish others even for their crimes, we cannot properly pray in the words our Lord has taught us. The condition expressed in the Lord's prayer is turned against ourselves. We do not comply with it. We regret the terms on which God has promised to bless us. We remind the Lord, (if the expression may be used,) of our inveterate offences, of the hardness of our hearts, of the opposition of our minds to the meekness and gentleness of Christ.

How can any man, who possesses the most common understanding, expect pardon from God, when he denies it to his fellow-men? Can any man believe, that another can offend against him so grievously, so continually, and so ungratefully as he has offended against the Lord? If He had been extreme to mark what is done amiss, who could abide it? Who could abide the just displeasure of the Almighty? Shall we deny forgiveness to those who have trespassed against ourselves, and can we expect forgiveness from our Judge? What comparison can be made between the petty injuries, which we receive from men, and the flagrant offences, the presumptuous sins, the continual neglect of duty, which are manifested towards our heavenly Father? The affronts and insults, which rankle in our hearts are often, are generally provoked by ourselves. They are produced by reciprocal ill-will. They are generated by a want of that love, which

Jesus Christ has taught us should reciprocally subsist among his members. When men quarrel, it almost always happens, that the causes of complaint are equal. They mutually offend and are offended. But in the case between God and ourselves, the guilt is all on one side. On the part of God is love, justice, mercy, compassion, and forbearance. And what do we exhibit on our part? Is it not rebellion, ingratitude, and sin? Do we not offend a Father who delights to bless us? Who, though his nature is infinitely superior to ours, has condescended to adopt us. Who has promised to receive us as his children? Do we not scorn the mercies of redemption? Do we not despise the love of our Saviour, the goodness and atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ? He suffered that we might live, and yet we sin, although we are told, that when we sin, we crucify him afresh, and put Him to an open shame. We reject the

guidance and purifying influence of the Holy Spirit, while we choose rather to be led by, and feel enjoyment in the suggestions of, a polluting and a carnal foe. Can any man evince such base unthankfulness, such positive disobedience against ourselves, as we have to our compassionate Redeemer? Even if we have repented of our baser crimes, are we not daily trespassing against Him? Does not this prove that the nature of man is corrupted and perverse? And how, then, can we expect to live in society without meeting sometimes with offence? It is right we should meet with it, that we may exercise the grace of forgiveness, that we may have an opportunity of following, although it must be in a very remote degree, the lenity which has been shown in our own case. What if God had punished us as soon as we had offended against Him? How long, or rather how short, would have been our lives? Where would our souls



have been at this hour? What opportunity should we have had of feeling anger? When would our pride have been hurt? How long should we have complained of any human offence? We should have been among the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction. We should now have been among the prisoners of despair. We should have lost sight of the faintest gleam of hope. God has forborne with us. We have trespassed against Him, and yet we are still alive, still are the promises of salvation held out to us. Still may we obtain, still are offered to us, conditions of pardon. The condition on which we daily rely, which we are taught by Christ himself to plead, is, that we may be forgiven, "as we forgive them that trespass against us." How awful will be our condition, when these words are brought against us, when we ourselves are judged. With what justice can we plead for pardon when we have admitted in all our intercourse

with the Deity, in every act of prayer, in our supplication for forgiveness, that we dare not expect pardon from God unless we have conceded it to those "who have trespassed against us?" "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors," are words of as plain and positive signification as language can devise: they admit of no subterfuge or equivocation. If we do not forgive those who are indebted to us, who have offended us, who have injured us, we cannot expect remission of our own debts, of our own injuries and offences.

There is no passage in the whole Bible more interesting than this. It comes home to every man's heart. For as there is no one who has never committed sin, so likewise there is no one who has never received offence. And when he who injured us is willing to make reparation, or he that has offended us expresses sorrow for his conduct, it is the indispensable duty of a Christian

to "forgive him that wrong." And whoever has a proper impression on his mind of the need he has of forgiveness himself, will do this with alacrity and with his whole heart. The consciousness of following the steps of our Saviour imparts a pleasure to the pious, which pervades and most pleasingly gratifies the soul now, and, which is of more consequence, will abide with it for ever. Amiable dispositions are the only possessions we can carry with us to heaven. Whatever virtues are practised in this world, in the next will expand and flourish and bear fruit to perfection. The virtue of forgiveness will particularly have this effect, because it is built solely on Christian principles. It combines every Christian virtue. It is a proof of our faith, for we forgive our erring brother because Christ has forgiven us; because when we pardon another, we hope ourselves to be pardoned. The exercise of this virtue is also an evidence that we are influenced

by that charity, that holy love, which prompted our agonized Redeemer to exclaim, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do."

This was our Saviour's dying blessing to his sinful children. And when we die, if any seed of malice be found in our hearts, will it not poison our souls, and render the offices of religion tasteless or disgusting? Will not every act of oppression or revenge then recur to our memories, and threaten to drag down the soul to eternal perdition? On the contrary, how blessed will be the persuasion, that in our extremest need our heavenly Intercessor will be able to say to His Father, "Father, he had compassion on others, even now have pity on him."

That we are indebted to God beyond the power of man to express, I have on a former occasion, I trust, sufficiently explained. And who will deny that we have injured the majesty of God, that

we have offended Him, that we are continually trespassing against Him? The precept conveyed by this confession is so plain, and the condition so appalling, that I believe the disuse of prayer by the wicked is chiefly to be attributed to its influence. A revengeful man feels that while he is using the Lord's prayer he is condemning himself; and, therefore, as sin is gratifying to his corrupt mind, and devotion irksome to him, prayer is disused, and the devil is obeyed. He that acts from resentment invariably acts wrong. He blindly follows the tempter of his soul, and to revenge a trivial, perhaps unintentional, affront, gives himself up to the guidance and the power of his eternal foe.

We must not only abandon all hope of pardon, if we forgive not our brother his trespasses, in consequence of our having violated the condition expressed in our prayers, but we have no reason to hope for forgiveness, because we

evinced a disposition which is directly contrary to that which all must carry into heaven, if ever they enter that blissful abode. An unforgiving spirit cannot reside in a Christian heart; for the mind of a Christian is filled with love, peace, gentleness, meekness, charity. Can a wish to retaliate injury, to render evil for evil, have place where these amiable and godly virtues continually reside? Can we look up to our Redeemer with joyful hope, can we pray to God with holy fervour, when the heart is polluted with malice, when the eye is tinged with jealousy, when our thoughts are bent on revenge? "Before thou prayest," saith the wise man, "prepare thyself, and be not as one that tempteth the Lord." We do tempt the Lord to punish us, to withdraw his grace from us, to leave us to the direction, the wayward impulse of our own unsteady passions, if we would wantonly or vindictively inflict pain; if we would gratify any malicious appetite;

if we seek for satisfaction, as it is called, though it may be more properly termed vengeance, for any received offence.

Our blessed Lord has seemingly introduced this clause and condition into the prayer which He has instructed us to use, to operate as a balance by which we may weigh and try ourselves; to afford us comfort in the consciousness that we are at peace with all mankind, and therefore have good hope of eternal peace; or to convince us of the hypocrisy of our own hearts, that we may judge and condemn ourselves; that the repetition of our own words may confound us at the last day.

Let me beseech you, then, my brethren, to eradicate from your minds every malicious, every vindictive feeling. Let not your prayer be turned into sin. Our Lord and Saviour has taught and commanded us how to pray. If we use his words with our lips while any passion contrary to his revealed will and word harbour in

our hearts, what can we expect but that He will reject our prayers, that He will declare unto us, "I never knew you, depart from me, ye workers of iniquity"? It is indeed the evil working of their minds. It is the leaven of malice swelling in their hearts that renders men malevolent and revengeful. And if they were neither blinded by the evil one, nor were their eyes closed by their own pride and sinful nature, men would never dare to repeat the Lord's prayer while they wished ill to any human being. They would confess with sorrow, with apprehension, that their offences against God have been numberless; that the sins of their tongues have proceeded from the badness of their hearts; that they have obstructed the operations of divine grace in their souls by the indulgence of base affections; that they have called for punishment of their offences by the hypocrisy of their prayers; that they have prevented the exercise of forgiveness to-



wards themselves by the perverseness of their minds, and their want of forgiveness towards those by whom they have been offended. These are crimes which, if not sincerely repented of and bitterly lamented while on earth, will accumulate for their destruction at the day of judgment. It will then be said, "By thy words shalt thou be justified and by thy words shalt thou be condemned. Shouldst not thou have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I would have had pity on thee?" That we may never thus heap perdition, and call for judgment on ourselves, may God of his infinite mercy grant, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

## SERMON VIII.

AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION.

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MATT. vi. 13.

And lead us not into temptation.

OUR time can scarcely be better employed than in reconciling any seeming discrepancy in holy writ; in explaining passages which may have the appearance, in a cursory view, of being contradictory to each other; and in investigating the true and full meaning of words which may have become obscure by a change in their usual acceptation. When we remember St. James's unequivocal and admonitory assertion, " Let no man

say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God : for God cannot be tempted of evil, neither tempteth He any man ;” we are inclined to imagine that there is some error in the translation of the passage in our Lord’s prayer, and that some other words should be substituted when we pray that “ Our heavenly Father would not lead us into temptation.”

But a due consideration of these important texts will convince us that the temptations spoken of are of different kinds. There are some into which, the apostle tells us, we should “ count it joy to fall,” for by these are our faith and virtue tried ; they convince us of our own weakness and of the necessity of the assistance of Almighty God ; and they serve to prove that we are true disciples of our Saviour. These are the ordinary trials which every Christian is doomed to undergo. They are sent from God to make us in the end partakers of his holiness, and to work in us

the comfortable fruits of righteousness. They are conformable to the assurance of our Lord himself, who has told us that through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom of God. We are to take up our cross and follow Him, and it cannot be expected that no temptations should be offered us to lay it down. Trials and afflictions are the sure lot of pious and godly men, who do not expect, and consequently do not pray, to avoid them entirely. But the temptations we are taught to pray against, I conceive, are those which continually and insidiously present themselves, and secretly undermine our virtue. We are to pray that we may not be led away from the straight path, that we be not enticed by worldly pleasure or worldly interest, that we yield not to the lusts of the flesh, and may not be insidiously entrapped by the wiles of the devil.

With these dangers before our eyes, and the consequences of falling into them

anticipated, do we ever suffer ourselves to be misled? Are there any who fall when assailed with these well-known temptations? Melancholy is the answer which the conscience of every man returns to this plain, this universally interesting question—I mean the consciences of those who are unclogged by vanity and self-conceit: for there are some who are so much inflated by spiritual pride or the pride of this world, that they never suffer themselves to imagine they can be the servants of sin; nor can they allow that they are seduced by the devil, much less that they are led captive by him at his will. This ignorance of their real condition and of their immortal interests, would soon be dissipated if they would consult the word of God. That would open their eyes and teach them constantly and earnestly to pray against temptation. For all the instances of guilty practice, all the misery which sin produces, are there attributed to its

seducing influence, to a compliance with passions evil by nature, and rendered tenfold more evil by habitual indulgence.

Miserable indeed will be our progress through this life, and dreadful must be its end, if we walk solely by the light of our own understandings. We see not naturally the dangers in our path: we mistake sensual pleasure for happiness: we slumber on the pillow of voluptuousness, nor shall we wake, perhaps, till reflection is accompanied by the weakness produced by excess, and our long intoxication is over. We shall perceive, when our knowledge has been bought by bitter experience, and our taste has been so depraved by vice as to render it incapable of imbibing any thing that may be of service to the soul—we shall then perceive that we have been the sport of wicked passions, that the objects of our hopes have been false, that the pursuit of them has been attended with

trouble, and their possession with mortification. Such must be the end of all worldly possessions. Yet how many are tempted and ruined by them! tempted to forsake the service of their Creator, who has given them all things richly to enjoy: tempted to deny the Saviour who has bought them with his blood: tempted to shut their ears to the calls of that Holy Spirit who would have helped their infirmities, guided them through the perils of this life, and at their last hour would have given them a foretaste of Heaven.

It is the knowledge of our own infirmity, and of our natural proneness to sin, that prompts us to pray, that we may not be led into temptation. We are aware that if God were to lead us into temptation, and then leave us to ourselves, we must sink under it. The strength of our own minds is inadequate to resist the force and wiles of a spiritual enemy; especially since this enemy

has confederates within us. Our own passions we know, by sad experience, have a bias towards the evil one. And even if he were at rest, and were not, as the scriptures tell us he is, incessantly employed, and "going about seeking whom he may devour," yet so prone are we ourselves to sin, that temptations are formed within, as well as without us, and every man, says St. James, is tempted when he is drawn away by his own lusts and enticed.

If we be not abandoned by the Holy Spirit, our minds are guided and directed by God; and when we are led into paths in which are frequent temptations, the trial of our faith, the refinement of our virtue, is severe. We have reason, however, to hope that the reward of obedience will be greater. But we are not to aim at obtaining a richer inheritance hereafter by courting temptation, or by voluntarily exposing ourselves in a warfare, where our adver-



saries are so formidable, and where by our own strength, we could not hope for victory. We are strong by the power of the Lord; by his aid alone we are able to stand, in his armour must we fight; and as we have done nothing to merit his assistance, as we have been all our lives unprofitable servants, to expose ourselves in any spiritual combat wantonly or unnecessarily, in expectation of succour which we do not deserve, is presumption. We ought to dread temptation because we know our weakness; and not only because we are thus sensible of infirmity, but because we are conscious that we have neglected the means by which inward strength would be supplied. We have been negligent in our duties; we have been remiss in prayer; we have disregarded the terms of salvation; we have not attempted to work it out with fear and trembling. This we must do, if we would attain it; but if we willingly

expose ourselves to temptation, where is our fear? If we rely on our own strength, where is our trembling? How do we know, if temptation should assail us the next hour, that we have not forfeited all claim to the aid and protection of God. Are our lives so pure as to render us worthy to be partakers of those blessings, of that defence, and those privileges, which have been mercifully vouchsafed to them who are now saints in light?

We are instructed daily to beseech the Lord that "we fall into no sin, neither run into any kind of danger;" but if we wantonly expose ourselves to temptation, we act contrary to our supplications. We have no reason to expect that the Almighty will perform miracles to keep us in the right path, when we are for ever straying from it with our eyes open. We must studiously avoid sin, and all worldly pleasures which lead and prompt us to

commit it, if we would pray with any hope of success, or with any appearance of reason, that the Almighty will help our infirmities and enable us to resist the enemies of our salvation. It is not enough to say, that there is no harm in worldly pursuits—it is not right to denominate a course of pleasure, innocent recreation. Whatever draws off our thoughts from godliness is dangerous, and the continual pursuit of it is sinful. Manifold temptations assail even the best men; while they walk with God, their eyes, and all their senses, are frequently attracted by objects which are presented to them by the evil one. If, while our nature was innocent, and our first parents held conversation with pure spirits, the artifices of the devil were successful, how much easier must it be for him to lead astray those whose minds are carnal, whose delight consists in sensual objects, and whose nature and constitution inclines and im-

pels them to thoughts, appetites, and deeds which are corrupt and sinful.


Those who have not read or heard much of the gospel, and to whom its saving truths appear contrary to the vaunted authority of human reason, are often inclined to exclaim,—“If all sin be the consequence of temptations, which a being of a superior order is continually throwing in our way, and dressing up in forms which are confessedly alluring; or if they be engendered by passions which our Creator has implanted in our nature, how are we accountable for their effects? Are we to be punished for what another has contrived? Or are we to bear the penal consequences of following our natural emotions? Undoubtedly we are: it was possible for us to resist them, for whenever we sin, we offend with our eyes open. If we were blind we should have no sin; but now we say we see, therefore our sin remaineth. We have been

early and tenderly admonished not to tread on perdition's slippery verge, and if we fall, we fall by our own temerity. No one who uses the Lord's prayer, can, without the grossest inconsistency, deny that every human soul is beset with temptations. For why otherwise does he pray not to be led into them? The serpent, indeed, which has crept into the heart of man, suggests to him, that the temptations which our blessed Lord would lead us to deprecate, and to avoid, are only occasional, and to be guarded against in some critical moment of our lives. But he well knows, and we shall know it too, if we listen to the small still voice of conscience, which this world's din so continually overpowers, that its assaults are not more congenial to our appetites, than they are continual.

A sense of guilt depresses the spirits, and renders them incapable of resistance. An indulgence in vicious pleasure poisons the mind, and gives us a distaste

for purer joys. It cannot well relish the living water which is unmixed and simple. Who has not been allured by objects which he knew to be adverse to Christian purity? Who has not found worldly delights seducing? Shall we confess the influence, the secret attraction, which these have over the mind, and fail to pray not to be led into temptation? Shall we rely on our own strength, and believe it possible to say, when we feel ourselves embarking on the sea of folly, or gazing with stupid apathy or intoxicating delight, on polluting joys; so far will I go and no farther? No. He that courts, or does not avoid temptation, is secretly yielding to its influence. He assuredly feels delight in forbidden pleasure. He longs to taste what he dares not gather; he is rendering the safeguards of his virtue weak, he is doing despite to the operation of grace. He is grieving the Holy Spirit, and disobeying, and wilfully rebelling

against the author of salvation. If we yield to temptation in any instance, what warrant have we to suppose we shall be supported in any other case? Having voluntarily abandoned the guidance of the Holy One, how dare we depend on his future direction? Are we not with justice left to ourselves; and are we not of ourselves incapable of walking in the path of virtue? No one who reflects on his past life, no one who watches for a single day, the course of his thoughts, of his actions, of his converse with the world, will venture to assert, that his mind is subject to no aberrations from virtue. The writers of the bible candidly record errors, frailties, and sins to which the most pious were liable, and when the records of our lives shall be exposed, to how many temptations will it be found that we have yielded? What has reclaimed us? What has counteracted the vicious impulse of our hearts? What has hindered the tempter.



from making a prey of us? What has prevented him from having sifted us as wheat? Is it that his allurements were disgusting to us? Is it that we have abhorred sin? Have we fled from it as from the face of a serpent? If we have thus felt and acted during the course of our past lives, we have indeed good ground to hope that we are proof against assault, that we shall be victorious in our Christian warfare? But if our consciences remind us of offence; if sin has overpowered us; if we have reason to dread a scrutiny of our past conduct, should we not also be apprehensive of incurring guilt hereafter? Should we not have recourse to every means of defence? should we not be on our guard? should we not seek for protection? The only means of defence which are in our power, are prayer for the assistance of God, a compliance with his ordinances, obedience to his commands, and a due, reverend, and



frequent use of that channel of grace and strength, which by the holy sacrament is afforded. To beseech the Lord that He would not lead us into temptation, and yet refuse and neglect the means by which temptation is to be avoided, is of itself a sin of no trifling magnitude. Many, I believe, are not aware how frequently they are tempted to sin in their prayers. They not only receive not because they ask amiss; but their improper or negligent supplications are themselves temptations of the Lord to punish them.

What can be more inconsistent, what more improper, than to be constantly beseeching God, that He would not lead us into temptation when we are continually exposing ourselves to snares, which human infirmity can scarcely avoid? When we slide again into the paths where we have already found that temptation is not to be resisted, what excuse, what expiation, what atonement can be made for such

conduct as this? Shall we say that we thought we had strength to withstand temptation, when daily experience convinces us that we are perpetually yielding to its influence? Shall we with confidence repeat the prayer which our practice has rendered null? Shall we sin on that grace may abound, and that our prayers may be renewed and perpetual? God forbid. We know we have no strength to resist temptation but from the Lord. We know too that he has not promised to pardon any who sin against conviction, who pray for form's sake, and proceed in a guilty course because punishment has not yet visited them. We know too, that this charge can be justly brought against ourselves. What can save us when our practice is weighed against our prayers; when we have perversely or carelessly exposed ourselves to the temptations; when we have willingly committed those sins against which we have been accustomed

to pray? What can save us? What plea can we offer, when our vices have rendered our former prayers ineffectual? Blessed be God, we have still "an High Priest which can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin; and though we have sinned, though we have hitherto neglected our salvation, though our crimes be black, and our ingratitude to our Redeemer undeniable, yet still may we look to the Saviour that is passed into the heavens, who ever liveth to make intercession for us; who will give effect to our prayers if they be sincere; who will, if we will but ask with true devotion for the unspeakable gift, purify our minds and deliver us from temptation.

Once more then, let me direct your attention to the prayer which our Lord has taught us, which every sincere Christian is most anxious to teach both rich and poor, and every parent most gladly

hears repeated by the lips of his children. It combines the golden rule of the heathens with every practical, every Christian virtue ; no human composition ever comprised so much in so small a compass ; it is at once instructive, practical, and sublime ; it teaches us, that we are the children of an Almighty Father, and by what means we can hold fast our profession as Christians. Let us therefore offer up our prayers with meekness, with contrition, with sincerity ; let us beg forgiveness of our past sins, and that for the future our lives may be virtuous, our faith powerful, and that we may not be led into temptation.

## SERMON IX.

BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL.

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MATT. vi. 13.

But deliver us from evil.

THOUGH it may be difficult to give a better translation of this passage, than that which these words afford, yet it is certain that they do not convey a precisely correct idea of the meaning of the original text. The article is inserted and the supplication literally is, " And deliver us from *the* evil." Whether we should supply the sense by rendering the word, " the evil one;" meaning the great, indefatigable tempter of mankind,

or the evil of the world, or of our hearts, is a question not of easy solution.

In examining the preceding clause in the Lord's prayer, it was apparent that we have daily need to pray against the wiles and subtleties of the devil. We promise to be on our guard against them when we enter into the Christian covenant. We daily pray not to be led into temptation, and however common it may be to attribute little, or nothing, to the influence of the evil spirit, yet the word of God assures us that he is never idle, but is always employed in artifices to effect our destruction. And when we consider the plain assurances of this truth which we find in the bible, and the repeated cautions against his insidious attacks, it produces a strong conviction in a pious mind, that the want of faith with respect to the devil's dominion over the unregenerated, is of itself a proof of the success of his seductions. Where we believe we have no enemy,

we shall take no precautions against one. And if we suffer ourselves to suppose that we have no spiritual seducer, that there is nothing to lead us into evil but the common allurements of the world, we shall either pass through life without perceiving that we are daily incurring sin; or, we shall retire into gloom and solitude, in the false confidence, that when we shut out the world, we have barred up every avenue which might afford an entrance to temptation.

But these dark clouds the renewed light of gospel truth has in a great measure dissipated. We are convinced that we cannot perform our duty to God more acceptably, than by benefiting His creatures. And though in the practice of active life much evil must be encountered, yet if we continually and earnestly pray to be delivered from it, success and reward will crown our exertions.

The word, in the original, which we

translate "deliver," is much more expressive than many suppose; it signifies to draw away by violence. We are all "in an evil case" until God rescues us; until we are saved by faith, and obedience to Christ; and our infirmities are helped by the Holy Spirit's suggestions.

When we pray to be delivered from evil, we ought to remember that sin is natural to us, that we have deserved to be evil dealt with, and that if left to ourselves, evil must assuredly be our portion. If we had not to encounter evil, this life would not be a state of trial. Who can for a moment deny, that he is not in a probationary condition, when he reflects how evil his life has been; how repeatedly he has criminally complied with the practices of an evil world; how often he has sinned against his own conviction; and how difficult he has found it not to imagine, to desire, and to perpetrate evil? Even that which all are agreed to term good in this



world, will be found evil in the next. This must be apparent to every one who considers what it is that most powerfully calls off the mind from godliness. Is it not this world's good? Does not the independence which the possession of worldly treasure creates in our mind, render us averse to supplicate the Lord? Does it not render us callous to the distress of others, and forgetful of the need we have of begging for our daily bread, and of propitiating the Lord to deliver us from evil? While the world smiles upon us, we are incapable of perceiving the evil into which we are liable to fall. We are too apt to imagine that the calamities under which our neighbours groan, are brought on them by their own misconduct, and that we are exempted from them because we deserve them not. This notion undoubtedly proceeds from an evil heart of unbelief. It is of itself an evil, against which it is our duty to pray. We should remember that "whom the Lord

loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Whatever, therefore, renders us forgetful of God, partakes of the nature of evil, which, if we do not pray to be delivered from before we go hence, will cling about the soul, and sink it in the place where we shall be no more seen.

It is, indeed, no trivial sin to render God's blessings productive of evil to us. They are given us to dispense with prudence and charity; to enlarge the sphere of practical benevolence; to afford us leisure for the cultivation of our minds, and more extensively to "let our light shine before men, that they may see our good works," and thus be induced "to glorify our Father which is in heaven."

But those who are choked with the world's good, are not the only people who ought to pray to be delivered from its evil. Men in society, unless they be led and rescued by God's grace, natu-

rally corrupt their way upon earth ; they mutually tempt and are tempted ; they encourage each other in sin, and often go so far in guilt as to be ashamed to acknowledge that they are withheld from crime, through fear of God, through any principle of gratitude or love to their Redeemer. Tremendous as is this condition, far gone as such must be in guilt, and treading on the very verge of perdition, it is, I fear, a state which includes a vast number. The majority of mankind are led away by the evil of the world. They consider things temporal as those only of any value. They may profess to believe in things eternal, but this belief does not influence their practice, it gives no tone to their conversation. They put far away from their thoughts the evil day, and think it wise to dismiss from their minds whatever calls a future state to their contemplation. When they do pray to be delivered from evil, it is not the evil of sin of

which they are afraid, but of some unknown object of alarm, which may abridge their pleasures, or render themselves incapable of partaking of them. But when a pious Christian uses this petition, he is alive to the evil which has formerly drawn him away from the straight path, and of the sins which most easily beset him; he knows that nothing is of so evil a tendency as that which leads him away from God, and which renders him blind to his precarious and dangerous condition; he knows the need he has to pray against the evil of his own heart; that he can attribute no good action to the unbiassed impulse of his own mind, for that is perpetually and naturally inclined to evil. Whatever virtue has been apparent in him, is indeed a source of joy to his heart; for it shows that he has not at all times been unmindful of godly impressions. The consciousness of the evil inherent in his soul, makes him apprehensive that his

best actions may have been performed from improper motives ; either to court the applause of the world ; to load others with a debt of gratitude towards himself, or to promotè his views of advancement in society. These are apprehensions which every man should entertain when he reviews his own conduct ; but they should never influence his opinion of the actions of his neighbours. It is a very good and righteous maxim, which teaches us to suppose others better than ourselves. We should be charitable and benevolent in judging the conduct of other men : but in judging ourselves, we should be strict and scrutinizing. If we do not exercise this forbearance, we shall incur the charge uttered in the book of Deuteronomy, our “ eye will be evil toward our brother,” and evil also will enter into our hearts, if we be not severe in our self-examination.

When we pray, then, to be delivered from evil, it is incumbent on us to re-

flect into how much evil we have, during the course of our lives, voluntarily run. It is incompatible with any rational hope of future deliverance, to deny, that the distresses we have suffered have been deserved, have been generally the consequences of the evil state of our minds; or have been at least awakening circumstances. We must confess too, that God's mercy, compassion, and pity, must be exerted towards us, if, while we continue in this world, we would be delivered from evil. Human foresight is of too narrow compass to perceive the miseries which may befall us; human prudence, or human power cannot guard against, or avert the approach of calamity. "Man is as surely born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward." And unless he seeks help from God, "and unto God would commit his cause," he will find the weight of trouble too heavy for him to bear. When indeed it falls on a man of a worldly

temper, it is not surprising that his spirits are crushed; that his mind is overturned by the blow: for he that has never experienced evil, is very much inclined to imagine, that he is out of its influence. With him, the petition for deliverance is but a mere form, a bare compliance with the pattern which has been set him. How different are the feelings of those, who are aware of the evil of sin; of the evil propensities of their nature, and of the evil, which they must inevitably incur, unless they are supported by more than mortal assistance? How strongly does this knowledge, and this experience lead humble and weak Christians to prayer! How cautious should they be, lest evil overtake them unawares—lest they be overcome by evil inclinations? Let no man say “what evil have I to dread?” Let us rather fear, lest by a compliance with worldly habits, and carnal inclinations, we may be induced to call evil good,

and good evil. This mistake every one is liable to fall into, who does not guard his mind against evil propensities. It is undeniable, that the crimes which shock us, while our years are few and our hearts tender, by familiarity, by long intercourse with the world, seem insignificant and venial.

This change of sentiment is an evil from which we cannot too earnestly pray to be delivered. For when the heart is growing callous, it is certain the possessor of it is losing ground in the Christian race; he is retreating in the Christian combat; he is no longer the faithful disciple and soldier of Christ. The human soul is an active principle, and must either advance in the path of virtue, or go back. The direction either way is frequently imperceptible to ourselves; for as we advance in godliness, we feel more dread of the evil of sin; we are more sensible of our numberless



offences ; we think it impossible, that we can be proceeding in the right path, while we are conscious of perpetual backslidings ; and when we are actually going backward, our senses are blinded, our hearts grow hard, our consciences become seared, we have no fear of sin, and rarely or carelessly pray to be delivered from its evil.

Since such is the natural condition of our souls ! since we are conscious that evil surrounds us—that we are followed by its penal consequences—that the future is fraught with it—that it prevails within us ; can we repeat even the Lord's prayer without being sensible of the importance of its last petition ? Must we not acknowledge, that it is of God's mercy that it has not pursued us, overtaken us, and overwhelmed us in destruction ? Must we not expect to encounter evil in our future life ? And while we are conscious of a bias towards it, shall we not

pray, that our heavenly Father would deliver us from its influence? Shall we not be thankful that our Lord Jesus Christ has crushed the head of the evil one; that he has taught us how to avoid all evil ways; that he has purchased for us the inestimable gift of the Holy Spirit, who helpeth our infirmities, who would guide us into all peace, and most effectually and perpetually "deliver us from evil?" Let us then, my brethren, while we repeat the Lord's prayer, carry with us a constant sense of the importance of its petitions; let us remember its wonderful adaptation to the wants of all men. That when we use it with sincerity, our hearts become more pure, our hopes elevated, our love to God and man enlarged, our gratitude to Christ excited. It is comprised in our blessed Lord's own words; it breathes his Spirit; it is the language of Heaven. May the use of it render us fit to inhabit that holy and blessed

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place! May our lives be directed by it;  
and at our last hour may it enable us  
with humble and happy hope, to resign  
our souls into the hands of our Maker!

## SERMON X.

FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM, AND THE  
POWER, AND THE GLORY, FOR EVER.  
AMEN.

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MATT. vi. 13.

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

**THAT** this clause in the Lord's prayer is not in St. Luke's gospel is undeniable. And why it is not is a question the agitation of which would be attended with no beneficial result. That it forms a most proper conclusion to the petitions we previously offer, and that the spirit of this doxology should accompany all our supplications to the throne of grace, will be manifest to every one who prays with sincerity; whose heart is affected

with holy gratitude, and who delights to glorify God. Every word of it is important, and excites in the mind a solemn and overpowering sense of the propriety, the necessity of continued and earnest supplication, as well as a holy confidence, that though every earthly circumstance should obstruct our view, though the whole world should unite to present obstacles to our petitions, yet that "with God nothing is impossible."

We address the Almighty as Our Father; we avow our wish that His name may be hallowed, that His kingdom may come, that His will may be done in earth as it is in heaven: for we confess that this is the kingdom into which we should perpetually strive to enter, which alone can repay our care, and in which those rewards are conferred that ought only to engage our attention, and to which it is our privilege and most glorious aim to aspire. We beseech the Almighty to give us day by day our

daily bread, to forgive us our trespasses: for His alone is the power to bestow these blessings on us. We implore Him not to lead us into temptation, but to deliver us from evil: for to Him redounds the glory of redemption, to Him we owe perpetual thanksgiving, and hope to ascribe and to give "glory for ever."

When we say, "For thine is the kingdom," do we not look forward to that which hath immortal foundations? Are not our minds encouraged to hope for a place in that for the coming of which we have just prayed? This indeed is the great object of our hope: to this we look as the end of our pilgrimage. We are anxious to serve the Lord in another kingdom, where his power and majesty will be manifestly displayed. "Thine," we say, "is the kingdom:" thine, O Father, from whom every good and perfect gift is derived. All our prayers are directed to this point—an admittance into his kingdom. And we must be convinced

that this will never be, if our services and our willing obedience on earth are devoted to another. This reflection leads us to penitence; for who can affirm with truth that his desires and affections have not been alienated from God? Did we really look for an heavenly kingdom, would worldly objects so perpetually engage our attention? would our minds be so distracted in prayer? would the certainty of an eternal world ever tend to bewilder the mind? When our hopes are fixed on immortal joys, the pleasures of this life must necessarily appear insipid. And their innocence, or evil seductions, may always be ascertained by attending to this criterion: whether they draw us off from devotional exercises, and lessen our gratitude to our munificent and unwearied Benefactor; or whether they supply us with additional sources of thankfulness, devotion, and praise.

The beauty of the creation, as well as

the delight we feel in contemplating its wonders, assures us that man was made to be happy. Various are the pleasures which in this world are consistent with mental purity : and in the proper enjoyment of them consists our most acceptable service. Whatever raises in the mind sentiments of the holiness, the power, the goodness of the Almighty, may surely be said to contribute to elevate the soul, and to render it more fit to be admitted into heaven : where all wonder shall cease, where all pleasure is pure, and where the soul not only reposes from care, but is filled with ever fresh and transporting delight in the kingdom, the power, and the glory of God.

The contemplation of this everlasting kingdom naturally leads the mind to meditate also on divine Omnipotence. No one who thinks at all can avoid joining in the exclamation of the holy Psalmist, " Great is the Lord, and great



is His power, yea, and His wisdom is infinite." Little consideration will serve to convince us, that if mercy were not exercised continually, Almighty power would crush all men living. Did our heavenly Father act, as act His sinful creatures; were He extreme to mark what is done amiss; did He punish sin as soon as it is perpetrated;—where is the man that would stand before Him? To defy His power is absurd; and to deny that it is owing to His pity and compassion that we have hitherto escaped punishment is impious. The respite which is granted to sinners, the hope of pardon, and the offer of salvation through the merits of our Redeemer, are of themselves sufficient to convince us of the great power of God. Where power is limited, where menaces can ever be impotent, pardon is seldom granted. Weak man supposes it to be a confession of infirmity, or that it may be ascribed to some fear of retaliation, that he is induced

to forgive an offence ; therefore revenge is frequently practised, or in milder cases pardon is withheld. But to the Almighty such apprehension cannot be attributed: His "is the power" that cannot be questioned. The power to punish and to forgive sins belongs only to God.

This attribute is so transcendent and so glorious, that it cannot well be omitted when we are expressing our gratitude to the Highest, when our prayers rise into thanksgiving, and when we are desirous to "show forth all his praise." If we had not a firm reliance on the power of Him to whom our prayers are directed, they would become faint and formal; our hopes would be turned to other objects, or our hearts would sink into despair. But how much is our hope enlivened; with what confidence may we address our Father, when we know that to Him who took our nature upon Him, who is touched with the feeling of

our infirmities, who has borne our sins, and who pities our sorrows, "all power is given in heaven and in earth." While He tabernacled among men, He prayed to the Father for his erring disciples; now that He has ascended up on high, He encourages *us* to pray to Him. He not only intercedes for us with the Father, but He has promised our requests shall be granted, if we believe that all power is committed unto Him, and that He is "able to subdue all things unto Himself."

The numerous and continual offences, then, which we see practised against His holiness and power, are arguments that there shall be a future reckoning, when his omnipotence will be fully manifested; and should serve to assure us, that He is as mighty to defend the meek and contrite now, as to punish the guilty at the last day. His power at present is often disregarded, sometimes even questioned by sinful men, and is

indeed seldom known but by the demonstration of beneficence, mercy, and compassion. Then will his power be manifested by a display of glory, at which this world and all that is in it will be lost. In this glory none shall partake but those who strive to vindicate His honour among men; for the Lord has repeatedly declared, "Them that honour me I will honour." We should remember too, that His glory cannot be actually increased or diminished by any act or conduct of our own. When we wickedly endeavour to tarnish the glory of God, we manifest the baseness of our own hearts; but no abatement of honour is experienced by Him whom we so ungratefully desert. Nothing more is suffered, but wicked rebellion on our parts, and the injury we do to the souls of others, who may be misled by our presumption; in whose sins the scorner may be said to partake even after he may have lost the will, or

the power to offend, to blaspheme, and to deny.

In the communion service "we give thanks to God for His great glory;" and in this act of adoration we anticipate the employment of that happy state to which our hopes are directed, and which it is the end and object of all devotional exercise to attain. Nothing, indeed, can fill the pious soul with more ardent gratitude, than the contemplation of the privilege, which the Christian enjoys, of celebrating the glory of his Creator: he thanks Him from his soul for the perception of His glorious attributes; he is never so happy as when he feels himself advancing in the path of truth and religious knowledge, and in the practice of giving glory to God. In contemplating the mercies of redemption, though we are humiliated by the confession of our own vileness, by the wonderful mercy and condescension of the Son of God, having taken upon Him our flesh,

enduring the punishment we have deserved, and by His securing our salvation by suffering, yet we sometimes forget the glory which the stupendous act of love and pity for the human race reflects on the Saviour of men. What can be more glorious than to triumph over sin, and the powers of darkness than our Redeemer's resurrection to life again, after having submitted to death, and after having been consigned to the tomb? or, than His visible ascension, His ultimate departure from this earth? Except it be His triumphant and awful return. Then indeed His glory will be complete, His power perfectly manifested, His kingdom fully come.

And when we would ascribe glory to God on earth, it should be "by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end." By Him, and through Him, is all glory given, all salvation effected, and all adoration paid. We are commanded to "honour Him even as we honour the

Father." In the days of His ministry on earth, He taught His disciples to pray; and never are our prayers so acceptable, as when they close with thanksgiving to Christ. When we are duly impressed with the Majesty of Him to whom our prayers are directed, our devotions imperceptibly glide into thanksgiving. When we have confidence to ask for future blessings, we cannot but remember the benefits which we have already received. When calamities oppress us here, we naturally turn our eyes to another kingdom, where pain shall be no more. When we feel ourselves weak, and destitute, and decaying, we apply to the power which has already saved us. When we have experienced the vanity of worldly grandeur, we willingly and unavoidably admire that glory which passes not away.

This consideration can be effaced from the mind of no one who uses the prayer of which I have been treating. We de-

clare our belief and our hope to our Father, that His is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever. Though we are all in the habit of avowing this, who can conceive the extent of the affirmation? Whose intellect can comprehend eternity? Who can fathom the power, or the glory of God? We know Him to be eternal; but here the human mind is lost in the interminable expanse of infinity; and here perhaps we should be content to rest, were we not assured that eternity is also attributed to the soul and nature of man. We are taught, and we are convinced, that the soul will never die; that even our bodies shall be raised at the last day; that according as our lives have been spent here, so shall be our never-ending condition hereafter. Our doom shall be "for ever" For ever shall we be monuments of the justice, or the mercy of God. We shall either live with Him in His kingdom, or be for ever excluded from it. We shall



be examples of His avenging power, or be saved by the power of His grace. We shall manifest His glory by becoming the victims of His justice, or His glory will be spread around us as the faithful disciples of His Son.

This all Christians believe; all join in using the prayer of our Lord. Fer-  
vently do we wish that we could say, all joined in the exercise of that charity which is the bond of peace and of all virtues. But till this desirable end is accomplished, an end which, in the present condition of human nature, the world will never see: it may promote kindred sentiments among those who profess themselves Christians, to remember that all have the same hopes, all unite in the same prayer, all beg for the same object. They supplicate their Father, who is in heaven; they "look up to Jesus, the author and finisher of their faith;" they pray that the Comforter may help their infirmities; and in hum-

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ble confidence, in meek assurance that their prayers will be heard and accepted, they joyfully, devoutly, and thankfully unite in the declaration, Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever. Amen.

## SERMON XI.

## FAITH AND WORKS.

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JAMES ii. 18.

Yea, a man may say, thou hast faith, and I have works. Shew me thy faith without works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.

No dispute among Christians has been longer continued, or has been productive of more unhappy effects, than that which involves the terms of acceptance with God, and the means of obtaining his favour. Faith and works have been set up against one another, and the necessity, propriety, and advantages of each have been perpetually canvassed, and have

been at different times advocated or denied, admitted or rejected, according to the dispositions of individuals, and the character of the times. This controversy has not only led to schism, uncharitableness, and even, in some cases, to persecution; but is always to be reprobated, as both sides widely depart from the doctrine of Christ, and have been, and must still be, as guilty of as much impropriety, as those who would create or perpetuate a quarrel of a child against a parent, or a parent against a child.

The disputants of each party consider themselves supported by the authority of an apostle. The banners of one side display the assertion of St. Paul; "the just shall live by faith," while the other with equal confidence triumph in the words of the text. So far has this dispute been carried, and such indecency has it produced, that the apostles have been accused of publishing different dogmas of belief; thus sinfully and danger-

ously implying that one and the same Spirit had not dictated every revelation from God. Most satisfactory, then, is the conviction that these seemingly opposite passages of scripture are perfectly reconcilable. The further insight, indeed, we obtain into the great scheme of redemption, the more easy is it to understand the argument of each apostle; the more firmly shall we be convinced that their doctrines agree in every important point; the more clearly shall we perceive, that every book, and every sentence in the Bible, leads to the same holy conclusion, and forms a part of one consistent creed.

The principal object of St. James in writing this epistle, was avowedly to correct the errors of those Jewish converts, who, in opposition to many of their nation and the purity of the Christian faith, conceived that a profession of belief in Christ absolved them from moral obligation, and with the yoke of the

law threw off the restraints of godliness. St. Paul's object, when he wrote to the Jews, who had embraced Christianity, was to show them, that the promises and prophecies relating to the Messiah had been fulfilled ; that the rites of the Temple worship, that had prefigured the great sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, had been rendered null by the efficacious and universal atonement, which the blessed Jesus had made on the cross. He laboured to prove that Christians were justified by faith in Christ's merits, without performing the works of the law ; of the Jewish law. But as the opinions of men are easily swayed by inclination, or early prejudice ; and when these prejudices are eradicated, they are apt to run into extremes, and to fly as far as they can from that which they have been convinced was erroneous ; these Jewish converts asserted that not only the ceremonial, but the moral law was abrogated ; that

a confession of the truth of the Messiah's advent was only necessary to entitle men to the joys of paradise—was the only requisite for admission into the kingdom of Heaven.

These erroneous doctrines having been embraced by the Jewish converts, were chiefly prevalent at Jerusalem, of which city all the ancient fathers declare, and the Acts of the Apostles intimate, St. James was the primitive Bishop: he felt it therefore his peculiar duty to expose and proscribe them, and to advocate, in the strongest terms of which language is capable, the cause of charity; of that pure religion and practical benevolence, which has in every age characterized the sincere believer in Christ. It was in prosecution of this holy design, that he says, "what doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works" to prove his assertion; "can faith," that is, a fruitless, barren, pretended faith,

“ save him.” Let it be remembered, that this is the commencement of St. James’s argument, and that he begins with censuring the conduct of men, who would prove their faith by assertion. “ Though a man *say* he hath faith :” he argues not against those that really possess it. He had not forgotten his blessed Master’s words, “ The tree is known by its fruits :” he exposes the folly and criminality of vain pretenders to faith, who assert that they have it, and yet bring forth no fruit to perfection : “ If a man say he hath faith, and have not works, what doth it profit ?” The truth is, his faith is unsound ; he has built up an ostentatious fabric on the sand, which will be swept away at the first gust of temptation.

No man can with any colour of justice pretend to faith, unless it be joined with the other Christian virtues, Hope and Charity. Faith teaches him to rely for salvation on the merits and intercession



of our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ. Hope encourages him to expect, that by patience and well-doing, he shall attain His precious promises : and Charity leads him to practise that universal love to man, which his heavenly Master has declared to be His new and last command.

Can any thing more evidently demonstrate the corruption and perverseness of the human heart, than the open avowal which unthinking sinners so often make of their opinion, that St. James avers, that faith is not necessary to salvation ; that the practice of good works comprehends the whole of Christianity ? Lamentable it is to be compelled to confess, that some, that many, have gone so far as to affirm it matters not what a man believes, so that he is sincere in his professions, just in his dealings, and merciful in heart. According to this belief the sensual Mahometan and the stupid idolater are as dear to

Christ, and will be as readily received into His kingdom in heaven, as those meek and lowly penitents whom He has called his own, and whose souls, He Himself declared, He died to save. The Mahometan proves the sincerity of his belief, by prayer five times a day. The still more devoted idolater lies down before the ponderous chariot of his wooden god, purposely to be crushed to death by the slow revolving wheels on which his bloody throne is erected. Do we, the professed disciples of Christ, though told to crucify the flesh, ever give such, or in any way so strong instances of sincerity? The votary of the arch impostor abstains from wine, and all fermented liquors in obedience to his commands. From what indulgence do we abstain for the sake of our Saviour? The sincere professor of idol-worship puts fire on his head, and subjects his body to various species of torture to evidence the soundness of his faith. To

what punishment do we submit, to mortify our guilty passions, and to bring our minds willingly to aim at Christian perfection? We are too apt to think ourselves virtuous, when we are not in the habit of committing flagrant sins; and that for our good works (when we have any to show) we shall be accepted by our Judge hereafter. But if all men are to be judged by the law of works, I fear, in many instances, those who call themselves Christians will be obliged to confess that infidels are their superiors. In many, in most conditions of human life, men have few opportunities of showing their faith by their works; and even those that have, are guilty of great presumption in challenging the world in the words of the apostle. St. James might well say, "I will show thee my faith by my works;" for *he* had left all to follow Christ; *he* had surrendered every personal comfort to advocate the cause, and propagate the creed of his Saviour, and

was determined (and was assured by his sacred Master's words, that he should be called to do so) to follow him even to death. Do we part with any personal comfort?—do we take up our cross to follow Him?—do we surrender all, or any hopes of worldly honour or worldly amusements to conform strictly to the precepts of the gospel? Are we resolved, if necessary, to yield up all our property, and encounter persecution, insult, and death itself for Christ's sake? When we have done any of these things, or are unquestionably thus determined, then may we with propriety say, "I will show thee my faith by my works." But till this be done, let no man vaunt himself in the words of St. James; let him rather confess that he is an unprofitable servant, and that if we were judged by the deeds of the law, even of the moral law, no flesh would be justified.

Good works, as the articles of our

Church declare, are the fruits of faith; and although “they cannot put away our sins, and endure the severity of God’s wrath, yet are they pleasing to God in Christ, and do spring out necessarily of a true and lively faith; ‘as a tree is discerned by its fruit.’”

This is the authorized, and I firmly believe, the only unobjectionable way of interpreting the apostle’s words. Good works necessarily spring out of a true and lively faith; so great is the necessity, that true faith cannot be known without them. Still are they the fruits of faith; of that faith without which, says the scripture, “it is impossible to please God”—of that “without which, no man shall see the Lord.” What means the scripture admonition, “As he that has called you is holy, be ye also holy,” but that all our works should be done in conformity to the will, and in hope of the assistance of Christ? St. James well knew that he, who cast off the faith of

his Redeemer, could have no good works to show; and the present state of this kingdom proves that the apostle's knowledge of the human mind was deep and clear. No man is so mad as to throw away the pearl of great price, which his virtuous exertions have brought within his reach, and which he believes God has promised to bestow; no man rejects Christ unless his heart is bad; in fact, every man's heart is bad by nature, and can only be softened, and rendered better, by the grace of God's Holy Spirit, which those who own Christ shall receive. But let it be remembered, they receive it only in consequence of His merits, and through His intercession. Do, then, the merits of Christ attach to those who, in opposition to the benefits of His death and passion, set up their own works and deservings?—who assert, that the propriety and purity of their hearts, and the uselessness of faith are proved by the excellence of their actions? what these

actions are, so powerful, so efficacious and valuable, it would be hard, I think, to show. Certain I am, there is no description of them in the gospel. We are there directed, after having spent our lives in strenuous exertion, and perpetual anxiety, to do the Lord's will, to say, and to say it from the heart, "We have done no more than it is our duty to do."

Who, that is deeply convinced of the truth of this confession, and meekly applies it to his own case, will dare to make the apostle's words his own? "Show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works." We confess, as broadly as human tongue can utter, that faith without works is dead, and this deadness carries with it absolute annihilation. For if any glimmering remain in the heart, its light would sometimes, though faintly perhaps, shine before men; and so desirous would its professor be to

glorify his Father who is in heaven, that this little spark would kindle into a holy flame, and illumine his walk towards eternity. The truth, I fear, is, that those who boast of their good works, and rely on them for salvation, have no faith at all. For faith must lead them to discover the corruption of their own hearts, and the need they have of a Redeemer. It would teach them the necessity of an atonement for sin; they would naturally look up to their Saviour on the cross; they would there behold a sacrifice, the value of which renders all human merit poor and unavailing. By faith in Christ, in the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world, are men only saved. And they are taught in scripture to prove their faith by their actions. Good works are necessary, they are indispensable, as evidences of faith; but they are of no value in themselves: for, says the apostle, "Whatever is not of faith, is sin." It must be so;



for who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean ? And however pleasing and enchanting may be the manners and conversation of an infidel, his behaviour is only a resemblance of the infatuating seductions of the subtle animal that tempted Eve, or of the wily pretensions of the serpent's instigator, when he endeavoured to persuade the fainting Jesus to turn stone into bread, under pretence of pitying his hunger.

But the vaunters of good works deny the necessity and efficacy of faith, for the purpose of raising the value of their actions. The pious Christian, however, knows that he owes all he has, and all he hopes, to Christ ; that his entrance into heaven, if by the mercy of God the Father, the merits and intercession of God the Son, and the aids of God the Holy Ghost, who helpeth his natural infirmities, he ever reach that blissful abode ; he knows that he shall be greeted with the words, or some of similar import,

which his blessed Lord used towards those whom he cured of their bodily diseases : " Thy faith hath saved thee." To this did our divine Master attribute, in subjection to his own will, every miracle He wrought on the minds of men, every bodily cure that He effected. His common question to those that solicited his aid was, " Dost thou believe ?" And this is the interrogation which every man should put to his own conscience. And if, my brethren, an affirmative answer is returned, fear not that no opportunity will offer of evidencing your faith. Faith was never proved by the value of the sacrifice : for how then should a poor man show his faith, but by the inward disposition of the soul ? For whosoever, (they are our blessed Lord's own words,) " whosoever shall give you a cup of cold water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward." In the same strain of just reasoning, and

of consolation to the poor, did our sacred Master declare to his disciples, when He saw the poor widow cast her two mites into the treasury, "Verily I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast more in than all they that have cast into the treasury." And those who have not even a mite to give, may still prove their faith, and the proof will be acceptable in the sight of God, by their prayers and their willing services.

These are works which are indisputably good : and they invariably give birth to those cheering sensations in the soul, of which they who have not faith, can form no just conception. They are productive of that courage in our Christian warfare, which makes the soul superior to its worldly circumstances, and often renders the mild rebuke of a poor man so poignant, so unaccountably appalling to the wealthy profligate, or the common swearer. For however these may laugh, and seem to ridicule the

chastened language, and more religious conduct of their neighbour, a well-timed and gentle admonition not only proves the faith of the Christian reprovee, but sinks, irresistibly sinks into the mind and memory of him to whom it is applied; and may, and I believe often does, form a leaven of pious thought, which in time leaveneth the whole lump.

May we, my brethren, in every action of our lives, in every subject of our conversation, in our public prayers, and our private devotions, show to the world, to our families, and our God, the sincerity of our faith. And while we confess that faith without works is dead, may we be convinced from our hearts that no work without faith is available to salvation.

**SERMON XII.****THE FIRST COMMANDMENT.**

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**EXODUS xx. 1—3.**

And God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have none other Gods before me.

**THE** wonders and miracles by which the Almighty effected the deliverance of the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt were so remarkable, that the usual modes of communicating information, or delivering precepts from God to man, would in that age have been

slightly regarded. To those who had seen the waters of the deep divided, and standing in heaps, that a passage might be opened for the ransomed of the Lord, any change effected in the common course of nature, would have made but small impression. And however authoritatively or solemnly Moses might have spoken to men, who had heard the crash which announced the discomfiture of Pharaoh and his host, when the Lord blew with his wind, and the sea covered them, his voice would seem but feeble. They would expect that a message from God would be delivered in a tone so appalling, that it could neither be disregarded nor forgotten. In this expectation they were not disappointed. When they were summoned to appear at the foot of Mount Sinai to hear the commands of the Most High, "there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud, so that all

the people trembled.” And well they might ; for the mount was enveloped in darkness, while the ground on which the astonished multitude stood seemed to shake beneath their feet. So deeply were their minds impressed with awe and consternation at the sound of God’s voice, that they besought Moses to speak to them, and report the commandments of God, lest if they should hear the words of the Almighty pronounced by Himself again, they should be bereft of their senses by the terror with which they were necessarily accompanied.

These awful circumstances attending the promulgation of the Almighty’s laws, which are commonly called the ten commandments, clearly indicate that they were never to suffer repeal or alteration. All future generations, of men were to be bound and judged by them. They are of as strict and necessary obligation now, as when they were proclaimed in thunder. And although one

or two of them may seem, at the first view, to point at the crimes which marked more strikingly the early period when they were promulgated, and at the peculiar vices of the Jewish people; yet the crime of preferring the gods of this world to the King Eternal, is now, alas! as prevalent as then; and the unbending obstinacy and perverseness which have been so often said to characterize the Jews, are vices which still stain those who would be thought, and who profess themselves, God's peculiar people.

The sentence which preceded the first commandment was uttered manifestly to recall to their memories the power of their Almighty King, and to awaken their gratitude. The Israelites were reminded of the wonders which he had done for them in their deliverance from the house of bondage. This deliverance was to be for ever impressed upon their memories: and not only should the tra-



dition of it excite in our minds a deep sense of the merciful dispensations of God towards mankind, and the especial providences by which their minds have been continually and progressively enlightened, but it should awaken in us a grateful and active sense of our deliverance from the bondage of sin, and of the wonders and mercies by which our redemption has been effected.

This train of thought will lead directly to a conviction of the necessity of practising the duties enjoined in the decalogue, and of the propriety of the first commandment : “Thou shalt have none other gods but me.” That men are still inclined to worship other gods, not only the admonitions of our Lord’s apostles, but the experience of our own hearts, too fatally convince us. The sin that most easily besets us, the passion to which we are most addicted, is the god to which our devotion is most strictly paid, and to whose service is directed

our willing obedience. For it should be thoroughly understood, that the command to have no other gods, does not imply, that different gods are actually in existence. It was against those who wickedly worshipped false and polluting deities, that the first commandment was enacted. It proclaims the unity, as well as the omnipotence of the Highest. He, indeed, must have a very poor and low idea of the Divine Majesty, who can suppose that there are more gods than one. His will nothing can resist; His power is undivided: and though men endeavour to withstand and defeat His will on earth, yet their attempts are impotent, and will only tend to manifest His almighty power and justice hereafter.

If we did not possess scriptures to guide our reasoning faculties, and to tell us the manner in which the affairs of the world have been conducted, we should be unable to account for the disposition which men have in every age betrayed

to multiply the objects of their devotion. But divine revelation informs us, that no sooner was man created and placed in the most delightful part of this lower creation, than he was assailed by temptation to disobey his bountiful Creator; that he confided in that impure and unholy spirit, whose object and design it was to deceive and destroy him; and that, since the fall, man's heart has been prone to credit deception, and to yield to the assaults which may be made on his faith and virtue.

The attempt to persuade men that there is no God, is so absurd, and the assertion is so directly contrary to the evidence of our senses, to reason, and to every feeling which tends at all to expand and elevate the mind, that though the opinion has frequently been attempted to be imposed upon mankind, yet it has generally been rejected, or faintly supported, even by those who have been most daring in seducing others

from their duty. A much more common method of lessening the subjects of God's kingdom on earth, has been the establishment of the worship of false gods, and the erection of altars and of temples where these have been worshiped by rites that pollute the mind, and lead it far away from every principle of purity, or adherence to religious duty.

A consideration of the attributes which were assigned to the false gods of the heathen, may more properly be made when treating of the second commandment. The duty more particularly inculcated by the first, is an acknowledgment of the only true God. And in this acknowledgment is included the admission that we ought to love Him above all things, to fear nothing so much as His displeasure, to trust in His promises, and to obey His commands.

Since the promulgation of His laws on Mount Sinai, our obligations and in-

duancements to love God with all our hearts, have prodigiously multiplied. To pass over the providencies recorded in the Old Testament, what can excite greater love in the human breast than the abrogation of the old covenant, and the establishment of the new? Can any one read and believe the wonders, the mercies, the astonishing instances of holy love and condescending kindness, by which our redemption from sin was effected, and yet withhold his gratitude to his crucified Redeemer, or his love for his Almighty Father, who for our sakes thus sacrificed His Son? He declares, "Thou shalt have none other gods but me." And what other gods would we have, but Him who hath sent His Son to die in our stead? who hath voluntarily borne our sins; whose sufferings have atoned for our crimes; and who, though crucified on earth, still extends His arms to receive penitent sinners into Heaven. So vast is the love of Christ, and so stu-

pendous and admirable are the instances in which it is displayed, that though we may wish to fix our attention on the moral duties, (which, indeed, are incumbent on every true worshipper of God,) yet we glide insensibly into meditation on the mercies of redemption. And as every former revelation of God tended to pave the way for the advent of the Messiah, so does every act of adoration, every devotional thought, lead to thanksgiving for the great atonement made for the sins of us all.

This pious consideration not only springs from holy love, and a chaste idea of the religion which all the revelations from God combine to establish, but it brings to our recollection, or rather it never for a moment suffers us to forget, the passages in the New Testament which teach us that Christ and the Father are one. And while with pious gratitude we are at all times ready in our devotions to exclaim with St. Thomas, in addressing our Sa-

viour, "My Lord and my God," we remember the awful declaration pronounced by the voice of the Almighty, "Thou shalt have none other gods but me." Those who study their Bibles know that this acknowledgment of the unity of God, and a desire to comply with His commands, and to understand His word more perfectly, lead them more closely to follow the precepts, and confess the divinity of their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. His gospel excites their love to God; His abhorrence of sin awakens their fear; in His promises they trust; His gentle commands they willingly obey. He has brought us out of the house of bondage; He has reconciled us with the Father; He has made His precepts plain to us; He has given efficacy to our prayers, strength to our faith, energy to our thanksgiving. To a sincere Christian, all other hopes but those derived from His sacred Master, are manifestly vain; he is con-

tinually anxious to cast all his care on his Saviour, to prove his love to his Almighty Father, and admits from his heart and soul, that nothing can be more just than the divine command, "Thou shalt have none other Gods but me."

Though the love of God is the genuine fruit of obedience to this command, yet there are other duties and other feelings which naturally arise in the pious heart while it is striving to prove its truth and fidelity. The success of our endeavours in evidencing the sincerity of our belief, is preceded by a holy fear. Though we are taught and are inclined to love our Almighty Father, yet we cannot forget that His nature is infinitely pure, that His sanctity is unspeakably great, that He asks and requires holiness in us, that He has demanded of us not only the fostering of pious affections, the extirpation of sinful appetites, but the outward expressions of reverence and awe. "If I be a father," saith He, "where is



mine honour? If I be a master, where is my fear?"

It is certain we cannot honour our Father worthily, if we admit the worship of any other god, if we suffer our hearts to stray from the path of virtue, if we allow any idol of this world to attract our attention. When our blessed Saviour said, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon," He spoke not to those who were professed idolaters, but to people who, whatever other vices they might have been justly charged with, abhorred every external act of worship except those which God had Himself prescribed. After their return from the Babylonish captivity, the least tendency to comply with the idolatrous rites of the nations by whom they were surrounded, was regarded with horror by the descendants of those who in a strange land had lifted up their hearts and wept when they regarded Zion. "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange

land?" was their reply to all who asked of them a melody in their heaviness. An answer too typical of our own language, when we are cast away and driven into that land of terrors where all will be consigned who now forget or disobey God's commandments. It is the fear of this awful banishment from God's presence, that ought to be ever in our thoughts, and to deter us from the practice of evil. In the place of perpetual exile, there will be no God to succour us, no Holy Spirit to comfort us, no light to cheer us, but the glare of those flames to which our sins will add fuel, and which our evil passions have kindled.

"Thou shalt have none other gods but me," saith the Holy One on earth. In the next world, the services of the wicked will not be accepted. It is an instance of God's mercy that He has taught us how to live; that He has given us commandments by which we may direct our lives; that He has instructed

us how we can propitiate His favour. He hath said, "This do and live." The consequence of disobedience is the loss of His favour. And what a loss is this, my brethren? What does this include? Is it not the loss of our immortal soul? The loss of heaven? The loss of happiness which would have been eternal? If we had been prescribed some hard thing to attain everlasting joys, should we not have done it? What then must be our guilt and our infatuation, when we neglect and disobey commands, which all must confess are not grievous? The service of God, we continually allow and often publicly confess, "is perfect freedom." It secures to us the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free: it delivers us from the bondage of our own passions. These are now the gods which set up themselves in opposition to the Most High; these seduce our minds, and lead us astray from the worship of our Maker. To recall us from error, to instil

penitence into our hearts, to render us mindful of our duty, we have only to listen to the commands of Him who we know is the Lord our God; who, we confess, has brought us out of the bondage of sin; and who is so jealous of any rival in our affections, that his earliest and most important command declares, "Thou shalt have none other gods but me."

Surely, my brethren, it is incumbent on us all to search and examine our consciences, and enquire whether our hearts be pure in the sight of God, or whether we have not reason to fear that we are inclined to the service of any other. It is not sufficient for us to say, "this is a fit subject for contemplation in the church:" for *here* we are engaged in other performances; we should make *this* the subject of our meditations in private; we should think of God's commands before we engage in private prayer; we should make the knowledge of the divine will

the constant subject of our thanksgivings.

If we would indeed serve the Lord, we must obey His commandments ; we must rely on His promises ; we must pray to Him, not with our lips alone, but with our hearts also : above all, we should honour and reverence His Son. Through Jesus Christ alone are all our prayers heard, our services accepted. We should thank our Almighty Father for the knowledge of His law, as delivered by Moses. With how much more fervent thanksgiving should we adore and praise Him for the grace and mercy which He hath vouchsafed to us in His incarnate Son.

I trust none of us need be assured, that adherence to the commandments, which were written by the finger of God, must certainly lead us to salvation through the merits, the atonement, the intercession of Jesus Christ.

**SERMON XIII.****THE SECOND COMMANDMENT.**

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**EXODUS xx. 4.**

**Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.**

**THESE** words, form the commencement of the second commandment, which, at the time it was promulgated, was perhaps the most important of any, since it forbids sins which were then universally prevalent, and which led mankind further from the worship and the knowledge of the one true God, than any other vicious practice or seduction of the human

heart. It would seem incredible, were not the fact undeniable, and did not all history and experience convince us of its truth, that the whole world has been so much and so entirely given up to idolatry, that the worship of images seems almost natural to man. Yet to pray to stocks and stones; to fall down in supplication before the stump of a tree, is palpably absurd: it would appear at the first view, revolting to reason, and repugnant to every principle which expands or elevates the mind. Whence arose the universality of the usage; how can we account for this depravity of heart?

It is satisfactory to every one who reads with a wish to confirm religious impressions, and to improve the intelligence which the scriptures give us of the early ages of the world; that though the accounts which heathen writers impart to us of ancient events and histories, are involved in fable, yet they bear some similitude to sacred history; and

an analogy may still be traced between traditional fiction and the plain records of truth.

It is extraordinary, that all nations have retained a tradition, that the world was once destroyed by a deluge ; that a single family only was preserved, and that all mankind are descended from him, who escaped the general inundation. Whether he be called Saturn, or Janus, or Prometheus,\* or any other name which the fancy of the heathens, or the difference of language might assign him ; still their mythology was so far consistent as to convey an account of a common father of mankind, in whose latter days men were dispersed, and society was broken. This belief generated or confirmed the knowledge that there was one Supreme Deity, whose wrath had been kindled by the sins of his creatures, whose favour was to be propitiated, and who

\* Vide. Stillingfleet's *Origines Sacræ*. Vol. ii. b. 3. chap. 5.



would accept, and who demanded, human adoration.

As crimes increased, and the minds of men became more corrupted, they felt a repugnance to adore One who was invisible; and they, who entertained chaster ideas of the divine nature and government, supposed that the Almighty was most properly worshipped through the means of a mediator. This idea (so similar to the truth, and so corroborative of the doctrine that all religion was previously derived from the same source, and though debased and polluted, was first imparted to man by his Creator) induced men to pay divine homage to those objects, through whose influence common blessings are conveyed: and as no blessings are more common and necessary than light, and warmth, and vegetation, their minds were led to worship the sun, and the other heavenly bodies, which cannot fail to excite wonder, or at least to attract observation. These they could

see, and knew they were above their reach ; these objects were however sometimes lost to their sight, and their votaries were induced to represent them by images, which when consecrated to their different deities, they supposed were possessed in some degree by their divine nature. As men became more and more corrupt, and their minds infatuated by image worship ; their deities became more numerous, and the orgies, by which they were adored, more vain and polluting : and after they had classed among their gods the souls of departed men, who had distinguished themselves on earth, their failings were elevated into virtues, and they were often worshipped by rites commemorative and descriptive of defects and vices, which stain the human soul, and call for the punishment of the Almighty. This was universally the case in states which had become luxurious : in these the temple worship of the heathen gods combined

with the corrupted passions of mankind, to destroy their souls and extirpate every vestige of pure religion, and even of morality.

The service of idols could not be performed, as was supposed, acceptably to the beings they were meant to represent, without the exhibition of wicked actions, and the perpetration of crimes, at some of which nature revolts, and all, every pure worshipper of God would shudder to witness, or to instil into the mind of any who in guilt were uninitiated. The effect, that the impure rites of heathen worship must have had on its votaries may easily be conceived. And the power of this superstition cannot be questioned, when we know that it was a common practice for parents to immolate their children, and to offer them as burnt sacrifices on the altars of their false deities; that similar cruelties are practised at this day in the benighted regions of the world, is a lamentable

fact; and that in former ages it would have universally prevailed, is equally sure, had not the Almighty selected, and wonderfully increased and protected a single family among the sons of men, to whom he revealed his will, and promulgated commandments. To these He declared Himself a jealous God; who would not endure any participation in their worship and affections. The rites and ceremonies of the Jewish law were manifestly intended to keep them at a distance from every other people. And the perverseness of the Israelites was in no instance so evident, as in their inclination to idol worship, and their attachment to visible representations of the King eternal. When Moses came down from the mount and saw the people worshipping a golden calf, we are not to suppose, that they had thrown off their obedience to Him, who had delivered them from their Egyptian thralldom. Their sin might not

have consisted in worshipping a false deity, but in making an image of the true. Whether by this was meant the supreme God of Heaven and earth; or any inferior deity, is of little importance. It was an evidence of their inclination to "will-worship" as St. Paul calls it; and the voluntary humility by which he describes the deviation from the worship of the great Creator, to that of angels, is marked as a crime offensive to the Most High, and as leading to the most dangerous consequences. If we trace the history of any people that ever lived upon earth, we shall observe that the evil one never had such strong hold upon them, as when he assailed them through means of idol worship. When impurity creeps into religious services, the soul of the worshipper cannot be clean; the mind is polluted by the very means, which ought to have cleansed it. And when the soul is thoroughly defiled, of what virtuous affection is it capable?

What can draw it off from following vicious paths? What can render it fit for a place of purity and holiness hereafter?

If men will sin here, if they will disobey the divine commands, and disregard the voice of God their Saviour, perish they must. And their sins also will be visited upon their children, unto the third and fourth generation. For though by God's mercy we do sometimes see godly children of wicked parents, yet it is certain that vice is frequently hereditary. And this happens by necessary and natural course. For how is the child of bad parents to acquire religious knowledge? When he hears God's holy name profaned at home, what is to induce him to reverence it abroad? When he never sees his parents bow their knees in prayer to the Holy One, what should induce *him* to pursue a course of devotion? Wicked, desperately wicked is the heart, and most dangerous is the

condition, of those parents who have never taught their children to pray to God. Of them it may be said, that they have taught their posterity to hate Him. And what but a miracle, what but an undeserved exertion of grace and mercy, can lead them from the paths of error, and the shelving course of iniquity? We are told the Almighty is a jealous God; and what, I would ask again, can induce Him to save those from perdition, who are inclined to the service of other gods—who prefer the slavery of demons, to the service of their Maker? When God visits the sins of the wicked upon the children, He does no more than strict justice demands: for the children are as profane as their parents, perhaps more so. They have indeed little chance of being otherwise, since we are all creatures of imitation. The generations of the wicked become worse and worse. If he that has children be negligent in the worship of his Creator, they gene-

rally forsake it altogether. This assertion is not only proved by an attention to sacred history, but is observable in our own times. When we hear of any one being convicted of crimes against the interest of society, how common is the observation, that he was of a bad family? How frequently do we say, that little good could have been expected of him? Does not this prove that the sins of the fathers are often visited upon the children? And does it not incite us to acquire and deserve a good name; lest our posterity should be involved in disgrace? Every command, every precept of God is just, and wise, and holy. They all tend to manifest his equity, and his mercy in declaring them to his rational offspring. How base must be the man, who after having been told what God has done to save the human soul, can be inclined to hate him! To hate God, is an expression, which if it had not been used in holy writ, would have




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alarmed our minds and would have been thought too strong to be applied with justice to any man. But though to you, my brethren, who attend here every Lord's day to praise God, it may seem almost impossible to hate Him; yet it is certain, there have been those in every generation on whom this heinous guilt may be charged. The service of other gods naturally and inevitably brings on hatred of the true. And though we are not now tempted to pollute our souls by filthy rites, and though no external worship of idols, though no graven image, no similitude of any creature be erected in our sight; yet we cannot deny that there is no internal idol on which our hearts are fixed. And the more God has blessed us in this world, the scriptures tell us, the more pompously and ardently is this favourite idol worshipped. The service of this, whatever it be, (and I would much rather your own hearts would

suggest it to you than any language that I can utter,) assuredly draws off the mind from the most acceptable service of God. Be assured, no service is acceptable to Him, which flows not from a contrite and a thankful heart. Where is the man who has no crimes to bewail? Where is the man who has no blessings to recount? Have we never transgressed God's law? Have we never defiled our souls? Have we never neglected our Saviour's precepts, and preferred the service of iniquity? Should we not lament our sins? Have we never experienced the bounty of God? Are we infirm and destitute, void of all comfort? Have we never been preserved from harm? Have we no hope of heaven? Has nothing been done for our salvation? Should we not attribute all we possess, and all we hope for, to the mercy and kindness of the Almighty? And does not this acknowledgment and conviction induce us to

love Him? This holy affection rises spontaneously in the hearts of the pious, even without hope of reward. But how vast are his promises to those who love Him and keep His commandments! To thousands of these his mercy is displayed. We have indeed nothing to fear, if we heartily and sincerely love Him. For the love of God not only "casteth out fear," but prompts us to willing obedience; to entertain sentiments of purity and holiness, to be zealous in God's cause, to set our affections on things above: it more especially leads us to rely on our Saviour. To Him every knee must bow. For to Him we owe every blessing we can ask. For His sake alone can we receive our pardon. And we must be sure, that we have no claim on his merits, unless we love God and keep his commandments. In this enlightened country no one can say, that he knows not what his commandments are. They are published every



Lord's day. They are inculcated in the mind of every one who professes himself a member of our truly apostolical church. Here all may learn their duty who really wish to practice and fulfil it. What must be the state of mind of those to whom their duty is repugnant, it were useless to describe, though it concerns us all to beware, lest this unwillingness creep upon ourselves.

Nothing can counteract criminal supineness more, than frequent, than daily meditation on the blessings we receive from God, on the glories of another world, and His own public and gracious promise; I will "shew mercy unto thousands that love me, and keep my commandments."

## SERMON XIV.

## THE THIRD COMMANDMENT.

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EXODUS xx. 7.

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain.

IN discoursing on the second commandment, I remarked that it was probably of greater importance at the time when it was promulgated than any of the others, as it was directed against that sin to which the Israelites were most addicted. With equal justice may I now assert, that the third commandment

is that which most concerns us now, as there are, I fear, very few alive at present who have not incurred its penalties; some in a greater degree than others, but all are guilty before God. Not one is there whose age and reason render him responsible for his words and actions, who can say, "I have never taken the Lord's name in vain." For it is most necessary to remember, that this commandment is not only directed against blasphemy, perjury, and open rebellion against the Most High, but every time we mention the Holy One without reverence, without being struck with a feeling of His majesty and goodness, without, in short, a wish and endeavour to glorify His name, we are guilty of taking it in vain.

Of the sin of blasphemy I hope it is not necessary for me to speak. I trust, my brethren, there is not one of you who has designedly and rebelliously blasphemed your Creator, your Redeemer,

your Comforter, and your future Judge. If there be, I earnestly entreat him not to delay to sue, most humbly, and earnestly, for pardon. Let him at once repent of this his great wickedness, and pray God that the sin of his heart and of his tongue may be forgiven him. For he has not only heaped dishonour on the Almighty, and defied his Maker to punish him instantly, but he has contributed to render God's holy name less revered among His creatures; he has added to the insults which the enemies of the gospel accumulated on his suffering Saviour; he has shown and declared himself an enemy to religion; he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.

Many suppose that this commandment principally prohibits perjury; and therefore, if they have not sworn falsely before a magistrate, or on some public occasion, that they are guiltless of taking God's holy name in vain. But though the

sin of perjury be included in the catalogue of sins which this commandment forbids, (as nothing, indeed, can be more presumptuous or dreadful than to say, "so help me God," when we are uttering a lie, or when we would profit or screen ourselves by any sort of falsehood,) yet the sin of taking God's holy name in vain, is of much more frequent occurrence. It is committed in prayer, in the want of habitual reverence towards God, in common conversation. When we enter God's temple, every thing tends to impress us with awe and reverence. "This is the place," saith the Almighty, "where mine honour dwelleth;" here it is where He accepts our public services; this edifice is consecrated to His worship, and therefore it is, that it is customary to uncover our heads when we enter this or any other building which is set apart for purposes of devotion. I am afraid I should have rather said *was* customary, for so many instances of irre-



verence are observable towards this holy place, that custom seems at variance with any outward sign of veneration.

But God's holy name is not perhaps so much, or so often taken in vain by external acts of irreverence and negligence, as by the indifference with which we hear it pronounced, and join in the prayers in which it is necessarily included. In every supplication we make to God, His name must unavoidably occur. When we do not join in devotional exercise with our heart; when we pray not with our understanding, do we not virtually take God's name in vain? When we address our Maker, we are directed to kneel before Him, as the humblest posture we can use. Is this lowly attitude adopted? Are our postures and our thoughts such as become Christians, when they supplicate the Lord in the great congregation? Is there any prayer used in the church service, in which a sincere believer may not conscientiously

join? Do we not assemble here to confess our sins, to unite in prayer for the supply of our common wants, and to render to our Almighty Father general and hearty thanksgiving? If we come hither for any other purpose than that which the Common Prayer professes to promote and accomplish, or if our devotion be formal and spiritless, perhaps irksome to us, do we not take God's holy name in vain? This observation applies also to private prayer. If we suffer any prayer to degenerate into form, or ceremony; if our services, whether they be public or private, be lifeless, they will not be accepted by the Almighty.

It is really alarming to consider how frequently, and to all appearance, unconsciously, men take God's name in vain; and how nearly the conversation of many in the present age approaches to the sin of common swearing. For be it remembered, that we profane the holy name of

God whenever we use it for any other purpose than to give glory, and honour, and worship to the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who sees whatever we do, who hears whatever we say, and who has declared, that "for every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account at the day of judgment." What more idle use can be made of the faculty of speech, (that astonishing gift of God to man, which distinguishes him above all other animals of the creation,) than by employing it to lessen the veneration which all ought to entertain of the Almighty? It cannot be pretended that those who use the name of God on light occasions, possess that regard and veneration for Him which is consistent with His dealings with us, and with the feelings which fill the hearts of all who fear and love Him. The ideas which we are taught in holy writ to entertain of a future life, induce us to imagine, or it may be said they directly inculcate the

belief, that the blessed are continually employed in giving glory to God, in celebrating His honour, in glorifying His holy name; and that the lost souls are for ever execrating the crimes which deprived them of a blessed inheritance; that they make their existence, which they can neither throw off nor render tolerable, still more accursed and tormenting by imprecations and unholy exclamations, and above all, by an improper use of God's sacred name. Which state is the most proper for those who in this world take God's name in vain, it is not difficult to determine. How, indeed, the profane talker can expect to be received into the mansions of bliss and religious delight, we should not cease to wonder if we were not aware that the expectation seldom enters into his thoughts. The thought of God and of His eternal glory, would at once prevent the mentioning of His name without a pause, without considering how nearly and how

happily every immortal soul will be admitted to Him hereafter, or be for ever expelled from His presence, and cast into a state of lamentation, and mourning, and woe.

Few things are more important than the caution which ought to be observed in conversation in the presence of children. When a child has been accustomed to hear the holy name of God pronounced without reverence; when it is uttered in fits of anger, of surprise, or in the most familiar expressions of affirmation, can the juvenile Christian retain that solemn and awful sense of the majesty, the power, and presence of the Almighty, which precedes and accompanies a sense of piety in the human mind? Will its first accents whisper praise? Will its prayers ascend to God in the same strain of holiness, as when it is taught never to mention the Holy One but with reverential awe, and an indication that religion and sacred gratitude

have taken root in the heart? Early and frequent are the occurrences in common life, which tend to wear off religious impressions; but none is more fatal, none more destructive of pious habits and godly sentiments, than the common practice of taking God's name in vain. And when we consider what is the condition of the mind when unholy imprecations are uttered, when the sacred name of our Creator and our Saviour is profaned, the sin, the consciousness of the register of the profanation, is most appalling. We should consider how unlikely it is, that the Lord will listen to our prayers when our tongues have been polluted with execrations; and how great is the inconsistency of declaring and celebrating the honour, the majesty, the ineffable glory of the Highest, with the same lips that have been used to mention the name of God amidst the loosest, it may be, the most profane and unbecoming conversation. To take the name of the

Lord our God in vain, is unquestionably to make use of it at improper times, and more especially on familiar occasions. What must our guilt be, when we couple it with oaths, with curses, with language, which on our death beds, we shall wish to forget; the unwilling recollection of which will disturb our prayers, and paralyse our hopes of salvation! My brethren, I hope this frightful remembrance will occur to none of you at your last hour. I trust that even now, your hearts are adverse to any expression or thought of irreverence towards God, and that your tongues are strangers to all filthy conversation. For we, as Christians, incur more guilt than did the Israelites, when we take the name of the Lord our God in vain. We have more reason to feel and to express gratitude towards Him, than had of old His chosen people. The blessed Jesus had not then died for the sins of all; He had not then endured the mockery, the

scoffs, and the insults of His merciless persecutors, of whom, those who now profane His holy name, are surely too close and daring imitators. Yet how frequently do we hear the name of Jesus, at which every knee should bow, made the subject of silly jest, or included in vulgar and jocular narrative. He was called Jesus because He came into this world to save His people from their sins. Can that man be held guiltless, who mixes this name with indecent ribaldry? Can he look unto Jesus with anxious supplication, with that hope which is the last anchor of the sinking soul, who has been accustomed to take His holy name in vain, and to make it the subject of merriment and impiety? Earnestly do I wish that I may be successful in persuading a single soul to desist from taking the name of the Lord in vain; for the practice incurs guilt, the measure of which is not easily calculated. It is a sin of frequent occur-



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rence, and of less temptation or excuse, if I may so speak, than any forbidden in the decalogue. The passions of human nature do not impose it upon us; no internal suggestion urges its perpetration. It is a sin to which we are tempted by nothing but the delight of profaning and lowering the honour and majesty of our Creator, our unwearied Benefactor, our continual Preserver, our compassionate Redeemer, our condescending Saviour; who would be our guide and comforter, if we would accept of His guidance, if we would be comforted by His promises, if we would reverence His holy name. What delight there can be in using the name of the Lord our God with irreverence, or according to the words of the text, of taking it in vain, I hope, my beloved brethren, you will never know. I trust the word and grace of God, and the feelings of your own hearts, will suggest to you many arguments against this guilty

practice, which I may have omitted ; that those who may have inadvertently incurred this guilt, may from this hour abandon it ; that all may remember that it is expressly forbidden by God Himself, and that the same divine voice which said, “Thou shalt have none other gods but me,” at the same time, and with the same threatenings, proclaimed, “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.”

## SERMON XV.

## THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT.

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EXODUS xx. 8.

Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

THIS commandment may be said to be a repetition of the earliest ordinance which God prescribed to man. Even before the fall, when our first father walked in innocence; when he had no sins to confess, no pardon to implore; and when his highest pleasure was in obeying and glorifying his Maker, the Sabbath of the Lord was to be kept and sanctified. On the seventh day God rested from his work which he had created and made; and that men might ne-

ver forget their Creator, they are ordered to keep holy every seventh day. When this command is disobeyed, we are very apt to neglect and forget Him; we forget that He has created us, that He has breathed into us the breath of life; we forget that we have a living, a never-dying soul; that we must one day rest from our labours, our diversions, and our sins; and that our works will follow us. However low God's people have been sunk, in whatever country they have been driven, however manners have been changed, and ancient usages forgotten, at every restoration to God's favour and avowed protection, this command has been repeated, "remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy."

The breach of this commandment has always been followed by punishment. It is indeed the earliest mark of falling away from God. Not only do almost all who forfeit their lives to satisfy justice; and to atone in some measure, for

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the violation of the laws of their country, attribute their unhappy end primarily to the abuse of the Lord's day; but the immoralities which may be traced to a free intercourse with countries calling themselves Catholic, all result, it may be affirmed, from the breach of the fourth commandment. "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." The word holy here most unquestionably signifies, set apart to the service of God: whatever therefore tends to make us forgetful of the duties we owe to Him, assuredly contributes to the violation of the Sabbath day; and as this is consecrated to the service of the Almighty, to attend the public performance of his worship, is indispensable in the case of all whose health does not prevent them from complying with this acknowledged duty; and whatever excuses any one may make for non-attendance at public worship, few, or perhaps none, satisfy their own consciences, that they actually and duly "keep

holy the Sabbath day." It is not impossible that those who keep from Church may read their Bibles at home, or privately use the service of the Prayer-book; and these certainly are practices commendable in all who are actually and unavoidably prevented from worshipping the Lord in the great congregation. But they are, at best, but substitutes for the performance of that great command. They have this plain defect: they do not correspond with our Saviour's precept, "let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven." The object of all public worship is God's glory. Do not then those that neglect it, diminish His glory among men? do they do their utmost to attain that "holiness, without which" it is expressly declared "no man shall see the Lord?" Can any one expect God's blessing, who habitually and wantonly disobeys His positive

commands. They who continually refuse to keep holy the Sabbath day, we must be led to fear, have little reverence for any command of God. They pray not for His blessing; they fearlessly neglect his precepts, and disregard the salvation purchased and offered to them by His Son. How many are there who obey this commandment so far as to abstain from labour, and yet have never known what it is to keep the Sabbath day holy in their lives? And, indeed, so perverse is the mind and nature of man, that the neglect or observance of this commandment is generally excessive. The Sabbath is considered by too many as a day of recreation and amusement, as the most proper, at least the most convenient season for visiting and diversion; or is regarded so strictly, as to cause it to assume a degree of austerity and gloom. If we would keep the Sabbath day holy, we should avoid both these extremes. I think it a very proper

critterion, to ascertain to our own hearts, whether we keep holy the Sabbath day in a proper manner, to observe whether our minds are inclined to greet the Lord's day in the same manner as did the man after God's own heart. Do we, or can we say, at the dawn of every Sabbath day, "This is the day that the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it?" And we should consider what ought to be the ground and the manner of our rejoicing. We should rejoice that we have attained to a knowledge of God's law; that His will and His nature have been revealed to us; that we have leisure afforded us to study His holy word; that we cannot but by our faults be kept in ignorance of our duty; that we have been redeemed from sin and misery, by the sacrifice of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; that on the morning of this day of the week, the Sun of Righteousness arose from the dead. We should rejoice that the Lord's day



may be made, and is intended to be, a day of refreshment to our souls; that our bodily labours are not perpetual; that one day in seven is set apart for the improvement of our minds; that if we keep it holy, as the Almighty has commanded, we have the strongest reason to hope that our eternal state will be a continual Sabbath; that at last we shall rest from our labours; that our sole employment will be the celebration of God's honour; that His praise and glory will impart the purest, the most transporting delight to our souls. Should we not ask our own consciences, whether this heavenly avocation occupies any part of our time, and forms a subject of delight to us at present; or, whether we expect that our souls will be so changed when they depart from the body, that those things will give us pleasure in another world to which in this we have felt repugnance? Shall we be willing and happy worshippers of Him whose

laws we have neglected, whose praises are now irksome to us, whose honour has been disregarded, and whose power we have defied? God has said, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." If we keep it, or suffer it to pass, in any other manner, we must not expect that we shall ever keep it in heaven. If a state of holiness be distasteful to us now, how is it possible that we can relish, or be rendered happy by an unceasing Sabbath hereafter? Reason, as well as revelation, convinces us that God will assign to every man a condition most proper for him: he will receive that doom to which his mind and spirit is best adapted. Nothing impure, or corrupt, or wicked, can enter into heaven; no gloominess is there perceived, no formality, no listlessness in God's worship; all is spiritual, cordial, and refined. And they whose minds are thus attuned and assimilated now, will proportionally enjoy immortal bliss, will be

admitted to a nearer approach to God's throne hereafter.

Most proper, then, is it to ascertain the full import of the command, "Remember the Sabbath;" and how we, in these days, may most acceptably "keep it holy." When the command was delivered, the Sabbath was explained and determined to be a day of holy rest; worldly avocations were to cease, and the religious world was to be occupied solely in the service of its Maker. Every one may indeed be said to serve God, when he industriously and conscientiously performs the duties of the station in which the Almighty has placed him. But the practice of these duties is to give place to more immediate acts of worship on the Sabbath day. After a week of worldly toil, we should surely be thankful for a return of a day when rest is not only allowed but enjoined by Him in whose sight all men are equal; who watches over us; who preserves us

when we think not of Him; and who has told us, that religious services are most acceptable to Him on that day which is denominated His own. When we wake then from our slumbers, in the morning of the Lord's day, it is most expedient to consider, (the thought indeed naturally occurs to the mind of a pious man,) how can I best employ this day of the Lord most entirely to His honour, and most profitable to my own soul? For these, in truth, are the objects for which the Sabbath was instituted. A wish, and an effort to attend public worship, all allow to be indispensable to its due celebration. But before we enter into God's courts, it is very proper that we examine our own consciences, that we confess our unworthiness to approach Him, that we lament our sins, that we petition for grace to join heartily in public prayer, and that our supplications may be com-

passionately accepted. This method of propitiating the favour of the Almighty, has always been followed by God's faithful people, and is strongly recommended by the wisest of men. "Before thou prayest, prepare thyself, and be not as one that tempteth the Lord." Success in our petitions must assuredly depend, in a great measure, on the frame of mind in which we utter them. If we comply with the observance of the Sabbath merely for form's sake, the institution will do us, as individuals, comparatively little good. Though it is almost impossible to pay any attention to the Sabbath without, in some degree, being the better for it. All are brought to a knowledge of God, and of themselves, when the Lord's day is kept and hallowed. For though custom be seemingly obeyed, yet improvement will follow; and rare, indeed, is the instance of any man duly performing his duty on the

Sabbath, and keeping the commandment of the Lord, and of failing in the practice of moral obligation.

The great object then of every man, as I have already intimated, is to acquire a knowledge, and to follow the conviction, of what this duty consists. Is it not, my brethren, in a due preparation for eternity? And does not the thought, that among the lost souls there will be no Sabbath, no rest, no thanksgiving, no divine hope, no prayer, no acceptance, or attempt at devotion, alarm our souls? Does not this persuasion render the thought and apprehension of the place of punishment awful and terrible? And what would this world be, if no day of holy rest broke the course of sensual pleasure, or selfish avocations? Even now the practice of piety is interrupted by manifold temptations. But while the Sabbath is generally and publicly observed, even the vicious cannot but feel that their conduct on that day

is openly revolting to their Maker. The cessation from labour, and the stillness which is observed in commercial life, cannot but strike the breaker of the Sabbath with something like compunction. When the busy, the diligent, and the industrious pause from the acquisition and pursuit of worldly gain, in obedience to the will of God, in the hope of His blessing, and in reliance on His promise to prosper them, the idle and dissipated must feel, if they reflect at all, that vicious pleasure on that holy day is doubly criminal. The practice of wickedness on the Sabbath, is a pollution of what God has sanctified. And at his last hour, the violator of the Sabbath must expect no rest in the place whither he is involuntarily hastening. None of us know whether this may not be the last Sabbath of our lives. Let us then keep whatever days of the Lord we may be permitted to see, in strict accordance with His precepts; let them be spent

in acts of kindness to each other, in the improvement of our time, and the melioration of our souls; let the word of God be precious to us; let the sabbath morn dawn upon our devotions, and the day's decline bring with it the influence of practical piety, of hearty thanksgiving, and the anticipation of eternal peace. Holy is our calling, holy is the day, holy also should be our thoughts and affections. Let us never forget the necessity of holiness, and that it is impossible we can attain this indispensable requisite to salvation, unless we manifest our belief in God by an obedience to His commands; one of the most positive of which, is contained in these words, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy."



## SERMON XVI.

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT.  

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EXODUS xx. 12.

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

**THIS, St. Paul affirms, is the first commandment with promise ; by which assertion he must mean, that obedience to it is followed by reward in this life : for the second commandment holds out a sure expectation and hope, to the faithful servants of God, that He will pardon their sins, and shew mercy unto thousands that love Him and keep His**

commandments. The especial reward then of keeping the fifth commandment, may be considered as the natural consequence of the performance of moral duty. He that honours his parents, is not likely to fall into those sins that tend to shorten life, impair the constitution, and render the soul the seat of vile affections. Whatever may have been the vices which men have been tempted and persuaded to commit in early life; when they become fathers and heads of families, they must be bad indeed, if they do not wish that their children should be virtuously brought up and instructed. And in nothing should men be more circumspect, than in their conduct and language in the company of their children. The seeds of profligacy are often sown in the mind of the young, by the unguarded and loose conversation of those, whose opinions they are taught to value, whose example they naturally follow, and who, for whatever

they do and teach, incur fearful responsibility. " Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called the least in (i. e. shall not be admitted into) the kingdom of heaven. Of what punishment, then, shall he be thought worthy, who has taught his children to rebel against the commandments of God, and to neglect his great salvation? If I were preaching to a congregation of strangers, I should dwell longer on this point; but I gladly entertain the hope, that none of those, whom I am now addressing, can be charged with instilling wrong principles into their children. Still greater reason, then, have the young to " honour their father and their mother," which is a duty of more importance than it is generally esteemed to be. If it were not, indeed, essential to eternal happiness, the commandment would not have been found in the concise and sacred table.

So important is the observance of this command, that the first step to profligacy in the young is almost always attended with the breach of it. While they honour their father and their mother, vice can have but little hold on their hearts. The affections which lead us to honour and love our parents are irreconcilable with a life of sin; for the love we bear them originates in a sense of gratitude for their care of us; in acknowledging that to them we owe the benefit of instruction. In the assurance that our parents are anxious for their children's good, and that they sacrifice much worldly comfort and pleasure to raise, improve, and educate them; when this amiable and grateful sense of past and continual kindness abides in the mind, much fear need not be entertained that children will be undutiful. And on the heart that is callous to so urgent and natural an affection, precepts of piety and goodness can make but faint im-

pression. An unwillingness to honour those who, in age, in experience, or in station, are superior to us, has been considered in every civilized nation the mark of a stubborn mind. To possess and harbour which, nothing can be more inconsistent with the Christian profession. Who that has ever heard children of any age answering their parents with impertinence, or treating them with audacity, has not felt within himself that the child has indicated a bad disposition, that he has taken a base advantage of his parents' indulgence, and that "there is more hope of a fool than of him."

The precept to honour our parents undeniably includes the injunction that we should obey them. In early childhood this command is seldom questioned. The dependence of a child on his earthly parents is so entire as to prevent the practice of disobedience to their commands. And the more strictly a child has been bred, and the stronger and

longer the habit of obedience has been exerted, the more willingly is it yielded. Those parents are invariably the most honoured who have exercised the firmest and the most constant authority. Improper indulgence is always followed by disrespect and ingratitude. Kindness towards a child is natural in a parent. In these days it too often leads to undue familiarity. If a parent would be honoured, he must be esteemed and respected. And the frequent instances which occur of disobedience to parents almost always proceed from the habit which the manners now prevalent in society produce, of children thinking themselves their parents' equals. I fear this notion, if I may so call it, or at least this violation of the divine command, too often now swells into an opinion, in some children, that they are wiser than their parents. For education is now so general, and so much more is taught than formerly, that children in many

cases cannot avoid discovering, that in general knowledge, in many works of science, they are actually their parents' superiors. The usual effect of this discovery is, that they are led to despise them. And the excessive tenderness and vaunted liberality which so deeply mark the present method of education, cannot but tend to impair the authority of parents, and has already produced a doubt in juvenile minds of the right and authority in their parents to coerce them. The whole tenor of scripture, the express command of God, is adverse to an undue indulgence to children. Kindness, willingness to instruct and improve them, to render them amiable, thankful and happy; constant affection and parental love, are enjoined and encouraged in every page of the sacred volume. But compliance with children's foibles, or easiness of consent to their wayward humours, infallibly produce in the parent a fear of offending the child;

and in the child, disrespect towards its parent, frequent disobedience, and constant inattention.

The undue indulgence to children, of which I have thought it my duty to speak, tends directly to defeat the fulfilment of God's promise, that they shall live long in the land which the Lord their God has given them. For no one can have lived long in the world without observing that inheritances are almost always wasted by children who have experienced from their parents an excess of fondness; who have probably been termed favourites, and who on that account entertain for their parents no reverence, or, to come nearer the words of scripture, are disinclined to "honour" them. This failing, this improper return for benefits received, however lamentable, is natural to the human heart. For a compliance with the froward dispositions of children, and the continual practice of gratifying and pleasing them,



necessarily renders them selfish and discontented, and eventually tends to their mortification. Even in the most easy circumstances men must meet with so many disappointments in life, that unless they have been accustomed to have their wills sometimes thwarted when they were young, their middle life and old age will be passed in perpetual dissatisfaction. No sentiment, then, can be more improper than that of a child who is angry with his parents, because they withhold what he may think would be pleasing to him. It is an old remark, and a very true one, that the affection of parents towards their offspring is much stronger than that of a child towards those who have given it birth. And children may be sure that parents know better what is good for them than themselves, and are more solicitous for their happiness than their inexperienced minds can easily conceive, or they will ever know, till their own

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parental cares and anxieties have opened their eyes to the dangers and miseries that the world contains; over which fond parents too often throw a veil, for the purpose of concealing what might prematurely distress them. It is a trite observation, that misery in this world comes soon enough, and that pleasure should be caught at as long as men are capable of enjoying it. This sentiment is seldom denied, for it furnishes an excuse for complying with the world's foibles and temptations, and the denial of its truth and expedience incurs the charge of moroseness and austerity. But it is a notion not to be found in the word of God, except it be put into the mouth of a sinner for the purpose of exposing its impropriety.

It is not to be supposed that the young will be satisfied with the same course of life which is pleasing to the old. Among the latter, active diversion gives place to the enjoyment of quiet,

and the perception of ease. Nor can it be expected that the gaieties of the world will be slighted by any, who have not experienced their vanity. But inclination for pleasure never becomes more criminal than when it induces children to consider their parents harsh and severe, when they would check its constant indulgence or intemperate pursuit by advice or authority. Scarcely an old man can be found who does not say, "If my life were to be gone over again, it should be passed in another manner." All admit that the knowledge acquired by experience has been dearly bought. More confess they have become wise by a consciousness of error, than by following the dictates of prompt sagacity. But if children were to honour their parents' precepts, and willingly obey them, they would have the advantage of experience without the mortification with which it is impregnated. This is a consideration, it is true, not very likely

to occur to the young. It is much more natural, as well as more creditable to their dispositions, to render obedience to their parents from a principle of affection and gratitude. No favour we can receive from others can be commensurate with the benefits we have received from our parents. And though many be unwilling to allow this during their lives, yet at the hour of their parents' death, a feeling of regret and a return of alienated affection recurs, which makes their departure doubly painful. Who can look at his parent's coffin, and not be induced to exclaim, "There lie the remains of the being to whom I owe my birth; who watched over my infancy, who supported me in youth; under whose care I thrived; at whose expense I was nursed and educated!" No child can count the hours which his parents have passed in watchfulness, in anxiety for his welfare, in care for his future good, and in prayer for his everlasting felicity.

Every principle of morality, every feeling of grateful love, conspire to induce a child to render to his parents honour, and obedience, and affection. And when we add to this the example of Him whose conduct all ought to imitate, neglect of the fifth commandment must appear most highly culpable. Our blessed Saviour, though He had left the glory of God Almighty, which He had with His heavenly Father before the world was ; though His condescension in taking our nature upon Him was infinite and passing man's comprehension, yet honoured His earthly, His reputed parents. The scripture tells us, "He was subject unto them." He obeyed them in childhood. In death He commended his mother to His beloved disciple on the cross. The mild precepts of His voice were consonant with the commands which His Almighty Father had before declared in thunder. His conduct in life presents a pattern which

all ought to imitate; which, if they do, will infallibly lead to the same result. They will "increase in wisdom," in righteousness, "and in favour with God and man."

And let us remember, that the promise of long life in the earthly Canaan was typical of the heavenly inheritance, which is eternal, and which fadeth not away. That it is absurd to pretend to follow Christ, and not to do the things which He says. That if we disobey his commands, or refuse to profit by His example, He will say to us, as He did to the Jews of old, "I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me." Let us continually remember that our blessed Saviour took upon Him our flesh, was obedient to the law, and suffered death upon the cross, that all mankind should follow the example of His great humility. And let us heartily and frequently beseech our heavenly Father to grant, that we may

both follow the example of His patience, and also be made partakers of His resurrection, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.

SERMON XVII.

THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT.

PREACHED ON PALM SUNDAY.

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EXODUS XX. 13.

Thou shalt not kill.

THERE are some crimes to which we feel a natural repugnance : our minds seem to revolt at the commission of them. Against these, therefore, it might be thought, no caution need be given, nor any punishment denounced. A very little consideration, however, will serve to convince us, that there is no crime which our debased nature may not be brought willingly to commit ; or



stain by which the mind of man has not been polluted. Who is he, who would not shudder when murder should be proposed to him? and yet this crime did the first man, that was born of a woman, perpetrate. To him who first inherited the feelings of humanity, was the Most Merciful induced to say, "thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground." To account for this violation of every good principle, and of natural affection, we must trace the course of crime which flowed in the murderer's breast; by which method, indeed, it will not be difficult to ascertain the motive of any crime whatever. It would be too much to assert that the incentives to each particular offence are always the same; but it may be affirmed, that they all proceed from a want, or perversion, of religious principle. There are gradations even in the crime of murder: some murders are the effect of sudden, or violent passion; others have been for years preme-

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ditated. None, however, admit of excuse; all are comprised in the penal declaration of Almighty God, "whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." The passion which first instigated Cain to the murder of his brother unquestionably was envy: this produced dislike and hatred, and a train of vile affections, which never fail to creep into the heart of every man, who encourages sentiments and feelings of ill-will to his neighbour. If these bad passions were not indulged and fostered, we should not hear so often of the untimely and savage deaths of our countrymen. We live not now in a time of barbarism; we can say of no man, as was predicted of Ishmael, that his hand is against every man, and every man's hand against him.

It is as much our interest, as it ought to be our inclination, to live in quietness, peace, and mutual love with all mankind. The blessings of this world are indeed

only enjoyed rationally and uninterrupted by those who are anxious to preserve peace and good-will with their neighbours. In this sense it is, that our Saviour's words are to be understood; "blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth." But no peace can subsist among any, who willingly and wantonly employ themselves in disturbing their neighbours' comfort, and in depriving them of what may afford them quiet, or safety, or protection. We should therefore avoid every source of altercation. "The beginning of strife," saith the wise man, "is as when one letteth out water:" when the flood-gates of anger are opened, no one can tell how far the stream may flow, or whither its force may carry him. Unless they be checked by the voice or word of God, human passions may be said to be irresistible: and perhaps there never was a murderer executed, who, a few years before, would not have thought it

almost impossible that he should commit the crime. Nothing therefore is more proper, than to encourage in our minds a dread of harbouring any passion that may lead us to violate one of the commands of God. 'There are some feelings which are natural to us, and of which we must bear the burden during the course of our lives. Many of these it is our duty to resist and keep under; but if any wish of determined anger or revenge be perceptible, we must do more than stifle it, we must eradicate it from our minds.

We may not perhaps have duly considered why murder is so offensive to Almighty God. To render this the more manifest we may reflect, that it is a crime, to the perpetration of which the great enemy of mankind seems most desirous to seduce us. It brings us immediately into the class of those accursed spirits of which he is the head: our blessed Lord calls him "a murderer

from the beginning ;” he commenced his reign on earth by the murder of the human soul. The first lie that was uttered, proceeded from his wily lips ; “ thou shalt not surely die.” By his persuasion was the primeval offence committed, which brought on death and sin, and all our woe ; and the circumstance that renders murder most heinous and awful is, that the premature death of the body frequently involves also the death of the soul. Not only does the murderer deprive his victim of all the blessings of this life ; not only does he cut him off from the endearments of social life, the hopes of his parents, the love of his wife, and affection of his children ; not only does he deprive him of the comforts which he might have expected from his industrious exertions, and the placid retirement which he might have anticipated in old age ; but he sends him to his great account with all his imperfections on his head.

These consequences of a sudden and violent death are so manifest, that it is apparent the murderer is reckless of the effects of his own act. If, indeed, he be not so entirely given up to vile affections as to exult, that he has sent his victim unprepared to his eternal doom. To be cut off from the land of the living, to be deprived of the least glimmering of hope, is a state of such unspeakable wretchedness as no culprit, however heinous may have been his crimes, is deemed to merit. All are allowed the consolation of religion previous to their suffering the stroke of justice; all are invited to look up to Jesus to save them from eternal misery, and to redeem them from their sins; but the murderer's wrath is more cruel. As was the sufferer's soul when he received the deadly blow, so must it appear before the judgment. No reparation can be offered for past offences, no repentance can be attempted, no prayer can

be made. When the soul's earthly tabernacle is destroyed, no place of rest can be found, but that station among the departed spirits, for which its virtues or its vices have rendered it fit, and to which, by equal and infinite justice, it shall be assigned.

We are induced to believe, that this crime is committed at the instigation of the malicious and continual persecutor of the human race, not only from the intimations of holy writ, and the language in which our forefathers have framed the indictments against this offence in our criminal courts of justice; but by the knowledge, that murderers are frequently not satisfied with the simple extinction of life : deliberate and wanton cruelty, and insulting triumph, frequently are added to the crime of murder. This remark will need no confirmation by those who read the service of the church for the present week.\*

\* Passion Week.

The most heinous murder that was ever committed, was perpetrated by the mock trial and cruel death of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. In the narration of this event, are displayed the passions which actuate the breast of the deliberate murderer. The envy of the Pharisees, the malice of unbelievers, the treachery of Judas, and the want of principle in the Roman governor, are often imitated in the present day; and though they may not hurry us on so far as to shed innocent blood, yet they are vices against which it well befits us to be continually on our guard, since all mankind partake of one common nature, and are influenced by the same temptations. And none of us can tell, had we lived under the government of Pilate, to which side we might have inclined; whether we should have fled with the scattered disciples of our Lord, or joined with the cry of those who feared that "the Romans would come and take away their place



and nation." No doubt we all hope we should have been faithful to the Lord. But which of His disciples was bold and resolute in His defence? Are we not told that they all forsook Him? And who is he that never forsakes Him now? Who unerringly walks in his Saviour's path? Who never neglects His precepts, nor disobeys his commands? There is none that does this. And why then may we not fear that He will forsake us; that He will abandon us to the natural course of sin, and leave us a prey to Satan's suggestions? Are we aware that when we commit sin we are murdering our own souls? "Fear not him," saith the Lord, "who, when he has killed the body, hath no more that he can do; but rather fear Him who hath power to cast both body and soul into hell." We know that our Almighty Father is unwilling that any should perish; but we know also, that His justice is infinite. Let us fear lest our

crimes call for judgment; lest the death of our souls be imputed to ourselves. For assuredly, if they be lost, it is by our own folly and perverseness. Every thing that unspeakable mercy can devise, or compassionate and condescending love can accomplish, has been done to save the human soul. When precept was of no avail, when admonition was neglected; when the voice of prophets and of angels was unheard, and miracles were disregarded, then said the Saviour of mankind, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God!" Though death be the most terrible object of dread, though it be rightly termed the king of terrors, yet was our immaculate Redeemer content to die in the sinner's place. And He, that in mercy had declared, "Thou shalt not kill," willingly underwent the most cruel of all deaths. What then do they deserve who kill the soul, to save and redeem which Christ died? What will be our distress, our agony and confusion,

when, at the last great day, we shall find that we have murdered our own souls, that we have died in trespasses and sins? Our judge has been stretched on the cross for us, my brethren; can we say that we have never crucified Him afresh, and put Him to an open shame? If our consciences acquit us of this guilt, have we never transgressed the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill?" No. So true is the aphorism of St. James, "He that is guilty of one point is guilty of all;" that every one who deliberately and willingly transgresses the least of God's commandments, is guilty of the body and blood of Christ our Saviour. How many abstain from the reception of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, through fear of incurring this guilt? And yet how few abstain from sin, under a more rational conviction? I am convinced, that there is no one who will read every day of this week the gospel appointed for it in the prayer book, but

will feel his soul awakened to a dread of sin. Let me persuade you, my brethren, to adopt this course. There are few among us whose time and avocations do not furnish an excuse, and I hope it may be allowed hereafter, for not attending daily to the solemn service of this week in the church; but no one's time is so occupied, no one is, or ought to be, so cumbered about the things of this world, as not to have leisure, either at night or morning, to peruse the sad history of our Redeemer's murder. It is written in so plain and strong a style, that no one can be ignorant of the cause, why the Prince of Life was killed; He died that we might live;—His death and sufferings formed the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world; of all who by faith and repentance come unto Him. Can any time be more proper to begin the work of faith and penitence in the soul, than when the death of our Saviour is publicly commemorated? Then are we es-

pecially called to eradicate all bad passions from our minds, to suppress the pride of our hearts, to follow most strictly a course of piety and devotion. Yearly have we commemorated the passion of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; repeatedly have we confessed our sins. May we not say, we have as often returned to them? How long do we suppose that the Almighty will wait to be gracious to us? How often with impunity shall we transgress his commandments? Let us not neglect salvation while it is offered to us. Those who called themselves the Lord's people, in other times, "killed" the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, in obedience to their own wicked passions, and through mistaken notions of religion. Let not us, my brethren, be "murderers like unto them:" but let us remember, that "as the Son of God did vouchsafe to yield up His soul, by death upon the cross, for our salvation," so it is our duty to receive

the communion in remembrance of the sacrifice of His death, as He himself has commanded. What day can be more proper for this solemn service, than the anniversary of our Lord's crucifixion? I beseech you, my brethren, to ponder on this important subject in your minds; which if it be rightly considered, I trust I shall see on Friday next some at the altar who have never yet partaken of that bread of life which is there distributed. No excuse can palliate the continual neglect of God's express command. Those who communicate continually are far from thinking themselves better, or more pious than their neighbours. For we all confess that we are unworthy, through our manifold sins, to offer unto God any sacrifice; we beseech Him to accept our bounden duty and service, not weighing our merits, but pardoning our offences, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**SERMON XVIII.**

**THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT.**

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**EXODUS xx. 14.**

**Thou shalt not commit adultery.**

As states and individuals advance in refinement, the names of certain sins seem unbecoming and improper, while the crimes exist, and, perhaps, are more frequently perpetrated. When vice is exposed, her visage is hideous; her features are shocking even to those who, when she is decently veiled, are easily led away by her seductions. Still it indicates a delicacy of mind to abstain from

naming gross offences ; and were we not compelled to confess the frequency of its occurrence by the perusal of the public journals, we should be induced to hope that the crime, against which we are cautioned in the seventh commandment, was seldom perpetrated.

The consequences of the commission of this offence are so fatal to that purity of mind which Christ inculcates, and are so injurious to the peace of society, that it must be considered as a crime of no common magnitude. In most nations the punishment awarded to it has been death. And it is not a little extraordinary, that in our own land the penalties have been remitted by which our forefathers checked it, and which have been appointed by the law of God.

To those, indeed, who consider marriage merely as a civil contract, the sin of adultery must appear comparatively slight. But the church to which we belong, has taught us to believe it a divine



ordinance, a "holy state, instituted by God in the time of man's innocency," and perpetuated for wise and benevolent purposes. Whatever, therefore, tends to annul or vitiate the bond by which God has joined together a married couple, must be highly offensive in His sight. In a moral point of view, no offence is fraught with more disastrous consequences. It irreparably severs the ties of affection between those who have sworn to love each other, and be faithful to each other "unto their lives' end;" it destroys all domestic comfort; it prevents children from honouring their parents, and deprives them of their natural, and frequently of their only, protectors; it casts a stain on their names, and makes them careless of reputation, of social duties, and of moral worth; it renders the injured party suspicious of all mankind, and produces evils and calamities, of which they, who have not plunged headlong into vice, have but

little conception. But I know not why divines should ever have recourse to arguments founded on morality, when they have a much purer source, from which may be derived a knowledge of the origin, as well as the sure consequences of crime, and which, if suffered to have a due and natural effect upon the mind, will render even the thought of sin distasteful.

The crime of adultery is followed by a long train of guilt. Perjury, deceit, a carnal mind, disregard of the duties we owe to our families and our children, and presumptuous neglect of the promises and threatenings of Almighty God, are among, but do not sum up, the sins which are committed by the transgressors of this commandment;—I mean those in the married state. But they who commit this crime before they enter into that “holy state,” are guilty likewise, and are audacious violators of the divine law. They participate in the

guilt prohibited in the text, and are amenable to future punishment.

None, on whose mind rests a reverence for the Almighty, will suffer a desire to transgress His holy law to remain long in the heart. Our Lord has said, "Those whom God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." Whoever, therefore, sows dissension between a married pair, violates one of the earliest and most important commands of the Almighty. And when disunion is brought about by the commission of a crime, which, independent of its destructive effects on marriage happiness, is so highly offensive in the sight of God, the guilt incurred is, I was about to say, unpardonable. This, however, can be said of no sin, perhaps, in our days. All human guilt may be blotted out by the blood of our Redeemer. But that the transgression of the seventh commandment will be thus erased, is very improbable; for the sin is seldom repented of

with sincerity. Though there may be a discontinuance of criminal practices, yet this cessation from guilt may be produced by causes in which penitence has little share. Disgust naturally succeeds debauchery, and the passion of love, as the world calls it, is never of long continuance towards an object where esteem does not support affection.

Besides, in every case in which adultery is practised, there must be an abandonment of all religious principle. Before its perpetration, divine grace must have been withdrawn from the soul; for it is a crime which is generally long premeditated; it is not one of casual commission, nor of sudden temptation, but of continued, purposed, and repeated guilt. The sinner is well aware of the consequences: he is studious in disobedience to the divine command; he delights in wickedly accomplishing his neighbour's wrong; he deliberately furthers the wishes and designs of the great

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enemy of mankind, and is rejoiced at the success of sinful temptation.

It may seem harsh to charge any one, who is not a professed infidel, with an abandonment of all religious principle; yet this, as I have asserted, seems to be the condition of the violators of the seventh commandment. For as the breach of it cannot be committed at once, it cannot be called a crime of one unguarded moment, but is undoubtedly brought about by a train of thought directly opposite to that which it should be the Christian's aim to acquire. We are directed to flee from "fleshly lusts," for they "war against the soul." And the violation of the seventh commandment can never be positively perpetrated, until the sinner's mind be defiled by the indulgence of guilty passions; until he have so frequently and fatally listened to the tempter, as to be persuaded that the sin is excusable. Our blessed Saviour's words cannot be too deeply im-

printed on the mind : “ Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.” This declaration plainly forbids all libidinous dispositions ; and should operate as a check upon our thoughts and our conversation. The scripture says, that sinners “ corrupt each other.” And it needs no very close observation of mankind to discover, that the general prevalence of sin is occasioned by the looseness of common conversation. It has been remarked, that filthiness of discourse puts all men upon a level ; and this has sometimes furnished an excuse for the practice of it. Indeed, it not only sets men on a level with each other, but also with the brutes that perish. It prepares the mind for the commission of sin ; and seems, in some sort, to justify the indulgence of evil thoughts, by the knowledge it conveys, that others indulge them. Nothing, therefore, is more requisite to a

pious life, and to a well grounded hope of a happy immortality, than caution in respect to our thoughts and conversation. "Make me a clean heart, O Lord, and renew a right spirit within me!" is the constant wish of a pious soul. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, and every species of wickedness. And however improbable it may seem to any one now, that he should be induced to violate the seventh commandment, yet no one can tell to what degree of guilt evil thoughts may lead him. The path of vice is slippery, and the way so naturally and imperceptibly alluring, that it is impossible for any one who walks in it to say, So far will I go and no further. Nor can we conceive a more desperate condition, than that of a sinner who is conscious that he has broken the commandments of God, and yet finds himself impelled by his lusts to continue in his evil courses. And yet this is the state of all who obey their

own passions. Their guilty appetites are their masters. The force of habit is invincible ; it is not to be overcome by human ability ; and even when old age overtakes the sinner, and bodily infirmities render him incapable of practising acts of debauchery, yet his mind is unchanged ; he is still pleased with guilty recollections. We may, indeed, establish a sure criterion, whether or not we sincerely repent of our sins, when we ascertain or remark, whether their remembrance affords us a secret pleasure, or fills us with remorse and compunction. It is the nature of impure desires to take entire possession of the mind ; and even when we may apparently lead a life of decorum, with our hearts we may commit adultery.

The beginning of sin, as well as of strife, is, "as one letteth out water." And as all sin is generated in the heart, great circumspection is necessary, lest impure desires poison the source and fountain



of our thoughts ; for if they do, during some part of our lives, the waters of bitterness will flow. It may be justly said of a debauched character, that "the latter end is worse than the beginning." At first the Spirit of grace has only to contend with natural affections, which, if directed aright, may lead to virtuous conduct ; and be the means of individual happiness, and of benefiting society. But when the natural corruption of man's heart has been strengthened and confirmed by vicious indulgence ; when the mind has been depraved by a course and habit of sin ; when good manners have been corrupted by evil communications, the ideas of "man's heart are evil continually." He feels an increasing repugnance to religious exercises, to serious thoughts, and virtuous conversation. The war which sinful lusts wage against the soul, terminates in *their* victory ; and the sinner's life is passed in slavish subjection to the passions

which represent and are excited by those demons, amidst whom it is the impenitent sinner's fate to live eternally.

If, therefore, the terrors of the Lord have any effect on the sinner's mind; if we would render ourselves meet partakers of the saints in light; if we would relish and be fit for the pure joys of another life, we must avoid all the allurements that lead to the sins which by the seventh commandment are prohibited.

The commands of God are short and comprehensive; they convey to us His will, and prohibit every approach to the sin which is expressly interdicted. This must have been known by every virtuous observer of the law under the old dispensation; but the precepts of the New Testament render this truth indisputable. It will not avail us at the last day to plead, that the appetites which led us into sin were natural; it is, and ought to be, the principal object of a true disciple of Jesus Christ, to subdue his

naturally corrupt affections. The condition of our reception into Christ's fold is, that we "renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil." Whatever, therefore, gratifies our importunate desires after these, or contributes in any way to bring us under their influence, is decidedly sinful; and the more congenial to our hearts any crime may be, which allures our senses, the greater is the necessity for guarding against its insidious approaches. Few of us prize, as we ought, the rewards which are promised to a life of chastity; nor are many aware of the necessity of at all times preserving purity of heart. The steps, which lead from this world to the caverns of perdition, are but few. An inspired apostle describes the human soul as at first earthly, then sensual, and immediately after, devilish. How incumbent then is it on all to suppress and extirpate all unruly affections? How watchful ought we to be over our thoughts? How cir-

cumspect in our conduct? How guarded in our conversation? It is not sufficient that we abstain from gross offences; we must cleanse our hearts, and endeavour in this life to attain that purity which will render us fit for the company of angels, and to acquire that "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." If we were at this moment to set about the work of repentance, we should find that the sins of impurity would principally swell the catalogue of our crimes. They are those, then, which will chiefly add to our dread account at the day of judgment; they are those which must be first eradicated; they are those against which it behoves us most frequently to pray. I trust we are all of us in the habit of confessing our sins before God; of lifting up our souls to Him unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid; that we continually and earnestly beseech Him

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to cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of His Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love Him, and worthily magnify His holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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## SERMON XIX.

## THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT.

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EXODUS xx. 15.

Thou shalt not steal.

WITHOUT a due consideration of this commandment, we are apt to imagine that it forbids only the single crime of theft: the act of taking from another what belongs to him alone, and to which no other person has a right or claim. This is indeed the strict and positive object of this law; but the penal declaration branches out into numerous prohibitions. And if the guilt it con-

demns be not so flagrant, and it should not seem so audaciously criminal in the sight of God as murder, or blasphemy, or other crimes, at the perpetration of which human nature shudders, and which seem at once to sever the ties which bind man to his Creator, and to cast off all hope of pardon; yet that theft is highly sinful, is not only apparent by the disgrace and punishment which men have in all ages and countries affixed to it, but also by the denunciations of Almighty God. That taking what does not belong to us is a crime, the dread and shame of which is early implanted in our nature, may be learnt from the observation that children acquire a knowledge of this vice, and the virtuous a detestation of it, long before they can form any ideas of property, or of the injury which society sustains by the practice of dishonesty. No opprobrium is more vile or more lasting than the appellation and charac-

ter of a thief. It gives us an idea of meanness, from which many other crimes are exempt. And there is no reason more apparent, why the disgrace of this is more feared, than that he, who is known to have deserved it, is thought capable of perpetrating almost every other species of crime. It is the second step downwards to the abyss of infamy. Lying is the first. And those parents who do not check effectually the practice of falsehood in their children, will very soon discover in them a propensity to theft. It is pleasing to remark how soon those of generous dispositions scorn both these vices, and how sensibly a candid acknowledgment of faults elevates the mind. We can none of us live without fault, and the confession of one transgression, instead of bringing on another, presents the strongest obstacle to a course of iniquity. The scripture says, let him that stole steal no more. And who, that has confessed his sin,



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and feels the stings of conscience for the commission of it, will give poignancy to those thorns by a repetition of his guilt?

If the Almighty had not said, "Thou shalt not steal," some men would be inclined to suppose, that the laws which have been enacted for the security of property were of human origin; that the rich and powerful had leagued together to make provision for preserving what they had fortunately inherited, or industriously heaped up. But to take what is not our own is expressly forbidden by God. And this prohibition includes not only acts of open violence and secret purloining, but also every species of fraud, by which our neighbour is deceived, his property diminished, or his welfare withstood. It matters not by what means we take another's goods, or of what they consist. The commandment, "thou shalt not steal," ought to be remembered in all our transactions in the world. The

practice of imposition is as much a sin; and as certainly violates this command of God, as the more flagrant acts by which men incur the punishment of theft. The laws of man indeed can only take hold of tangible offences. But "the Lord seeth not as man seeth." And as He can trace the course of crime within us, all secret practices and wishes to overreach another will be exposed and punished in the last day.

The Lord hath said, "Thou shalt not steal." And men's consciences are the monitors to instruct them how this great rule is to be applied. In young and virtuous minds the influence of this innate principle is very powerful; and on the first accusation of improbity, the countenance and the tongue betray the fearful and unhappy consciousness of guilt. This natural fear of incurring God's wrath and the world's shame, cannot be too long cherished and continued. It forms the strongest barrier against

vice. It is the sure indication of some remaining innocence and of ingenuousness of heart. But this virtuous feeling is destroyed by repeated attempts of dishonesty. There is no character more likely to perish miserably and for ever, than that of an early and successful thief. He that has discovered that the laws of God may be disobeyed without the breach of them being followed by immediate punishment, will be induced to proceed from one act of dishonesty to another. This indeed is generally confessed by all who die by the hands of the executioner. It was the impunity which attended their first offences that rendered them callous to the voice of conscience, and encouraged them in their guilty progress. Nothing, therefore, is more expedient and ultimately more compassionate and charitable, than to punish effectually the early propensity to stealth. It is too much the practice of the present day to attempt to reason

criminals out of the course of iniquity ; but it will and has been found, that he that has paid no attention to the awful denunciations of God, will not heed the arguments of man. On him who has wickedly and presumptuously transgressed the laws which were promulgated in thunder, the mere threatenings of the human tongue will scarcely make any impression. And to what but to the license that is allowed, and the laxity with which authority is exercised towards young offenders at present, can be owing the crowded state of our jails, unprecedented in any former generation. Could such melancholy instances of early depravity be witnessed, if the commands of the Almighty were obeyed, if scriptural precepts were regarded, if the experience and practice of our forefathers were allowed to have any effect ?

But the most effectual and proper method of preventing the young from acquiring a habit of dishonesty, is to

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instil into their minds a reverence for all the commandments of God, an earnest desire to keep His laws, and to venerate those places and ordinances where His honour dwells, which our forefathers held sacred, but which now seem falling into neglect. Where there is no reverence paid to God's house, there will be little regard to the property of man. And there is no mark of depravity more certain than the evidence, that respect to the King eternal and invisible is foreign to the heart. Profligacy, of whatever kind it be, always brings on general corruption of manners. It is indeed too natural to man, but is to be checked and prevented by early habits of industry, and by inculcating on the mind the necessity of every man's doing something for the general good of society, and of the propriety of the scriptural maxim, "If a man will not work, neither let him eat." So indispensable were habits of industry considered among the

Jews, who were the only people to whom God's will was known, that men of the highest rank and the largest property had some trade or profession taught them. St. Paul was a tent-maker. And it was a common saying in those days, that he who does not bring up his child to some employment "teaches him to be a thief." Our blessed Lord himself was bred a carpenter, and tradition reports that His time was chiefly employed in making yokes and ploughs; whence it is supposed that so many of His similitudes and parables are drawn from these implements, and whence also was prompted the allusion, that His "yoke is easy and His burden is light."

His yoke consists in the practice of our duty to God and man. The knowledge of which is gained by the perusal of God's word, by attendance on his worship, by spending that day on which worldly labour is suspended, in promoting our spiritual welfare, in gladly at-

tending His service, and in inducing others to reverence His holy name. He that does his duty to God is rarely deficient in the performance of it to man. And so linked are all virtues to each other, that honest industry prompts and enables men to be charitable and kind. Who that works all day will be induced to plunder at night? Will he not retire to repose, thanking the Lord that He has given him strength and ability to labour, that He has rendered him useful to his fellow-creatures, and given him confidence and respect towards himself? There is no man more respectable than he who eats the bread of honest industry: there is none that more truly enjoys himself in this world, or whom the Almighty has promised more richly to reward in the next. An abhorrence of violating any of the commandments of God renders every one who harbours the holy fear, industrious and devout. It generates also that sacred love to God

which the scripture tells us is indispensable in working out our salvation. That we are enabled to get our daily bread is God's blessing. He bestows the ability as well as blesses and rewards our diligence. That we may not be tempted to steal, we are taught to labour, to work with our hands, not only to keep us above want ourselves, but also, according to the admonitions of the apostle and the suggestion of an honest and kind heart, "we may have to give to him that needeth." That we are enabled to relieve another's want by the fruit of our own exertions, inexpressibly enhances the pleasure which is derived from the distribution and right application of charity. Our hearts are lifted up to the Giver of all good. We thank Him that through His bountiful goodness we have had no temptation to steal: that no charge of fraud and dishonesty will be laid against us at the last day. What indeed has that man to fear hereafter



who passes his life in habits of assiduous exertion ; who eats his daily bread in the gladness of thanksgiving and in simplicity of heart ; who, before he commences his daily task, blesses God for having brought him in safety to the beginning of the day, and prays that during the course of it he may fall into no sin nor run into any kind of danger ; who, when he retires to his repose, prays again to his heavenly Father that he may pass his time in rest and quietness, and that He would defend him from the perils and dangers of the night ? To him the commandment, " Thou shalt not steal," appears not as a penal statute, but as a defence from harm and violence. He remembers the Lord's promise to the pious, " Ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely ; and I will give peace in the land, and none shall make you afraid."

Let us, then, my brethren, fear nothing but that which would induce us to dis-

obey God's commandments. Let us walk honestly in the faith and fear of God, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof.

## SERMON XX.

## THE NINTH COMMANDMENT.

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EXODUS xx. 16.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

NOT any of the other commandments require to be more vigilantly kept than that which I have just recited : nor does the breach of any produce more numerous evils, or more general injury in society. There is no mischief against the effects of which it is more difficult to guard, than that of a slanderous, a false, or a vindictive tongue.

And I think I am warranted in the

assertion, that none of God's commandments require to be more vigilantly kept, by the certainty that the temptations to violate it are not only strong but perpetual. No age is exempted from their influence; no circumspection can entirely guard us from their effects: and there are none which meet with more encouragement from the world, pregnant as it is with malice, self-sufficiency, and secret as well as presumptuous sin. The understanding of few, I apprehend, is so confined as to limit the prohibition in the text to the crime of bearing false-witness in a court of justice, or during examination before a magistrate. This offence is punishable by human laws: and though all perjury is a direct and presumptuous denial of God's omniscience, and of his power to punish us, yet it may be said to be criminal according to its effects. It may form a case of inquiry among casuists, whether a man sins so much when he takes a false oath

to deprive his neighbour of a trifling possession, as when his false witness affects his neighbour's life. But the violation of God's commandment is the same. What allowance may be made for sinners at the day of judgment, we can never know, till we implore the Judge's clemency ourselves. When men declare that they wish God may help them as they speak the truth, at the time they are uttering a falsehood, they dare God's power to punish them; they call on themselves the wrath of the Most High. The consequences of this crime must be dreadful: if it be not visited by the awful effects of God's wrath here, it must be lamented, though it cannot be atoned for, by an existence of eternal remorse and shame. Nothing can make atonement for sin but the merits of our blessed Redeemer Jesus Christ; and when the Scripture speaks of making restitution, this is mentioned to prove, that no penitence can avail

without it, because it affords the only evidence that repentance is sincere. We cannot truly repent of sin, and yet keep possession of what sin has given us: nor can we repent of the sins of our conversation, unless we exert our utmost endeavours to render ineffectual, and completely wipe away the effects and injuries which have followed, and may follow, the slanders and false witness that have originated and been circulated by a scandalous tongue. None can deny, that this commandment prohibits every expression which may tend to our neighbour's disadvantage. We bear false witness against him as completely, when we promote ill-natured reports that may hurt his reputation, as if untrue testimony were solemnly asseverated: perhaps the injury may be greater, for an innocent man may find means of repelling an open attack upon his character; but who can guard against the sly and insidious inuendos

of a secret and a cautious foe? If we give any expression of assent to reports injurious to our neighbour's character, which we do not know or believe to be true, we bear false witness against him. The gospel teaches us to be careful of the fame of others: for how can any one be said to love his neighbour as himself, if he delight to propagate ill-natured stories against him? How can he be said to do unto others, as he would they should do unto him, unless he endeavour to resist and crush any groundless prejudice, or false accusation against him. Our characters ought to be dearer to us than our lives: existence in this world becomes miserable when the finger of scorn may with justice be lifted up against us. We should be tender of our good name: we are taught to let our light so shine before men, that they may see our good works and glorify our Father which is in heaven. No good man ever despised the opinion of the world;

very ignorant must he be of his duty to God and his neighbour, who says, "I care not what may be said against me."

We are taught indeed to soar above the false prejudices and the vain glories of the world, but it is in pursuit of higher objects. It is to cheer us in the path of duty that our Saviour says, "blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you *falsely*, for my sake." If we suffer under an unjust accusation, we derive courage from our innocence; whenever evil is said against us *falsely*, we shall find comfort from on high, if we seek it from thence; if we pour out our souls, and lay our griefs before the Lord, He will help us in distress, particularly if we encounter evil for his sake. Nothing is more lamentable, than that Christians whose opinions on religious subjects do not exactly coincide, should speak evil of each other. Their prepossessions, and their ignorance of each



other's real sentiments, too frequently lead them to bear false witness against their neighbours; and we should be careful, lest we attribute to our neighbour motives to which he may be a stranger, or accuse him of prejudices from which he may be free: more especially we should not harbour ill-will against our neighbour on account of religious differences, or speak of him with disrespect. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh; and they that entertain latent rancour against their brethren, can scarcely refrain from betraying their dislike by their tongues. Any outward expression of animosity, or even if it be secret and restrained, is a violation of that charity which is the greatest of Christian virtues, which is called in Scripture the "very bond of perfectness;" and which in the prayers of our church is so highly recommended. We are instructed to speak evil of no man; which rule if we

follow, it will be almost impossible to violate the ninth commandment. We are not likely to bear false-witness against our neighbour when we say nothing of him but that which is good. The virtue of never lending ourselves to propagate stories, which may injure our neighbour's reputation, is more precious than many are aware of, and more uncommon than many will allow. There seems to be a secret impulse in the human heart, of detracting from our neighbour's good name. Whether this proceed from envy, or a consciousness that we ourselves do not deserve commendation, or from whatever the wish may spring, the existence of it is undeniable, and its effects are formidable and widely spread. It has been said that character is never stationary; that we are always rising in the world's esteem, or sinking as the length of our lives increase; but the truth of this affirmation is very questionable; for we are constantly exposed to

the noxious effects of the breath of calumny. A good name is like a flower which may be blighted by a passing vapour, and which, when planted in ungenial soil, will soon wither and be seen to droop. Those out of whose mouths this noxious vapour comes, have much to answer for; they must expect at last to be swept away by the breath of God's displeasure, as were the pestilential locusts of Egypt into the Red Sea.

It is not so much, however, of the fate of the slanderer of which I wish to speak, as of the example which has been set us in the conversation and conduct of our blessed Saviour, in whose heart there could exist no envy; and continually did there proceed truth, and love, and charity from His tongue. He mixed in society; He was, indeed, reproached by His enemies with too free a communication with the world; yet no one could complain of any offensive language, or convict Him of the least

shadow of sin. His precepts expressly prohibit any thing which may produce discord in the world. We are commanded to think others better than ourselves; to be willing to sacrifice worldly pre-eminence for the sake of Christian peace.

There is, however, one caution necessary even to those who endeavour to live peaceably as Christians. We must adhere to God's command closely; we must not bear false witness in any way. When our testimony is required, our evidence, our language, and our manner must be strictly conformable to truth. We do positive injury to our neighbours, when we give any one a character or commendation which we know he does not deserve, and as widely depart from the course of justice, as when our testimony tends to individual hurt; in fact, we must err whenever we infringe the boundaries of truth. It is certainly grievous to give evidence to that which

we know will produce severe punishment, but we ought to consider, that the severity is not ours, but is exercised for the good of society, and that punishment, by the Almighty's mandate, must follow guilt. When we are all of us tried at the bar of the Almighty, no crimes will be concealed out of tenderness to our souls; impartial evidence will there be given of all our actions, words, and wishes; and as by our unerring judge false witness will be immediately detected, there, if any where, will our great accuser speak truth. Can any one believe the scripture, and yet imagine, that at the day of judgment witness will not be produced against him? Will not our present tempter, our spiritual adversary, search for evidence, and call for judgment, which may consign us to his power? Is he not said, even now, "day and night to accuse us before God?" And how are we taught in the book of revelation, to overcome him? "By the

blood of the Lamb, and by the word of our testimony.”

By the blood of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ alone, can be wiped out any stain of guilt. We must be saved, if we be saved, as the penitent believers and faithful disciples of Christ. And how will this character be proved, but by the word of our testimony? We must testify our belief by the purity of our conversation. If we profess to be Christians, and our words or our actions contradict and are opposite to the commands of our Lord, we bear false witness against Him; we testify to the world, that the strictness and purity of God's law is not credited by ourselves; and imitate the falsehood of the great deceiver, by telling our weaker brethren, and the unguarded sinner, “Thou shalt not surely die.” This was the first lie that was ever uttered upon earth. Its consequences have been fatal; but not more so than any lie or

false witness which may be uttered by ourselves. Our judge has told us, that "*all* liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone." How incumbent on us is it, then, to take care that this character by no implication may be fastened on ourselves? How circumspect should we be in what we say? How vigilantly should we guard our heart from every accession of sin? How continually do we need the assistance and evidence of Him who helpeth our infirmities? If we confess this need, and yet refuse, or neglect to pray daily for the help of God's Holy Spirit, do we not bear false witness against ourselves? Shall we limit our supplications for divine grace to certain periods? Rather let us pray continually in private, as we have frequently in public, O God, the strength of all them that trust in Thee, mercifully accept our prayers; and, because through the weakness of our mortal nature, we

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can do no good thing without Thee,  
grant us the help of Thy grace, that in  
keeping Thy commandments we may  
please Thee, both in will and deed,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.



## SERMON XXI.

## THE TENTH COMMANDMENT.

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EXODUS xx. 17.

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

A DUE obedience to this commandment depends upon the knowledge and consideration of the acceptation and force of the word "covet;"—on a proper understanding of what is intended, when we may be said to covet any thing which is our neighbour's. We may covet or

desire many things, without reproach or offence to any one ; we may desire good health ; we may wish for success in life to our children, and all others ; we may seek after a fair reputation, and many other things, without incurring the charge of covetousness. But the commandment tells us, that we are to covet nothing that is our neighbour's. The propriety of this precept must be obvious to all ; for if we covet any thing which belongs to another, we wish to deprive him of it ; and sinful wishes generally lead to sinful actions. We ought not, however, to suppose that wishes are only guilty when they generate crimes. The scripture tells us, that a wish itself may be culpable. Evil thoughts are among the crimes for which we must give account at the last day. And to covet any thing which the Almighty has withheld from us, and with which He has blessed our neighbours, is, of itself, a sin against God ; it is harbouring in

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our minds a feeling, that we deserve more than that with which God has been pleased to bless us. All discontent and repining at our condition in life is offensive in the sight of our heavenly Father. He knows what is best for us, and we ought to believe, that whatever bounties we may wish for and do not enjoy, are withheld from us in mercy. The possession of them would probably lead us into temptations, which we could not withstand; they might shorten our lives, or render us forgetful of the need of our daily bread, which we are taught daily to ask of our Father.

When, therefore, we observe the success and superior prosperity of those around us, we should check the first risings of envy in our minds; for that passion is the parent of numerous crimes; and, when admitted into the soul, renders it incapable of entertaining amiable affections. He that is envious of another, must be discontented with his

own situation. But we are not to judge of our own condition by comparison with our more prosperous neighbours; but with our own deservings. Who is he that deserves any blessing from God? If we were in the habit of continually offending man, should we expect to be fed by his bounty? But are we not daily offending by word, or deed, or thought, our munificent and unwearied Benefactor? Why, then, should we covet that, which He has thought fit to withhold? Does not the course of His providence, does not His merciful dealing with his creatures, convince us, that whatever conduces to our real welfare, He is disposed to give us? Do we never bear in mind, that this life is a passage to another and a better world? Would we wish it to be said to us hereafter, "Son, in thy life time thou receivedst good things?" And are we not told in every page of scripture, that the good things of this world tend to harden

man's heart? We are instructed, and we promise, to resist the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil. The temptations of the world are certainly more frequent, and more strong, the higher we are raised in it. We know too, that when we yield to one temptation, we are more easily assailed and vanquished by another. The flesh and the devil have more power over those whom the world has previously enchained. Nothing blinds us more than the accumulation of "that which perisheth." No passion leads us further from God than covetousness, and therefore it is called in scripture idolatry; it induces us at last, to worship that which we have ourselves set up; it fills the mind with carnal and hard thoughts of God, and renders the meek and lowly doctrine of the cross of Christ distasteful. Happy is the poor man who can look on the riches of the world without repining: blessed is he who is satisfied with his

daily bread ; happy in being free from the influence of evil passions in this life, and blessed in the prospect and the promise of good things hereafter. We are not taught to render our minds dull and stagnant ; we are to covet, and covet earnestly, the best gifts. And what, my brethren, are these ? Are they not spiritual ?

That which we are instructed to covet, belongs not to our neighbour, but to God. And when we truly desire the riches of His grace, all earthly possessions seem poor to us. What is really precious, we are allowed and taught to wish for, and to endeavour to obtain ; but perishable things are not worth a wise man's solicitude. This we shall be convinced of as soon as we find ourselves immortal. When the soul has taken its flight from this world ; when we enter on a state which will never end, how insignificant will seem the good things we have been obliged to part with ? Shall we not wonder that

they seemed at any time dear to us, in comparison with that eternal treasure, which was offered to our choice ?

But independently of the small value of the goods of this world, when put in competition with those joys which Jesus Christ has purchased for us, and which will never fade ; we cannot withhold the conviction, that when we covet what does not belong to us, and what our neighbour seems to enjoy, we insensibly imbibe prejudices and dislike against him. We consider him as favoured by fortune, or by providence, and we ourselves neglected and passed by. This turn of mind, which necessarily accompanies the desire of possessing what belongs to another, is the very reverse of that disposition, which it is the object of Christ's gospel to frame. " He that eateth," though it be the coarsest food, if he eat piously, " giveth God thanks." But how is thanksgiving consistent with murmuring ? And every one must mur-

mur, if he covet what he does not, and cannot expect, to possess. By covetousness we offend God, and give strength to every base passion of the soul. We prove that our desires are confined to this earth; that the joys of heaven are not credited or prized by us. And do not our own understandings tell us, that by such they will never be obtained? What can be more affronting to Christ, than to disregard that, which He endured so much to purchase? The joys of the next world have been bought for us with a price, which we could never give. And can we disregard and undervalue them, without a crime? Shall we prefer the mammon of unrighteousness to those blessings which are at God's right hand for ever more? How consistent and convincing are all the revelations of God! When the law was published on Mount Sinai it was clear, that the commandments prohibited whatever was injurious to our neigh-



bour. The clearer light of the gospel has shown us that they forbid whatever is injurious to ourselves. In this view it is, that the declaration of the apostle is so applicable when he says: "The law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ." By the commandments delivered on Mount Sinai we are forbidden to trespass against our neighbour, or to violate any moral duty; and to keep God's people from being led into sin, the last commandment relates to the desires of the heart. It teaches us to regulate our affections, to restrain sinful lusts, to be content with our present state. Its prohibitions extend further than any human law can reach. It bears the seal and stamp of Him, who both can, and will, bring every work into judgment, and every secret thing, whether it be good or evil. For He "is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Our blessed Lord has admirably explained and enforced the

necessity of adhering strictly to this early command of God, when He says, "if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee, for it is profitable for thee, that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell." This teaches us expressly to mortify covetous desires ; to eradicate those passions from our minds, which lead us to envy, and to repine at the happiness of another ; to fix our thoughts on, and to enjoy the prospect of, another world, and to " turn away our eyes, that they should not look upon evil." The language of the gospel is strong, and sometimes figurative, but never stronger than the occasion requires ; never more figurative than the consummation will warrant. When we are commanded to pluck out our right eye, when it engenders covetousness, or is the channel of any evil wish ; we are convinced of the necessity of rooting out sinful desires ; and also, of the difficulty there is in the

performance of this duty. Nature assures us, that we are as capable of enjoying the good things of this world as any of our neighbours; and it is not easy to persuade ourselves, that it is expedient they should be withheld from us: this we must learn from revelation; the assurance of this, is an exercise of faith which leads to good works, and which will not be overlooked by our Judge at the last day. What indeed can be more pleasing in His sight than a contented mind? What more endeared Job to the Father of spirits, than the pious resignation of his soul, when he exclaimed “the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord:” except it were the temper, which this declaration manifested; and the holy practice, by which this temper was encouraged? For we read that Job “rose up early in the morning,” and paid his devotions to the Lord, and this “Job did continually.” If we

imitate his conduct, why should not our minds be framed after the same model? If we pray morning and evening to our Heavenly Father, will He not disclose to us the prospect of eternal bliss? And when our minds are fixed on things above, shall we covet or desire perishable objects? shall we not see the vanity of all things here below? Prayer opens to us the gate of heaven; it presents to our minds a representation of things which are invisible. While we pray for substantial blessings, for unfading joys, we are convinced of the insufficiency of all temporal good; we covet not things which might lead us to sin; we know that we are more blessed than we deserve to be. Even if our lives were passed in slavery, in misery, and continual pain, yet the redemption of our souls is a gift which far outweighs all worldly calamity. We must be convinced, we none of us deserve that Christ should die for us; that this stupendous act of mercy is enough to fill

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our souls with thanksgiving for ever ; that the bountiful care of providence is sufficient to render us tranquil and happy in this life.

If indeed we be peaceful, placid, and contented here ; if we covet what alone is truly desirable, the love of God ; the help of His grace, and a well-grounded hope of salvation ; we shall never covet other men's goods ; our desires will not disturb our peace in this life, but will have their sure fruition in eternity. We must be aware that " God's commandments are not grievous ;" that obedience will produce the enjoyments which the pious seek : and we are aware too, that transgression of every divine command is followed by misery. Let us then endeavour to acquire that peace of mind which passeth all understanding ; let our desires be regulated by the word of God ; let us conform ourselves to His will, and be content with what He has thought fit to bestow ; let God's

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commandments be engraven on our hearts, and let us remember, that this is the last commandment, “that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another:” and also that he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in Him, and He in him: and hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us.

## SERMON XXII.

ON THE EQUAL DISTRIBUTION OF REWARDS IN ANOTHER LIFE.

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MATT. xvi. 28.

For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of the Father with His angels, and then shall He reward every man according to his works.

ON every serious mind the doctrine of the rewards and punishments of an eternal world must make a deep impression. And to the effect which a belief in it has on the hearts of the pious, must be ascribed the virtues they practise and the precepts they enjoin. In them, therefore, it is a grand motive to action,

which will be more stimulating and powerful if it be supported by the knowledge or the conviction that the rewards of another life will be adjusted in due and exact order: that there will be a scale of delight proportionate to the degree of our virtuous exertions, according to the measure by which our faith was established and our virtue approved. This opinion naturally emanates from reason. It is consonant with that principle of justice by which all human laws are enacted, and will be found, I think, strictly analogous to those sacred and immutable truths which the word of God was revealed to confirm.

That this subject has not been more frequently and largely treated, is owing probably to the facility with which it may be perverted to exalt that innate pride of the human heart which it is the great object of the gospel to subdue and destroy. The consideration of rewards in the next life almost imperceptibly



leads to an idea of merit in this. But as all human merit is incomplete and nugatory, and cannot deserve the bliss of heaven for an hour, much less to all eternity, the doctrine of rewards proportionate to good actions has been overlooked or disregarded amidst the blaze of that evidence which assures us that salvation is of grace: and which inflames our souls with sacred love and gratitude, by convincing us that the joys of heaven have been purchased for us by the merits, the atonement, and the intercession of our blessed Redeemer Jesus Christ.

But though our souls are redeemed from future punishment, and “bought with a price,” it by no means follows that virtuous exertions will not be rewarded. And the very notion of a reward implies that it should be proportionate; for how otherwise could it be just? In support of this argument we are not left to the deductions of reason, though that

alone might convince us of its truth. There is sufficient evidence from scripture to establish the doctrine that we shall be recompensed with strict and impartial justice, or, to use the emphatic words of inspiration, that every man shall be rewarded according to his works.

So faintly was a future life described by the promulgations of the old covenant, or rather so perverse were the people to whom it was preached, that we know a large proportion of the most zealous advocates for the ceremonial law rejected the belief of it. And to those who embraced and loved it, the evidence seemed as the dim glimmering of a star, which through their dark and dreary pilgrimage was to guide their course. It is not then till the day-spring from on high had visited the people of God, that we are to look for the clear evidence of this truth, so cheering to the pious, so full

of hope to the lowly, so fraught with every incentive to duty and zeal.

Far am I from asserting, that holy men of old were destitute of all hope in another life. We are expressly told, that they looked forward to the recompence of reward. And the lives of many of them were so passed, that they might say with them who loved the Lord at a later period, "If in this life, only we have hope, we are of all men most miserable."

David was convinced that there is a reward for the righteous, and declared in positive terms, "Also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy, for thou renderest to every man according to his works." And his wiser son appeals to the understanding of the sinners in the next age: "If thou sayest, behold, we knew it not, doth not He that pondereth the heart consider it, and He that keepeth the soul, doth not He know it, and

shall He not render to every man according to his works?" Nor were the prophets silent on so interesting a subject. "Great in counsel," exclaims Jeremiah with pious fervour, "and mighty in work; for thine eyes are open upon the ways of the sons of men, to give to every one according to his ways and according to the fruit of his doings." The equity of the divine dealings with man is also asserted by Ezekiel. "I will do unto them after their way, and according to their deserts will I judge them, and they shall know that I am the Lord." "And yet ye say," says the same prophet in another place, "the way of the Lord is not equal. O ye house of Israel, I will judge you every one after his way."

These passages in holy writ were considered by too many as relating to the temporal dealings of God with men. Few could look so far as holy Job, and exclaim with confidence, "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 my eyes shall behold, and not another." Still fewer had any conception that the rewards of the righteous in another world would be proportionate to their virtuous exertions in this. Nor should this delay in the positive assurance of this unquestionable truth surprise us, when we bear in mind the stubbornness of the Jewish people, and how prone they were to reject the most positive evidence of God's providence. Even when they were most scrupulously exact in the performance of the ceremonial law, and in offering sacrifices for sin, they understood, not that they were only typical of the great atonement which was to be offered for the sins of mankind. Most of them considered the blood of calves and of goats a sufficient sacrifice for every human crime ; and because they were

accepted for venial offences, they imagined that by them the wrath of God was appeased and their guilt expiated.

Far different is the creed of the pious Christian. He knows that he can only be reconciled to his heavenly and justly offended Father by faith in the merits of His only begotten Son. He allows that through Him, and Him alone, he can enter into a state of immortal bliss; and he believes too that this bliss will be the greater the more he has evidenced this hope by his actions, which prove his faith in his Redeemer's love and his charity to man. Multiplied are the grounds on which this conviction rests. Were we to refer to all the allusions which the sacred writers make to this doctrine, we should have to transcribe the greater part of our blessed Lord's discourses: we must compress the substance of the apostolical epistles, and present an epitome of "all the counsel of God." In support then of the doctrine

of proportionate rewards in the next life, it may be sufficient to notice a few of the passages in which it is held out to us as an incentive to the practice of those duties, a compliance with which the profession of the gospel directly implies.

In preaching to that people to whose perverseness we have just alluded, it might have been inexpedient to enter upon the subject of proportionate rewards in another life. They were to be won to the cause of salvation more by representing to them the fulfilment of the train of prophecy to which they had long looked, and of which at the time of our Saviour's mission they were in just and eager expectation, rather than convinced of the rationality of the gospel, or its adaptation to the wants of every man, and of the certainty that without respect to persons, our heavenly Father will "judge every man according to his works."

In conformity to this method of dealing with His people, the opening of God's message to those whose information may be supposed to have been more limited, and whose avocations and condition in life prevented them from investigating the proofs of our Lord's pretensions to the character of their Messiah, was calculated to alarm their fears and awaken their consciences. "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand, repent ye and believe the gospel," was the commencement of the preaching of the kingdom of God. It was necessary to warn men against sin before the rewards of an eternal world were held out. Nevertheless, our blessed Lord in His discourses to His disciples, plainly asserted the doctrine, the effects of which are so productive of hope and virtue. For when he describes His second advent to judge the world in the glory of His Father with His angels, He unequivocally asserts, then "shall



He judge every man according to his works."

Perfectly consonant with his master's prediction is the Apostle Paul's admonition to the Corinthians: "We must all stand at the judgment-seat of Christ, that every man may receive according to his works, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." And he was anxious to impress the same truth on the minds of the converts at Rome, having in the early part of his epistle assured them, that God will render to every man according to his works. If the doctrine of proportionate rewards in the next life stood in need of clearer illustration, further evidence might be adduced; but the passages from scripture are so plain, so positive and irrefragable, that, I trust, it may be considered as firmly established. Should more proof however be wanting, St. John's descriptions of the exact distribution of eternal rewards in the book of Revela-

tions will surely supply every deficiency; they occur in the 20th and 22d chapters, and in each chapter at the 12th verse.

Before we turn our attention to the effects which result from the consideration of this doctrine, it may be proper to observe, that the evangelists and apostles who assert that future rewards will be dispensed to the righteous in proportion to their good actions, carefully avoid any ground for the supposition, that they are to be rewarded for their sake. Good works are, as the article of our Church expresses it, "the fruits of faith." They cannot put away our sins, and endure the severity of God's judgment. They are indeed pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and will tend to increase our bliss in a future life; but it is through the merits and intercession of Christ alone that we can have access to the mansions of the blessed.\*

\* This distinction between the cause and the

Thus it appears that the doctrine of proportionate rewards in the next life may be entertained without diminishing in the least our hope in our Redeemer's love, or our reverence and thanksgiving for that stupendous instance of divine mercy to mankind in the atonement for their sins by the death and sacrifice of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

No one who has marked the incentives which influence the conduct of men in common life, will deny that this doctrine must operate as a stimulus to good works. As industry is excited and abilities are called into action by the desire of a

degree of rewards in the next life is uniformly preserved by the sacred writers. They do not say that men shall be rewarded *ενεκα* for the sake of their works, for no desert of ours can merit salvation. But the Lord will give to every man *κατα* according to his works. In the single passage in which this preposition is not used, it is exchanged for a word of similar import. In the last chapter of the Book of Revelations St. John uses *ως*, to give to every one *ως* as his work shall be.

superior degree of comfort and respectability in this world, the talents with which our Creator has endowed us, and the graces which He may vouchsafe to us, are brought into more lively exercise by the hope of attaining a larger measure of bliss in the next life; as we are assured that in our heavenly "Father's house are many mansions," we are prompted to obey His will, and manifest our love to Him more actively by the consideration, that the mansion which will be assigned us, may correspond with the alacrity and diligence which we manifest here, in the discharge of our duty. This principle cheers the pious believer in another life, when called to combat difficulties which have laid, and must lie in his path to all eternity; it keeps him alert in the discharge of every moral, religious, and social duty, and animates him with the expectation of approval at the great day,

when every man shall be rewarded "as his work shall be." The same incentive which, when exerted to obtain worldly honour, produces war, desolation, and tumult in the earth, engenders peace, charity, and active benevolence, when found in the heart of a sincere Christian. He is well aware that the talents he possesses are to be improved for his master's use: that in the parable, in which their distribution to mankind is so pointedly described, the rewards given to careful servants, were proportionate to the diligence they displayed in their master's absence. Our master has now travelled into that far country, where we must expect to meet reward proportioned to our activity in his service; if our duty has been performed with fidelity and readiness, we shall assuredly hear the voice of our heavenly King, applying to us the words He used in the parable, "Well done, good and faithful servant,

thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!"

And let it be remembered in the consideration of this parable, that though the talents were to be traded with and improved in this life, the reward of improving them to their master's use, was not to be given to the servants till his return "after a long time, when the Lord cometh and reckoneth with them." Thus it is with ourselves; we have received talents, which we are to occupy till our Lord come, when He will reckon with us, and according to the improvement we have made of them, so will our reward be; for He has assured us, He will give to every man according to his works. Can any excitement to good conduct be stronger? Can any be more agreeable to the sense of interest, which so powerfully, and so universally affects men in their intercourse with each other; and which, when refined and spiritualized

by the grace of God, will lead them to improve those faculties, by which in another world they will experience felicity?

It is this general, this universal argument, adapted to the understanding of us all, which teaches men to look beyond the present transitory scene. They are not only sure, that they shall not "serve God for nought," but this doctrine convinces them, that "he that reapeth receiveth wages," and that those wages will be in proportion to his work. No service is represented in Scripture as more acceptable to our heavenly Father, than that of leading others into the right path; of endeavouring to reclaim their souls from sin; and of propagating that seed, the branches of which, when it has attained its full maturity, will spread over the whole earth. To excite our zeal and fidelity in this service, the prophet Daniel has declared, that "they that be wise shall shine as

the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." In the same spirit of stimulating promise St. Paul assures us, that "one star differeth from another star in glory;" this difference in glory manifestly proceeds from the Almighty's just distribution of reward in the next life: the splendour of each star will be beyond conception great, but the degree of lustre will be more or less, according as the beams of God's Holy Spirit have imparted the faculty of shining.

According to the measure of zeal and fidelity which we exhibit in a course of good works, do we enjoy the light of God's countenance now, and hereafter we shall be blessed with it still more abundantly; and if we perceive, as we advance in years, that we make no progress in our way towards heaven, we must surely feel alarm, lest as we do not improve the grace vouchsafed to us, the



Lord, in justice, should take away even that which we may seem to have.

Thus are the most opposite passions in the human breast excited by the consideration of proportionate rewards in another life; and when we experience this holy impulse in the soul, we cannot fail to render it a source of consolation. We are aware that it had a powerful effect on St. Paul, who expressed his reliance on it in his second epistle to the Corinthians: "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Though we admit that all our endeavours after righteousness are imperfect, and that they are accepted only for the sake of the atonement which the holy Son of God made on the cross for the sins of the world, yet the assurance that our reward in the next life will be proportionate to our virtuous exertions here, fills the mind with a holy ardour, and teaches it to

look beyond this transitory scene. A firm believer and diligent servant of his blessed Lord may, without presumption, hope for a brighter reward in heaven, in proportion to the zeal he manifests, the distresses he undergoes, the patience he displays in the service of his divine master. This assurance has cheered martyrs at the stake; it has induced the faithful in former ages to endure persecution; and even now forms, in the breast of the pious, a source of consolation and patient fortitude, which enables them to encounter scorn, to stem the current of vicious pleasure, and evince their belief in the gospel. If, indeed, there will be degrees of punishment, as the apostle infers by declaring, that the punishment of those "who have trodden under foot the Son of God, will be *sorer* than that of the despisers of the law of Moses," why should we not entertain a firm confidence that the rewards of the next life will be adapted to our obedi-

ence in this? We know that the same Lord who, at the first promulgation of His law, proclaimed, "To me belongeth vengeance," has closed the sacred volume with the consoling promise, "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me to give to very one as his work shall be." By this faith the just will live; on this hope the sincere believer in Christ relies; it awakens the liveliest feeling of gratitude; it forms the most urgent motive of earnest and meek devotion.

For nothing tends more to excite gratitude and piety in the soul, than the consideration of the benefits which our heavenly Father has bestowed on us, and of the blessings which, for Christ's sake, He is about to confer on us hereafter. The redemption of our souls from just and eternal punishment is, of itself, a sufficient subject of the most ardent thanksgiving, and never-ending praise. But how much more warmly shall we feel

this grateful sense, when we are assured that our imperfect endeavours to “add to our faith virtue,” will be proportionally rewarded in another world; that no exertion in the service of God, though it may be frustrated by circumstances beyond our control, will be overlooked by Him, or considered mean in His sight. The labours and intentions of men in this life, are measured by the success that attends them; but the good works we undertake, or the zeal we display in the cause of Christ, though the devil and man may unite to oppose, and may apparently defeat them, will meet with a due recompense in the mansions of eternal peace, where those who “have sown in tears, will reap in joy.”

This sense of pious gratitude inspires also the deepest humility. While we thank the Lord for the assurance of reward in the next world, we must own, with Christian meekness, that these rewards are not of our deserving; they

will be conferred on us for the sake of the abundant merits of our Redeemer. Through Him, and Him alone, cometh every good and perfect gift, every comfort we enjoy now, and every blessing we can hope for in future. Those who covet earnestly the best gifts, serve the Lord with all humility of mind; and the more desirous they are to obtain immortal rewards, the more convinced are they that they do not deserve them. What feelings, then, can the hope of their fruition excite, but those of the liveliest gratitude, and the most profound humility? These are the most predominant sensations in the mind of every pious man. They are so in this distant age; they were so at the first propagation of Christianity. In every generation of men, since they have enjoyed a knowledge of the truth, the most virtuous have striven to follow the steps of their lowly Saviour. His early and positive admonition has been deeply engraven on

their hearts: "Blessed are the poor in spirit for their's is the kingdom of heaven." If this excite not a spirit of meek and pious gratitude in the mind, words must have lost their efficacy. What but gratitude can fill the soul, when it is promised the enjoyment of Heaven? What but humility can be engendered in the heart, when we know that by the meekness and gentleness of Christ are heavenly blessings won.

And when the humble and thankful Christian thus contemplates the promises of the gospel, and is sure that his reward in the next world will be proportionate to his faith and obedience in this, he feels that holy glow on his soul which proceeds from the hope of divine approbation. The promises of God seem addressed to himself. And so adapted are they to every man's case and heart, that no one, I believe, ever did a good action, on Christian principles, without feeling his heart burn within him:—not con-

sumed or wasted with that feverish heat which evil appetites produce, but warmed with that sacred flame which is kindled by the Holy Spirit, as a recompence and encouragement of virtue now, and an assurance of God's approval hereafter. In this consists the only genuine and lasting pleasure that we can enjoy on this side the grave. This earnest of future bliss depends not on adventitious circumstances; it is neither to be purchased by worldly good, nor lost by worldly calamity. The rewards of the pious commence even in this life; even here they may be said to correspond with our faith and virtue; for the stronger is our faith, the more clear and certain do these rewards appear; and the more steady and active is our virtue, the more complete and brilliant will be our hope and earnest of salvation. He must know little of the grace of God, and have a very inadequate idea of the promises of the gospel, who denies that

the peace of mind which they promote and generate, is of an increasing quality. From the time it is first planted in the soul, if it be not checked or broken by guilty appetites and vicious indulgences, it increaseth more and more, till "it passeth all understanding."

When "God, then, hath given unto us this earnest of the Spirit, we labour that we may be accepted of Him." When we are assured that we shall be recompensed in the next life in proportion to the fitness of our souls for enjoying the rewards of heaven, we shall strive to render ourselves "meet to be partakers of the saints in light;" we shall be diligent in the service of our Lord, and keep our lamps burning; we shall ground our hopes on the merits of Christ; we shall feel pious gratitude and humility springing up and increasing in our souls, and enjoy continually those meek and blissful hopes which form the genuine pleasure of a Christian.



All these hopes, these impulses, and holy affections, issue from the cross of Christ; from Him all blessings flow; through Him are our prayers heard, all grace is derived, all sin expiated; for His sake it is, that rewards are promised in the next life, and that they will be distributed in exact proportion. For this purpose will He descend upon the earth, in the glory of His Father, with His angels. For "these things," saith the Son of God, "I am He which searcheth the reins and the hearts, and I will give unto every one of you according to your works."

THE END.

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